

TWENTY CONTEMPORARY PAINTERS

FROM THE PHILIPPE DOTREMONT COLLECTION, BRUSSELS



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The true artist is always the explorer. His broad field of exploration is the seemingly illimitable sea of human expression. His islands are always "beyond" until he finds them, discovers them to us—then leaves them for other islands beyond. And a collector who teams up with the truly creative artists of his day, as Georges Salles has suggested in an appreciation of the Philippe Dotremont Collection, becomes also an Argonaut.

Dotremont, as Salles says, does not collect for the sake of amassing works of art, but to freshen his view, "to go forward, to enjoy a risk." And I remember the two impressions of his collection which I carried away from my first visit: the quality of its individual examples and its maker's courage of choice.

These are the characteristics of even such a modest sampling of the Philippe Dotremont Collection as this group of Twenty Contemporary Painters provides. This is why we regard it such a privilege to be able to present it in the Guggenheim Museum. Along these two lines the Dotremont Collection is a model for emulation.

But one must keep in mind that these Twenty Contemporary Painters are merely a sample of the whole. Because we chose to limit the group to living artists we had to forego the chance of including Dotremont's famous Leger, Soldier with Pipe, 1916, his fine Matisse's, early and late, his Dufys, his Kandinskys, his Klees and other "old" masters of the contemporary scene. With a view to opening up as much less familiar territory as possible in a limited showing we have possibly done Philippe Dotremont's breadth of taste an injustice by including none of his numerous examples of American work: his Calder's, his Tobey, his Sam Francis and others. And because the exhibition focussed on painting one misses his handsome Pevsner, Arp, Gonzalez, Jacobsen and their fellows.

In his generosity Philippe Dotremont has not only afforded us a rich opportunity to make the acquaintance of a score of the leading contemporary European artists on their highest level of quality, but he has also shown us how an alert, sensitive and prescient collector approaches the living art of today and the gratification such an approach can provide. We are deeply grateful to him for it.

We are also most appreciative of Madame Paul Fierens' kindness in permitting us to reproduce the late Paul Fierens' characteristically warm and perceptive appreciation of the Philippe Dotremont Collection.

Finally we owe particular thanks to Mrs. Louise Averill Svendsen for her care in the preparation of this catalogue.

James Johnson Sweeney, Director

THE PHILIPPE DOTREMONT COLLECTION

Since a collection is in itself a work of art, it is interesting to exhibit it as such. For the collector this is, moreover, a test, just as every one-man show is a test for an artist. It is a chance to take one's bearings, to get in touch with the public, with the critics. It is also an act of faith, the opposite of a display of self-conceit, or of empty vanity. It is a pause, a halting place in a career. For the man of action with his sights set on a target, or for the dreamer in pursuit of his dream, it is the hour of summing up, of reflection.

I would wager that Mr. Philippe Dotremont, who lends so generously, so frequently, to the organizers of exhibitions, the works he has brought together in his fine Brussels home, is not at all displeased to see the whole of "his work" take its place in the galleries of a museum. He sees it, this "work" of his, this collection, stripped of a certain magic given it by the intimate family surroundings where it is a part of his daily life and of that of his relatives and friends. Does he see it better? More objectively, no doubt, and as if something which had been an integral part of his daily existence were now set apart from him. He has the right, in my opinion, to take pride in his success, to consider it as an original creation in his own likeness.

Every collection reflects not only the tastes but also the temperament and the intelligence of the one who formed it. Among the rivals of Balzac's Cousin Pons, we have the maniac and the crackpot, stingy and extravagant ones, the modest and ostentatious, the timid soul and the enthusiast: a whole gallery, a collection of collectors . . .

But if we had to base our idea of Mr. Philippe Dotremont's character on his preferences and choices, we would have to say that this man, often peremptory in judgment and quick in sensibility—businessman doubling as a genuine amateur, that is to say, as a connoisseur who is a sort of "douser"—offers an exceptional mixture of daring and of wisdom, of fervor and of sang-froid.

