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The Museum of Modern Art

IMPORTANT COLLECTION OF WORK BY ODILON REDON ACQUIRED BY THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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Mr. Lowry said, "This outstanding group of works complements the Museum's existing Redon holdings to create the most significant body of the artist's work outside France. We are grateful to the Woodner family for their generosity."

The wide array of oil paintings in the Woodner gift includes early studies from nature; still-lives of flowers; important mythological images, as in *The Birth of Venus* (c.1912) and

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and the charcoal *The Eye Like A Strange Balloon Mounts Toward Infinity* (1882).

The Woodner gift expands the Museum's collection of Redon's drawings to include at least one example of every thematic aspect of his oeuvre. The 40 drawings, in a diverse range of media, include precise pencil drawings such as *Trees* (n.d.), pen and ink studies such as *Diana* (c. 1910), fanciful watercolors including *Fight of the Centaurs* (n.d.), and rare pastels such as *The Boat* (1902). Most significantly, the group includes ten of Redon's renowned "Noirs" works, the mysterious charcoal diffusions which explore the interior realm, exemplified by *Vision: Berenice's Teeth* (c. 1880–85). This remarkable collection of drawings, including both sketches and finished works, through its depth and breadth of theme and technique, provides a comprehensive survey of Redon's universe of the imagination.

MoMA is currently the largest repository of Redon's prints among New York institutions; its collection encompasses a total of 108 Redon works—four illustrated books, 64 individual prints, and three portfolios comprising 40 individual prints. With this gift, the Museum will become a major resource for scholars and the public and one of the most in-depth collections of Redon's printed work in the country.

The gift will add 55 printed works—nine illustrated books, 20 individual prints, and three portfolios comprising 26 individual prints—including important works such as *Closed Eyes* of 1890, a silent figure whose image recurs throughout Redon's work as a sleeper, a dreamer, and one who receives visions. Variant impressions of the artist's prints, reflecting experimentation with different techniques and papers, comprise a notable component of the gift, and offer interesting points of comparison with works already in MoMA's collection.

For example, *The Haunting*, an 1893 lithograph already in the collection, is augmented by a rare proof before letters, one of only two known in existence. In addition, MoMA will now

own 12 of the 13 books by Symbolist writers to which Redon contributed prints, plus the separate frontispiece for the thirteenth.

Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, says, "This extraordinary body of work resonates with the Museum's collection in numerous ways: Redon's art has often been seen as a bridge between the Romantics such as Delacroix and Goya, and the mysticism-tinged pursuits of Symbolists such as Gauguin. At times, the intensity of color in his work can evoke the worlds of Bonnard and Matisse. And his vision continues to reverberate through the twentieth century, finding favor among the Surrealists, and attracting contemporary artists, such as Jasper Johns."

Redon first achieved fame as a draftsman and a printmaker; in later life, he turned to luminously colored pastels and oils. Unlike the light-soaked world depicted by his Impressionist contemporaries, Redon created a shadowy realm, peopled by hybrid "monsters" or disembodied heads, adrift in dream spaces. His imagery is filled with references to mythology, religion, and literature, yet his work is nonetheless hauntingly personal, and frequently reflects the pervasive melancholy the artist associated with an unhappy childhood spent in the bleak, misty plains north of Bordeaux.

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