

# The Museum of Modern Art

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Suggested Press Release

## A CENTURY OF MODERN DRAWING FROM THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

The Museum of Modern Art in New York will lend over two hundred of its finest drawings to the British Museum for an exhibition which opens to the public on June 10 and continues until September 12, 1982. To be installed in the Prints and Drawings gallery and the adjacent gallery belonging to the Oriental Antiquities Department, A CENTURY OF MODERN DRAWING FROM THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART is the largest and most important survey ever sent abroad of a collection often considered unparalleled in breadth and quality. Organized under the auspices of The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition is directed by Bernice Rose, Curator of Drawings at The Museum of Modern Art, who selected and installed the works in consultation with Frances Carey, Assistant Keeper in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum.

John Elderfield, Director of Drawings at The Museum of Modern Art, describes the intent of the exhibition in a preface to the catalogue: "(The) exhibition is presented both as a selection of works of particular quality, indicating the richness of The Museum of Modern Art's collection,

and as a review of modern draftsmanship, showing its diversity and historical development." The earliest work in the exhibition is a conte crayon drawing by Georges Seurat (Stone Breakers, Le Raincy, c. 1881), one of four works representing him, and the most recent is the American Bruce Nauman's Face Mask, a charcoal, pastel and pencil drawing executed last year.

Four works by Paul Cézanne illustrate Ms. Rose's thesis that, in one sense, "... Cézanne's late watercolors begin the history of modern drawing." Other 19th century masters represented in the exhibition who exerted a strong influence on the development of the modern movement are Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Odilon Redon, and Auguste Rodin.

Virtually all the major movements of the 20th century are represented in the exhibition, beginning with Fauvism and Cubism in Paris in the early years of the century. Shown with eighteen works, Pablo Picasso has the largest representation of any artist in the exhibition, including two studies for his famous painting Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (1907) and a number of Cubist works, including Guitar (1913), one of the artist's classic Cubist collages. A group of six drawings by Henri Matisse range from six decades of his career, beginning with Jeanne Manguin (1906) and ending with The Necklace (1950), drawn four years before his death. He was the 20th century's "master of the simplified contour line, the line in which gestural expression is reduced to an essence," Ms. Rose notes. Other School of Paris masters represented in the exhibition include the painters Georges Braque, André Derain,

Robert Delaunay, Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, Amedeo Modigliani, and Georges Rouault, and the sculptors Constantin Brancusi and Jacques Lipchitz. Italian art from the first two decades of the century is represented by the Futurists Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carra, and Gino Severini.

The widespread influence of Cubism led to other movements which became increasingly abstract. Included in the exhibition are constructivist styles as they developed in several countries: in Russia during the early years of the Revolution (represented by Kasimir Malevich, Alexander Rodchenko, Vladimir Tatlin, and El Lissitzky); de Stijl in The Netherlands (represented by Piet Mondrian, Theo Van Doesburg, and Bart Van Der Leck); and Vorticism in Britain (represented by Jacob Epstein and Lawrence Atkinson).

Figurative expressionist art is shown in works from turn-of-the-century Vienna by Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka, Alfred Kubin, and Egon Schiele; and from Germany in the years just before and soon after World War I in works by Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz, Erich Heckel, Franz Marc, and Emil Nolde. Also working in Germany during this period were the Swiss Paul Klee and the Russian Wassily Kandinsky. Klee, called by Ms. Rose "one of the great graphic innovators of the century," is represented with eight works dating from 1915 to 1940, the year of his death. Five drawings by Kandinsky from 1913 to 1933 show the emergence of his style from representation to pure abstraction.

The first World War also saw the emergence of Dada, begun in Switzerland and Germany as a movement of protest. Not a style but an attitude, Dada opened art to ready-made objects, devices, nonsense attitudes, and irrationalities previously outside art. Leading figures in the movement represented in the exhibition include Max Ernst, Francis Picabia, Man Ray, Kurt Schwitters and the proto-dada innovator, Marcel Duchamp. Several of the artists later participated in the Surrealist movement. Inspired by Freudian free association, Surrealism sought a new psychic reality. Leading Surrealist artists represented in work dating from the 1920s through the 1940s include Salvador Dali, Paul Delvaux, André Masson and Yves Tanguy. Although not formally associated with the Surrealist group, Joan Miró was closely linked to it. The five drawings representing him (dating from 1926 to 1941) show a master draftsman at work. European work produced after World War II is represented by Balthus, Jean Dubuffet, and Henry Moore.

In the section of the exhibition installed in the Oriental Gallery, the emphasis is on the contribution of American artists. The pioneer generation of American modernists is represented by works mostly from the 1920s and 1930s by Stuart Davis, Edward Hopper, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Charles Sheeler. American Abstract Expressionism, the first group of American artists to achieve a position of central importance in the mainstream of the modern movement, is represented by Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, Sam Francis, Mark Rothko, and David Smith in work mostly from the 1940s and 1950s. Among

artists who came to prominence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Robert Rauschenberg is represented by an extraordinary series, Thirty-Four Illustrations for Dante's "Inferno", produced in 1959-60. Jasper Johns is represented with four drawings from 1960 to 1977. Pop Art is represented with works by Jim Dine, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, and James Rosenquist. Minimal and conceptual directions from the 1960s and 1970s are shown in works by Carl Andre, Agnes Martin, Robert Morris, Dorothea Rockburne, and Richard Serra. The expansion of contemporary drawing beyond conventional limitations is represented by a drawing by Sol LeWitt executed directly on the wall.

When The Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929, it contained no facilities for the separate collection and study of drawings. As such works were gradually acquired, they were acquired either because they served as studies for paintings or sculptures the Museum owned or because they filled important gaps in the Museum's historical collection as a whole. While these functions continue to be served by the drawing collection, it gradually evolved an autonomous status with its principle being to create an independent and qualitative overview of modern art in works on paper.

Unlike most European museums, The Museum of Modern Art is a private institution which receives most of its support from private contributions and from public admissions, rather than from government. As a relatively young institution, it lacks a large endowment or purchase fund for the acquisition of works of art, and hence has been unusually dependent upon the generosity of donors in building its collections.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the Museum's first Director, was largely instrumental in forming the drawing collection. With the support of Barr's former teacher, Professor Paul J. Sachs, one of the seven founder-trustees of the Museum, and through the particular generosity of three other founder-trustees, Lillie P. Bliss, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, and A. Conger Goodyear, and later of John S. Newberry, the collection grew steadily in size. It was not, however, until 1964 that the Museum inaugurated galleries especially devoted to the exhibitions of drawings and prints from its collections, naming those galleries in honor of Professor Sachs. In 1971 the Museum established a separate curatorial Department of Drawings, directed by William S. Lieberman, under whose leadership the collection grew rapidly, with many important additions, chief among them The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection, which itself was formed with the needs of the Museum specifically in mind. In 1973 the Museum's Committee on Drawings was appointed with Lily Auchincloss as Chairman, succeeded in 1981 by Ronald S. Lauder. In the spring of 1983, expanded facilities for the study and exhibition of drawings, including a new study center and galleries devoted exclusively to works on paper, will be provided as part of the Museum's enlarged premises, due to be completed at that date.

The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, under whose auspices the exhibition has been organized, is a nonprofit membership corporation of over one hundred ninety art patrons and collectors from

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twenty-six countries. It was founded in 1953 to give The Museum of Modern Art's International Program both national and international cooperation and support. Prinz Franz von Bayern serves as Chairman of the Council; Mrs. Alfred R. Stern is President.