He owes to relying on his emotions – I would like to say on his instinct, on his “flair” – but he reasons afterwards, analyzes what he feels, and if he admits that he is incapable of offering an explanation of beauty, he knows how to express clearly what, in the work of art, touches him, what essential quality he discovers in it. He feels pure pleasure, the gratification that Poussin assigned to painting as its aim; but he is not satisfied with momentary enjoyment and giving himself up to his own humor, and he wants a certain logic to preside over the “construction” that his “work of art”, his collection, represents for us.

The collection of Mr. Philippe Dotremont is based in fact on solid foundations. Fauves, cubists, expressionists – at least the masters of these movements which have given to the twentieth century its character – furnish for it the points of departure, which are key positions. Modern art was not born yesterday, but it is not dead today. It is perhaps more alive today than it was yesterday. But everything is interrelated, is linked together, is unified, despite the breaks, the schisms and skirmishes which have less to do with art itself, than with its history. For Mr. Philippe Dotremont the important thing is to be aware of values which, from the moment they cease to be values in terms of “shock,” become an integral part of the treasury of tradition. It is a question of espousing, in a sense, the general movement of artistic evolution, without being carried away by fashion, and without taking part in the polemics between factions. It consists in having confidence in those introducing something new, and in keeping intact the capacity for sympathy, for wonder, but, in the end, above all, for understanding. The collection of Mr. Philippe Dotremont can be taken, so to speak, as a sort of example of quality, a guidepost to criticism.

You will notice that the principal tendencies, which at the present time share the preferences of youth, are represented in this collection by significant and important works. When they are brought together in this collection and confronted with the works of the great forerunners, do they not acquire a more precise meaning and a more obvious importance? Equally instructive are the relationships between artists of divers groups, origins and backgrounds, between Frenchmen, Belgians, between painters


and sculptors. Every work in a collection has its identity, its own life certainly, but is, at the same time, part of a whole, a voice in a chorus, or the timbre of an instrument in a symphony. Chords and dissonances contribute to the harmony of the ensemble, to the development of its effects. The collector is, in a sense, the orchestra conductor.

We are living in an exciting period from many points of view, probably in a great art period, in which many things are being challenged, in which the idea of reality is being modified, in which the inexpressible is taking form, in which what is happening in the mind and in the heart of man becomes all at once more real than what his senses apprehend. Of all this, one is aware on visiting and studying the collection of Mr. Philippe Dotremont. Moreover, this collection invites us to a certain rehabilitation of "eclecticism." But we must agree on the sense of this word! An indiscriminate, a careless eclecticism mixes the good with the mediocre, and results in the worst possible confusion in people's minds. A judicious eclecticism, which is what Mr. Dotremont's is, seeks and finds the good in all the valid forms of art, and sometimes in directions that are completely opposite.

He laughs at formulas, at systems, at dogmatism. His eclecticism is critical and, let us repeat it, creative. It is perhaps not idle to recommend such an attitude, such an open and independent spirit, to the attention of our contemporaries, just now when we see the great battle – which is always inherent in living art – degenerating into partisan strife and into futile quarrels of petty groups.

Finally let us emphasize that we are happy to see the collection of Mr. Philippe Dotremont take its place – temporarily – in a museum, since we know many a museum director who in his heart is envious of "the architect" of a collection of this quality and of this kind and would like to be able to take his own inspiration from such an example.

**Paul Fierens (1895-1957)
Director, the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium**



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Pablo Picasso *WOMAN WITH DOG*. 1953. Oil on wood, 32 x 39 $\frac{2}{5}$ ".



Karel Appel *BARBARIC NUDE*. 1957. Oil on canvas, 76 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 51 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".



Victor de Vasarely *ZSOLT*. 1951-53 Oil on canvas, 47 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".



Joan Miró PAINTING, 1953. Oil on canvas, 78 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 78 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Photograph of Miro's Painting courtesy of Galerie Maeght, Paris, Hervochon, photographer; others by Paul Bijtebier, Brussels

PIERRE ALECHINSKY 1927 —

Born in Brussels. Studied at École Nationale d'Architecture et d'Arts Décoratifs, Brussels. One of founders of COBRA movement, 1948. 1951 to Paris where he now lives. Worked with S. W. Hayter in Atelier 17, 1952. Trip to Japan, 1955.

