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FOR RELEASE

EXILED ART PURCHASED BY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

New York - August 7, 1939. - The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, announced today the acquisition of five works of modern art formerly owned by German museums but recently expelled from them by official order. Two are outstanding masterpieces: The Blue Window by Matisse and the Kneeling Woman by Lehmbruck. All have been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art through the Buchholz Gallery, whose New York agent is a German refugee.

By their exclusion from German museums these exiled works of art have joined the glorious company of paintings by van Gogh, Gauguin, and other masters of modern art which have been banished from Germany to the enrichment of collections in other countries. These new acquisitions, several of which were shown in the official exhibition of "degenerate" art at Munich in 1937, are:

ANDRE DERAINE

Valley of the Lot at Vers
oil on canvas, 1912.
Formerly in the Cologne Museum.

ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER

Street Scene
oil on canvas, 1913.
Formerly in the National Gallery, Berlin.

PAUL KLEE

Around the Fish
oil on canvas, 1926.
Formerly in the Dresden Gallery.

WILHELM LEHMBRUCK

Kneeling Woman
artificial stone, 1911.
Formerly in the National Gallery, Berlin.

HENRI-MATISSE

The Blue Window
oil on canvas, c. 1912.
Formerly in the Essen Museum.

These works of art were not excluded from German museums on racial grounds. Two of the artists, Lehmbruck and Kirchner, are native Germans; two, Derain and Matisse, are Frenchmen; Klee is a native of Switzerland, long a resident of Germany and identified with German art. Three of the works are in fact famous examples of expressionism, the characteristic art movement in Germany from 1910 to 1920 and later.

In announcing the new acquisitions, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum of Modern Art, called attention to the speech broadcast by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as part of the opening celebration of the Museum's new building. Mr. Barr stressed particularly the following excerpts from President Roosevelt's speech:

"We know that only where men are free can the arts flourish and the civilization of national culture reach full flower. The arts cannot thrive except where men are free to be themselves and to be in charge of the discipline of their own energies and ardors. The conditions for democracy and for art are one and the same. What we call liberty in politics results in freedom in the arts.

"A world turned into a stereotype, a society converted into a regiment, a life translated into a routine, make it difficult for either art or artists to survive. Crush individuality in society and you crush art as well. Nourish the conditions of a free life and you nourish the arts, too."

Mr. Barr added the following statement: "The Museum is very fortunate in having acquired these excellent works of art. The Kneeling Woman is one of the great masterpieces of modern sculpture and was so regarded in the native land of the artist for many years. The Derain painting, far from being radical, is a severely disciplined landscape in a modern classical style derived from Cézanne and Poussin. All the paintings are the work of men who are generally considered in other countries to be among the best of living artists. The only good thing about the exile of such fine works of art from one country is the consequent enrichment of other lands where cultural freedom still exists.

"Opposition to modern art," Mr. Barr continued, "became an act of German political faith immediately after the Nazi Revolution of 1933 when the suppression of modern art and the persecution of modern artists began. At that time masterpieces of modern painting in museums were placarded with insulting remarks, modern artists were removed from teaching positions and as time went on museum directors and curators who had shown any sympathy with the modern movement were dismissed. Gradually the paintings and sculpture were removed from museums until in 1937 in Munich a great hodge-podge of so-called degenerate art was presented in an exhibition which included some of the works just acquired by the Museum, together with fourth- and fifth-rate examples of the most extreme and trivial phases of modern German art all jumbled together to discredit the movement as a whole. This exhibition of

'degenerate' work was supposed to contrast favorably with the exhibition of officially approved art in the new House of German Art in Munich.

"It was, however, somewhat embarrassing to the official authorities that the attendance at the exhibition of condemned modern art was incomparably greater than that at the exhibition of officially approved art referred to by Hitler as 'pure Aryan German art, uncontaminated by modernism.' It was Hitler's now famous speech at the opening of the House of German Art in Munich that widely publicized official opposition to modern art in Germany.

"The Nazi opposition to modern art seems in fact to be due to Hitler's personal taste rather than to any racial or political factors. In spite of his radical political philosophy Hitler's taste in art is as reactionary as was that of Lenin in the Russian revolution of twenty years ago. Hitler was at one time a painter of feeble and mediocre academic watercolors - a fact which seems permanently to have affected his taste. His antipathy toward new forms of art and architecture found a good deal of sympathy among the less cultivated Brown Shirts, as well as among academic artists who seized the opportunity to recover some of their lost prestige. There are, however, more cultivated elements in the Nazi party who are very much embarrassed by the 'degenerate art' theories of Der Führer. These men sincerely regret the loss of many works of art. They also regret the terrible damage done to Germany's reputation as a cultivated nation for, before the Nazi Revolution, the art of Germany stood second only to that of France among European nations.

"The Museum of Modern Art," Mr. Barr concluded, "welcomes these distinguished exiled works which greatly enrich its modern European collection."

The new acquisitions will remain on view in the Museum's current exhibition of Art In Our time until it closes some time in October. Also on view in the same exhibition are several of the Museum's recently announced American acquisitions of three oils: John Kane's Self Portrait, Fletcher Martin's Trouble in Frisco, Franklin C. Watkins' Boris Blai; and Floating Figure, the large bronze sculpture by Gaston Lachaise, shown in the Museum's sculpture garden. Eventually many of these works will be shown at various museums throughout the country.