NEW ACCESSIONS OF PAINTINGS

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The interest and generosity of several friends of the Museum have recently brought to us eight paintings that make a valuable contribution to our collections. They are two excellent and typical eighteenth-century portraits, two beautiful landscapes by Van Gogh, very different from the others in the Museum, three distinguished paintings by artists who worked largely in the twentieth century, and one by Salvador Dali. All are illustrated on the following pages.

The picture by Vuillard has been a favorite with visitors since January 1954, when it was graciously lent by the present donor, Alex M. Lewyt, for the reopening of our galleries. It is a portrait of the artist himself with brushes and painting stick, accompanied by his friend Varocquez, and it dates from about 1890. At this time Vuillard was in fairly close contact with the Impressionist movement, which, with the influence of Japanese prints, determined his style. The curious mistiness of atmosphere enveloping the figures, apparently achieved by working from a reflection in a mirror, creates the mood of intimacy that Vuillard prized.

Louis Tocqué is an artist new to the Museum, and it is a pleasure to have him represented by a sprightly portrait of his father-in-law, the court painter Nattier. This painting, like the one by Greuze a gift from Colonel and Mrs. Jacques Balsan, is an oil sketch for a more formal finished portrait which Tocqué offered as his reception piece to the Danish Academy of Fine Arts. The fact that it is a preparatory painting accounts for much of its vitality.

Portraiture was a field in which Greuze showed great breadth and penetration and a stature not suggested by his allegories alone. His likeness of Madame Nicolet recreates with forthrightness and justice this earthy and competent actress, who charmed her manager, married him, and applied her good sense and judgment to helping him direct a successful company.

The Flowering Orchard by Vincent van Gogh, which comes to us through the Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ittleson, Jr., Purchase Fund, was painted in April 1888 in Arles. The spring of that year was a high moment in the brief career of the tormented artist. His technique had been freed and invigorated in Paris and his colors brightened, and when he got away from the capital to the sunny, blossoming countryside of Provence his spirits soared. The Olive Pickers, purchased from the Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Bernhard Fund, was painted more than a year later, in November 1889, when the artist was seriously ill in an asylum in Saint-Rémy. The gaiety of the orchard paintings was gone, replaced by a certain melancholy poetry and above all by a serious concern with aesthetic problems.

Paul Signac was the chief exponent of the school of painting called Neo-Impressionism. His dot technique differs from that of Seurat in the square shape of his individual brush strokes. Our broad and spacious view of the port of Marseilles, given by Robert Lehman, shows the church of Notre Dame de la Garde, surmounted by an enormous statue of the Virgin, a landmark for sailors. The painting is a perfect complement to the Museum’s sketch for La Grande Jatte, Seurat’s masterpiece, which is the highest achievement of pointillism.

Chester Dale has given the Museum Modigliani’s Italian Woman and a painting by Salvador Dali. The Modigliani, like the Vuillard self-portrait, has been on loan for the last two years. It is a peculiarly good example of the beauty this artist achieved with his skillful, though eccentric, use of line.

The large work by Dali, mysterious and provocative, was named by the artist not Crucifixion but Corpus Hypercubus. He chose this cryptic Latin title to express the metaphysical allusions of his composition. It also refers to the artist’s research in the aesthetic treatise on cubic form by the seventeenth-century Spanish architect Juan de Herrera, the designer of the Escorial.
Portrait of the artist with his friend Varocquez, by Édouard Vuillard (1868–1940). Gift of Alex M. Lewyt, 1955
Jean Marc Nattier, by Louis Tocqué (1696–1772). This painting was a study for Tocqué’s portrait of Nattier, his father-in-law, in the Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen. Gift of Colonel and Mrs. Jacques Balsan, 1955
Madame Jean Baptiste Nicolet, by Jean Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805). Madame Nicolet, the celebrated actress, was before her marriage Anne Antoinette Desmoulins. Gift of Colonel and Mrs. Jacques Balsan, 1955
LEFT: The Flowering Orchard, painted by Van Gogh in Arles, 1888. This landscape and the one opposite date from the last years of his life. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ittleson, Jr., Purchase Fund, 1956. RIGHT: Italian Woman, by Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920). Gift of the Chester Dale Collection, 1956.