CLOUDS IN TROUSERS. (HOMAGE TO THE POET MAYAKOVSKY). 1957. Oil on canvas, 38½ x 76¼".

KAREL APPEL 1921 —

Born in Amsterdam. Self-taught. Member of COBRA group, 1948. Murals, City Hall and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 1958. Pittsburgh International, 1952, 1955, 1958; São Paulo Bienal, 1953; Venice Biennale, 1954. Since 1950 has lived in Paris.

BARBARIC NUDE. 1957. Oil on canvas, 76¼ x 51½".

JEAN BAZAINE 1904 —

Born in Paris. Studied literature and sculpture before turning to painting in 1924. Has designed theater sets and costumes; stained glass and mosaics, notably a large mosaic decoration, 1958, for UNESCO Headquarters, Paris. Lives in Paris.

DIVER. 1949. Oil on canvas, 57½ x 45".

GASTON BERTRAND 1910 —

Born in Wonck, Belgium. 1938 visited Paris. 1942 first one-man exhibition, Brussels. Represented in Venice Biennale, 1948, 1956; São Paulo Bienal, 1951, 1953; Pittsburgh International, 1952, 1955. Teaches at Academy of Fine Arts, Brussels.

COMPOSITION FOR A WALL. 1952. Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 59".

ALBERTO BURRI 1915 —

Born in Perugia, Italy. A surgeon by profession, gave up medicine for painting after having been a prisoner of war in Texas. Included in Venice Biennale, 1952, 1956, 1958; Pittsburgh International, 1955, 1958 (third prize); candidate, Guggenheim International Award, 1958. Lives in Rome.

SACKING AND RED. 1954. Mixed media collage on canvas, 59 x 98 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

GIUSEPPE CAPOGROSSI 1906 —

Roman by origin, lived in Paris 1927-33. First one-man exhibition, 1928. Has traveled extensively in Europe. Represented in Venice Biennale, 1950, 1952, 1954; São Paulo Bienal, 1955; Pittsburgh International, 1958; candidate, Guggenheim International Award, 1958. Lives in Rome.

SURFACE N. 137. 1955. Oil on canvas, 76 $\frac{4}{5}$ x 63".

JEAN FAUTRIER 1898 —

Born in Paris. 1912 studied painting in London; wounded in World War I. First exhibition in Paris, 1923. 1935-39 lived in Switzerland, later settled in Chatenay-Malabry (near Paris). Represented in Pittsburgh International, 1958.

"CANT GIVE YOU ANYTHING ELSE BUT LOVE." 1957. Oil on paper, 38½ x 51⅙".

RENÉ GUIETTE 1893 —

Born in Antwerp where he resides. Has taught at École des Métiers d'Art, Antwerp, and at École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture, Brussels. Exhibitions: Venice Biennale, 1954; São Paulo Bienal, 1955; Pittsburgh International, 1955, 1958.

BIRD CATCHER. 1958. Oil on canvas, 45⅙ x 31½".

HANS HARTUNG 1904 —

Born in Leipzig, Germany. 1924-28 studied at the Academies of Fine Arts of Leipzig, Dresden and Munich. First abstract works 1923. 1935 settled in Paris; became French citizen, 1946. Participated in Venice Biennale, 1952, 1954; São Paulo Bienal, 1955; Pittsburgh International, 1955, 1958.

T. 52-44. 1952. Oil on canvas, 38½ x 51⅙".

AUGUSTE HERBIN 1882 —

Born in Quiévy, France. Moved to Paris, 1903. In 1909 became associated with the cubists. One of founders of Salon des Surindépendants, 1929, and of the periodical Abstraction-Création, 1932. Represented in São Paulo Bienal, 1953; Pittsburgh International, 1958.

"NO." 1951. Oil on canvas, 51 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

ALFRED MANESSIER 1911 —

Born in Saint-Ouen (Somme), France. 1931 Paris, where he studied architecture. 1935 worked with Bissière with whom he later exhibited. Represented in São Paulo Bienal, 1953 (first painting prize); Pittsburgh International, 1955 (first prize), 1958. Lives in Paris.

