

The Museum of Modern Art

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NEWLY ACQUIRED PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURE AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Two bronze studies by Rodin, a painting and two sculptures by Max Ernst, an object by Joseph Cornell and a painting by John Graham constitute a group of recently acquired major works on view in a special exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art from April 5 to April 21, 1974.

The Rodins are studies for the Monument to Balzac and "provide a superb overview of the many steps through which Rodin arrived at the final monumental Balzac which the Museum has had for many years in its Sculpture Garden" according to William Rubin, Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture. They are promised gifts from the B. G. Cantor Art Foundation, which has also promised to give eight additional studies to the Museum in the near future.

Rendezvous of Friends -- The Friends Become Flowers, a major painting of 1928 by Max Ernst, is a gift of Samuel A. Berger and the artist. The sculptures, Moon-mad and An Anxious Friend, both of 1944, an important period of his career, were given by the artist.

Joseph Cornell's Object (Roses des Vents) was begun in 1942 and completed in 1953. It was acquired with the Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Murphy Fund. Harlequin (Self-Portrait) by John Graham, an early work in his figurative style probably painted in 1944, was given to the Museum by Harry Kahn.

The exhibition was selected by William Rubin, Director, Painting and Sculpture, Department and installed by Cora Rosevear, Curatorial Assistant. Miss Rosevear also wrote the accompanying notes* on the works in the exhibition.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501; 956-7504.

*Notes are attached

Auguste RODIN. French, 1840-1917

Balzac in Frockcoat. c. 1891-92. Bronze, 23 7/8 x 8 1/2 x 10 3/8".
Promised gift of the B. G. Cantor Art Foundation.

Nude Study for Balzac. 1893. Bronze, 29 3/4 x 12 1/8 x 13 5/8".
Promised gift of the B. G. Cantor Art Foundation.

Rodin was commissioned to do a public monument to Balzac in 1891 by the Société des Gens des Lettres in Paris. He considered the sculpture "the sum of my whole life"; after seven years of work, the finished Monument to Balzac was rejected by the Société. About forty preliminary studies for the Balzac remain and the two bronzes acquired by the Museum -- Balzac in Frockcoat (c. 1891-92) and Nude Study for Balzac (1893) -- are important in their own right and for their relation to the large final version. Rodin considered posing Balzac in several ways -- standing, sitting, clothed, naked. In the Balzac in Frockcoat Rodin portrays Balzac leaning back with arms folded and traditionally clothed, a relaxed figure despite the animated surface modeling. By contrast the standing Nude Study for Balzac shows the author as a massive, expressive, unidealized but athletic figure with folded arms. Combining elements of both of these studies, the final version focuses on Balzac's intense and powerful head and a vast enveloping robe that completely covers his standing form. Rodin suggests the massive body beneath, creating both a portrait of Balzac and a visual symbol of his might.

Max ERNST. French, born Germany 1891. To France 1922. In U.S.A. 1941-50

Rendezvous of Friends--The Friends Become Flowers. 1928. Oil, 51 1/8 x 63 3/4".
Gift of Samuel A. Berger and the artist (by exchange).

Max Ernst was a founder of the Dada movement in Cologne in 1919 and one of the leading Surrealist painters in Paris in the period between 1922 and

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1938. In the mid-1920s Ernst developed inventive techniques for applying paint, which involved rubbing, scraping, and blotting the wet canvas to achieve the desired effect. In Rendezvous of Friends -- The Friends Become Flowers these techniques are adapted to create abstract forms that express Ernst's personal and poetic symbolism. Images of shell flowers and indefinable geological forms are combined with menacing anthropomorphic shapes, two themes he developed separately in the "Shell Flower" and "Horde" series of the previous year. The painting exists ambiguously between naturalism and fantasy and remains ultimately mysterious in its verbal and pictorial message.

Moon-mad. 1944. Bronze, 36 7/8 x 13 7/8 x 13 3/4". Gift of the artist.

An Anxious Friend. 1944. Bronze, 26 3/8 x 14 x 16". Gift of the artist.

Ernst lived in the United States from 1941 to 1950 and spent the summer of 1944 in Great River, Long Island, where he executed a dozen sculptures, including the two shown here. A third work from this summer, considered a major period in Ernst's career, is The King Playing with the Queen, which is already in the Museum's collection and on view in the Sculpture Garden. Moon-mad is a strange personage created from crescent-shaped forms with lunar horns jutting out from a circular head. Composed of rectangular planes accented by concave and convex circles, An Anxious Friend is a fantastic creature with two heads, one in the front and a second in the back. Both sculptures combine whimsy and humor in an ironic spirit that is at once light-hearted and forbidding. Moon-mad and An Anxious Friend were exhibited in the Museum's 1961 Ernst retrospective.

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Joseph CORNELL. American, 1903-1972

Object (Roses des Vents). 1942, 53. Wood box containing compasses, maps, etc.,
21 1/4 x 10 3/8 x 2 5/8". Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Murphy Fund.

Although Joseph Cornell was never an official member of the Surrealist movement, his collages and boxes relate to Surrealism in their spirit and technique. Found objects are presented in unexpected juxtapositions preserving a carefully ordered, formal balance, their iconography at once poetic and symbolic. In Object (Roses des Vents) there are two levels of visual experience. A three-part hinged lid, covered inside with sections of a map of New Guinea and Australia, opens to reveal a tray containing twenty-one round compasses. The entire tray may be lifted to show the contents of the box at a glance or each glass compass may be looked through or removed to reveal the special treasure beneath: a map or chart of the earth or heavens; a shell, spring, seeds or coil; a print of a beetle; a fish or the constellation Auriga; pebbles, pins, painted balls or colored glass. Roses des Vents is the French term for a mariner's card, the card attached to the needles of a mariner's compass, which seamen use to navigate the seas.

John GRAHAM. American, born Ukraine. 1886-1961. To U.S.A. 1920

Harlequin (Self-Portrait). c. 1944. Oil, 24 1/8 x 20 1/4". Gift of Harry Kahn.

John Graham was born in the Ukraine in 1886 and came to the United States in 1920. In New York in the 1930s he painted in a post-Cubist abstract style and had considerable influence on younger painters of the time. His style changed in the early 1940s and his work became figurative, finding

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inspiration in mystic sources and Renaissance classicism. Harlequin (Self-Portrait) is an early work in Graham's figurative style, one of a series of self-portraits as a jester. His costume is abstractly patterned, with flat, bright, rounded, interlocking color shapes. His face and head take on a disquieting significance through the use of bright highlights and the asymmetry of the features, particularly the eyes, eyebrows, and ears -- note the strangely incomplete left ear. The painting invites interesting comparison with two other works by Graham in the Museum's collection -- the more loosely painted Self-Portrait of 1943 and the Two Sisters (Les Mamelles d'Outre-Mer), also of 1944, in which the composition is more complex and the distortions of the faces and bodies more exaggerated.

C. R.