

The Museum of Modern Art

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PRESS PREVIEW:

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Important early drawings by Matisse, a sheet of studies by Picasso, and recent work by contemporary American artists form the nucleus of a selective sampling from more than 300 drawings acquired by The Museum of Modern Art since the summer of 1966, which will be on view in the Paul J. Sachs Galleries at the Museum from February 18 through March 30.

Eila Kokkinen, Assistant Curator for Drawings in the Department of Drawings and Prints, has chosen 30 works for inclusion in DRAWINGS: RECENT ACQUISITIONS ranging from the school of Paris to recent works by European and American painters and sculptors. Artists represented include Balthus, Klee, Kupka, Hamilton, Tilson, de Kooning, Motherwell, Leslie, Johns and Oldenburg, among others.

The earliest of three important drawings by Henri Matisse added to the collection this year is a pencil study for the artist's first sculpture of a female figure Madeleine, I (1901), casts of which are in Baltimore and San Francisco museums. The drawing was contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Matisse in memory of M. Victor Leventritt. Matisse's first original sculpture, The Slave (1900), was of a male figure, and is owned by the Museum.

A newly acquired sketch Nude Study (1907) by Matisse of the back view of a model is shown with a drawing already in the collection of the front view of the model in a similar pose. The restless stroke of Matisse's drawings of the Fauve period is evident in these two studies. Matisse preferred to work directly from a model, observing and drawing before completing a sculpture. Miss Kokkinen comments in the wall label text that these sketches perhaps gave Matisse the inspiration for his series of four large relief sculptures The Back (I-IV) (1909-30) in the Museum's Sculpture Garden.

Matisse's graceful and evocative pen and ink portrait of the young girl Yvonne Landsberg (July, 1914), a gift of Mrs. Bernard F. Gimbel, is one of several drawings

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and five etchings that the artist did in preparation for his famous abstract portrait in oil Mlle Yvonne Landsberg (1914) now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This portrait started as a close likeness to the sitter and became more and more abstract until, in the final sitting, with the wooden ends of his brushes Matisse incised in the wet paint lines curving out from the figure.

A sheet of nude and still life studies made by Pablo Picasso in 1909 is another major acquisition of this year. The bowl of fruit on the table sketched on this sheet reappears in a painting Fruit Dish (1908-09) owned by the Museum, which in its exploration of the space and tonality of Cézanne anticipates Analytic Cubism. A fascinating drawing of a Favrile glass appears in the upper lefthand section of the sheet.

Other additions to the Museum's holdings include a 1911 abstract pastel of the interior of Chartres Cathedral by František Kupka, a gift of Lester Francis Avnet. A rare transitional work -- between the artist's early figurative Art Nouveau manner and his later abstract style -- this drawing is an important addition to the several hundred studies and sketches by Kupka that the Museum already owns.

A recent charcoal drawing of a reclining nude by Balthus has been given by Mr. and Mrs. Donald B. Straus. A drawing of Joë Bosquet in Bed by Jean Dubuffet in the exhibition is a study for a painting of the same title in the collection.

Several automatic drawings by Surrealist painters -- "decalcomanias" by Oscar Dominguez, Marcel Jean, and Yves Tanguy -- are now part of the collection, documenting the Surrealists' experimentation with techniques to create images from the unconscious. Dominguez, a painter born in the Canary Islands, originated the technique "decalcomania," which consisted of spreading gouache between two sheets of paper and pressing them together to create forms. The images evoked became more controlled and specific with the use of stencils.

Newly acquired works by contemporary American artists include recent drawings by the pioneer Abstract Expressionist painters, Willem de Kooning and Robert Motherwell.

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Two brush and ink drawings from the series of twenty-four entitled Lyric Suite (1965) presented to the Museum by the artist Motherwell are included in the exhibition. A pencil drawing of 1967 by Claes Oldenburg, related to illustrations he made for a book of poems by Frank O'Hara published by the Museum, has been contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Richard E. Oldenburg. The first drawing by Jasper Johns, Numbers (1966), to enter the collection has been given by Mrs. Bliss Parkinson in honor of René d'Harnoncourt. Alfred Leslie is also represented by two drawings of 1966, showing the artist's experiments with Notan, a Japanese concept of perfection in the values of light and dark which also symbolizes the state of moral perfection.

Two influential British artists of the 1960s -- Richard Hamilton and Joe Tilson -- have works in the exhibit. Hamilton's studies for The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum are closely related to the fiberglass and cellulose constructions he has made on the same subject.

A group of drawings and watercolors by Jean Dubuffet, given by the artist to the Museum in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph F. Colin and gifts of Mr. and Mrs. Lester Francis Avnet, will also be on view in an adjacent gallery to DRAWINGS: RECENT ACQUISITIONS. Dubuffet is revealed as a master draughtsman in the rich diversity of this work ranging from 1943 through 1966.

 Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Joan Wiggins, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.