

The Museum of Modern Art

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NO. 17
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JAMES THRALL SOBY BEQUEST ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

A selection of paintings and sculpture from the more than fifty paintings, sculptures, and works on paper bequeathed to The Museum of Modern Art by the late James Thrall Soby will be on view in the Museum's Lobby from March 22 through April, 1979. A distinguished writer, collector, and curator, Mr. Soby (1906-1979) was a Trustee of The Museum of Modern Art, and its Director of Painting and Sculpture in the 1940s. From 1946 to 1967 he was Chairman of the Painting and Sculpture Department.

The exhibition, which is being directed by Alicia Legg, Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture, concentrates on two of Mr. Soby's major interests: Giorgio de Chirico and Surrealism. The eight canvases by de Chirico on view, all from his "metaphysical" period between 1913 and 1919, will join six excellent examples already in the Museum, and will constitute the finest collection of de Chirico in the world. Outstanding among the works in the Soby collection that demonstrate Surrealist fantasy are Picasso's Seated Woman of 1927, Tanguy's The Mood of Now, 1928, Miro's 1929 Portrait of Mrs. Mills in 1750, and Still Life with Old Shoe, 1937, Matta's Here Sir Fire, Eat, 1942, and the post-surrealist painted bronze Tall Figure, 1949 by Alberto Giacometti.

James Thrall Soby's museum career began at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, where in 1931 he helped organize the first museum exhibition of Surrealism and, three years later, the first Picasso retrospective ever held in this country. One of his first activities with The Museum of

Modern Art was as a member of its Library Committee in 1937. He joined the Advisory Committee in 1939, and he was a member of the Committee on Photography from 1940 when it was established. Also in 1940, he became a member of the Acquisitions Committee. Mr. Soby was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1942. He was Director of the Armed Services Program and Trustee Chairman of the Department of Photography from 1942 to 1945.

His curatorial career at the Museum began in 1943 when he served as Director of Painting and Sculpture and Assistant Director of the Museum. From 1946 to 1967 he was Chairman of the Painting and Sculpture Department as well as Chairman of the Trustees' Committee on the Museum Collections. In 1967 he was named Honorary Chairman and continued as a member of the newly organized Committee on Painting and Sculpture.

The important exhibitions which Mr. Soby himself directed for the Museum since 1941 number fourteen in all, including one-man shows of Arp, Balthus, de Chirico, Gris, Magritte, Miro, and Tanguy, among others. Mr. Soby had to his credit over twenty monographs and collections of essays. His contribution to the Museum's publications program has been of capital importance.

James Soby served as art critic for the Saturday Review of Literature from 1946 to 1957, and at the Magazine of Art, he was Acting Editor, 1950-51, and Chairman of the Editorial Board, 1951-52. Of Soby as a critic, the late Paul J. Sachs, art historian and one of the Founding Trustees of the Museum, wrote in 1957, "By actual experience as well as intellectually and emotionally, he has earned the right to describe (and he does so with gusto) the artistic revolutionary thoughts and techniques of the twentieth century."

March 1979

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