

# The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

NO. 13  
FOR RELEASE:  
FEBRUARY 11, 1972

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS X

A construction and a painting from the early twentieth century by two Russians and a group of six paintings from the sixties make up the exhibition of new acquisitions to The Museum of Modern Art Painting and Sculpture Collection on view on the first floor through March 5.

The Russian works are a life-size figure constructed of painted wood elements (with some crushed eggshells applied for pointillist effect) by the virtually forgotten sculptor and painter Vladimir Baranoff-Rossiné (1888-1942), and a large gouache by Ivan Puni (1894-1956) called Flight of Forms. These purchases constitute major additions by artists not previously represented in the Museum's collection of the crucial, short-lived development of abstract art in Russia before and after the Revolution of 1917. Historically, the Baranoff-Rossiné is especially interesting. Called Symphony Number 1, it was done in Paris in 1913 under the influence of Cubism and establishes the artist as a pioneer experimenter, together with Picasso and Archipenko, with the concept of constructed sculpture, using found components and unconventional materials. In its ambitious scale and intricacy of construction and painted surface, however, it goes beyond anything produced until then by either Picasso or Archipenko. Its title parallels the use of musical nomenclature by the artist's fellow Russian, Wassily Kandinsky, and other works by Baranoff-Rossiné confirm his interest in finding a means of integrating musical concepts with those of the visual arts. He also produced a color-light machine which projected moving forms inspired by music and was intended to be shown with musical accompaniment. He and his wife actually put on several performances in Moscow playing the music of Grieg, Beethoven and Wagner. A second version of the Museum's piece was shown at the Salon des Independents in March of 1914. It is said that Baranoff-Rossiné was so disheartened by the bad reception it got from the Paris critics that he threw it into the Seine.

(more)

After a sojourn in Paris, Ivan Puni returned to Moscow on the eve of World War I in 1914 where he became a follower of Kasimir Malevich, signing the latter's Suprematist manifesto. The compositional elements of the Museum's picture, Flight of Forms, done in 1919, are letters of the Cyrillic alphabet which function both as abstract shapes and vehicles for a kind of visual onomatopoeia. The words "flight," "form" and "spectrum" appear in the composition and letters of the first two are flung across the surface in such a way as to suggest a flight of birds, while the idea of a spectrum defines the organizational disposition of the picture's colors. Puni, like Baranoff-Rossiné, left the Soviet Union in the twenties as the official attitude towards the avant-garde changed into disapproval, and lived in Paris where he changed the spelling of his name to its French form, Jean Pougny.

Roy Lichtenstein, the only artist in the exhibition previously represented in the Museum's Painting and Sculpture Collection is seen in a major picture of his "comic strip" kind, the Girl Drowning of 1963, which has been acquired by gift and exchange. Lichtenstein was born in New York in 1923 and studied at the Art Students League and Ohio State University where he subsequently taught. In 1963, after teaching at the State University of New York at Oswego and Rutgers University, he returned to his native city.

Richard Smith, one of the leading British artists of his generation (he was born in 1931), has been widely exhibited in New York and in principal international exhibitions, including the Bienal at São Paulo, Brazil, where he was awarded the grand prize in 1967. The Museum's acquisition, Ring-a-lingling (1966) is a large three-part relief of red-painted canvas, with sheet aluminum. Its parts, hung flush with each other, function both as elements of a single composition and as serial units.

Robert Ryman was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1930 and began painting in New York in 1954. Since his work was first shown in 1965 he has had a number of one-man shows and has been included in many group exhibitions. His painting Twin (1966), like virtually every

(more)

picture he makes, is composed of white paint on a square ground. Though partaking of the minimalist esthetic in its near-elimination of visual incident, Ryman's surfaces retain the evidence of the artist's own hand in the rich and varied texturing of the brush strokes and the imprecision of the edges.

The three remaining works in the show are by American artists born in the forties, who, inspite of their relative youth, have had considerable exposure in New York. Dan Christensen, born in Lexington, Nebraska, in 1942, first showed in 1967. In his painting PR, dating from that year, he divides his large canvas into two swirling skeins of paint applied by spray gun to create an ambiguity of surface and illusory sense of depth. Peter Young's nine-foot square Number 7 was done in the same year. Its all-over composition of pastel-colored dots <sup>of paint</sup> is reminiscent of pointillist methods. The dots here, however, function more as particles of matter in an imaginary white outer space articulated by their clusterings and scatterings, and by the predominance of a given color and changes in density through color juxtaposition. Young was born in Pittsburgh in 1940 and had his first one-man show in 1968.

Ronnie Landfield's Diamond Lake was done in 1969 when the artist was 23. It falls within the movement of color-field painting which has been called "lyrical abstraction," but its broad horizontal band of lavender paint across the bottom and the "sky" area across the picture's top establish an illusion of deep landscape space. These last three paintings are exhibited as promised gifts from Philip Johnson, the architect and Trustee of the Museum who has enriched its collection over many years by numerous gifts and promised gifts of works by younger artists of the avant-garde.

\*\*\*\*\*

Additional information available from Diana Goldin, Coordinator of Press Services, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, The Department of Public Information, 11 W. 53 St., New York, N.Y. 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7297, -7501.

\*\*\*\*\*