

WOODCUTS BY VALLOTTON ON VIEW AT MUSEUM

Thirty-six woodcuts by Félix Vallotton (1865-1925), a master of the medium, will be on view from February 21 through April 28 in the Paul J. Sachs Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art.

Born in Lausanne, Switzerland, Vallotton moved to Paris in 1882 to study art at the Académie Julian. In the 1890s he belonged to the circle of artists and writers known as the Nabis and contributed woodcuts to the magazine La Revue Blanche and other publications. Vallotton became a French citizen in 1900.

The prints in the exhibition, which span the decade from 1891 to 1901, are all drawn from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. Many are intimate scenes of human relations or activities, such as embraces, arguments, bathing, the playing of musical instruments. Beneath the simple narrative quality of these woodcuts lurks a biting sarcasm, as the artist casts a jaundiced eye on the people he depicts. Vallotton himself once wrote: "Sentimental nonsense, cooing, couples arm in arm, walks together, etc., have always tended to get on my nerves."

Formally, Vallotton's woodcuts are marked by large, bold areas in which figures and ground often merge. In Money, for example, the surface is almost entirely black; two figures are illuminated at one edge of the picture by a window, then merge directly into the black ground without any outline delineating a separation.

The Vallotton exhibition is directed by Riva Castleman, Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books, with the assistance of Howardena Pindell, Assistant Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books. The Museum of Modern Art gratefully acknowledges the support of its exhibition program by the New York State Council on the Arts.

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