IN THE MEADOW. 1954. Oil on canvas, 45 x 63 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

GEORGES MATHIEU 1921 —

Born in Boulogne-sur-mer, France. Licence ès lettres; studies in law and philosophy. First paintings, 1942. First one-man show, Paris, 1949. Has traveled extensively and exhibited widely in Europe and this country; Pittsburgh International, 1958. Lives in Paris.

BLANCHE D'ESCAUDOEUVRES. 1957. Oil on canvas, 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 76 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

JOAN MIRÓ 1893 —

Born in Mantraig (Barcelona). First exhibit in Barcelona 1918. 1919 to Paris. 1922 included in International Dada Exhibition; 1925 in first surrealist group exhibition. Winner, Guggenheim International Award, 1958. Lives in Palma, Majorca.

PAINTING. 1953. Oil on canvas, 78 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 78 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

PABLO PICASSO 1881 —

Born in Malaga, Spain. 1895 Barcelona. 1900-01 trips to Madrid and Paris. 1904 settled in Paris. 1907 met Braque with whom he developed cubism. 1917-21 stage sets for Diaghilev ballet. 1937 'Guernica.' 1939-40 Royan, near Bordeaux. Since 1946 has lived in the south of France.

WOMAN WITH DOG. 1953. Oil on wood, 32 x 39 $\frac{2}{8}$ ".

SERGE POLIAKOFF 1906 —

Born in Moscow; left Russia, 1919; settled in Paris, 1923. Studied painting in Paris; 1935-37 at Slade School, London. 1938 met Delaunay, Kandinsky. Exhibited at Salon des Indépendants, 1938-45; Salon de Mai, 1946-53; São Paulo Bienal, 1955; Pittsburgh International, 1955, 1958.

ABSTRACT CANVAS — RED COMPOSITION. 1953. Oil on canvas, 51 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

PIERRE SOULAGES 1919 —

Born in Rodez, France; settled in Paris, 1946. Self-taught. Since 1947 has shown extensively in Europe, Japan, South America, and United States. Stage sets for ballet and theater, including Jouvet's production, 1951, of Graham Greene's The Power and the Glory. Winner of Windsor Award, 1957.

PAINTING. March 14, 1955. Oil on canvas, 76½ x 47¾".

PIERRE TAL COAT 1905 —

Born in Clohars-Carnoët (Finistère), Brittany; settled in Paris, 1925. 1936 winner of Prix Paul Guillaume. Studied sculpture; designed models for pottery industry in Quimper. Represented in Venice Biennale, 1956; Pittsburgh International, 1952, 1955, 1958.

PASSAGE AT BROUX. 1954. Oil on canvas, 38½ x 51½".

ANTONI TÀPIES 1923 —

Born in Barcelona where he now lives. 1946 abandoned study of law for painting. 1948 founded "Dau al set" group, Barcelona. 1950 to Paris on French government scholarship. Represented in São Paulo Bienal, 1953, 1957; Venice Biennale, 1956, 1958; Pittsburgh International, 1958 (first painting prize).

PAINTING. 1955. Oil on canvas, 76½ x 67".

RAOUL UEAC 1910 —

Born in Malmédy, Belgium. 1929 Paris. 1936-39 exhibited with the surrealists and collaborated on periodical Minotaure. Participated in Pittsburgh International, 1952 (fourth prize), 1955, 1958 (juror); São Paulo Bienal, 1951, 1957. Lives in Paris.

PICTURE WITH BLACK DOTS. 1954. Oil on canvas, 51 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

VICTOR DE VASARELY 1908 —

Born in Pécs, Hungary. 1927 student of medicine; later studied design under Moholy-Nagy, Budapest. 1930, Paris. Salon de Mai, 1953, 1957, 1958; International Exposition, Brussels, 1958. Lives in Arcueil (Seine), France.

ZSOLT. 1951-53. Oil on canvas, 47 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. 7 East 72nd Street, New York 21, N. Y.