

FÉNÉON AT *LA REVUE BLANCHE*

Following his acquittal during the famous Trial of the Thirty, Fénéon became editor in chief of *La Revue blanche* (The white review). He worked there from 1894 until the publication folded in 1903, during which time he helped establish it as the leading avant-garde journal of its day. Fénéon's anarchist politics were not a liability at the progressive magazine, and he published social criticism alongside the latest in art and literature by a range of creative luminaries, including Pierre Bonnard, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Félix Vallotton. In the remarkable portrait at left, Vallotton paid homage to Fénéon's late-night, behind-the-scenes dedication. The editor is shown hunched over his desk, illuminated by the glow of an electric lamp.

FÉNÉON AND MATISSE

In 1907, Fénéon convinced Matisse—then a little-known artist—to sign an exclusive contract with Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, providing him financial stability for the first time in his career. Matisse would remain with the gallery for nearly twenty years. Perhaps the most important of the many sales and exhibitions Fénéon organized for the artist was his first retrospective in 1910; three of the works seen here were among the ninety-one included. During the early years of their relationship, Fénéon purchased at least eight paintings by Matisse for his personal collection, one of which, *Interior with a Young Girl (Girl Reading)*, hangs nearby.

FÉNÉON AND SEURAT

Of all the artists Fénéon championed, his greatest passion was for Georges-Pierre Seurat. Fénéon discovered Seurat's work in 1884, and he soon began promoting it through his art criticism. After the artist died, at the age of thirty-one, in 1891, Fénéon helped to inventory the hundreds of works in Seurat's studio. His meticulous notes laid the foundation for the first comprehensive Seurat catalogues—standard references still used today. As a dealer and collector, Fénéon also organized many exhibitions, sales, and bequests that helped secure the artist's legacy as a pioneer of modern art. At one time or another, Fénéon owned at least fifty paintings and 180 drawings by Seurat, a number of which are shown here.

FÉNÉON'S COLLECTION

“I aspire only to silence,” Fénéon once said. He realized this aim toward the end of his life in the ultimate act of self-erasure: rather than bequeathing his art collection to a French museum, he decided to disperse it through a series of auctions. The first took place in December 1941, when he needed funds for cancer-related hospital bills. Following his death in 1944, and that of his wife Fanny in 1946, more than eight hundred remaining works were sold in four record-setting sales: three for his collection of art from Europe, and one for his collection of objects and sculptures from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas.

THE ITALIAN FUTURIST EXHIBITION OF 1912

The most sensational of the myriad exhibitions that Fénéon organized at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune was “The Italian Futurist Painters” in February 1912. Launched three years earlier by the poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the Futurist movement comprised artists Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Gino Severini, and Giacomo Balla. Their paintings combined the color principles of the Neo-Impressionists and the fractured forms of the rivaling Cubists with their own distinctive subject matter: revolutionary politics and the speed and dynamism of modern experience. While the exhibition received mostly negative reviews, partly in response to the artists’ bombastic rhetoric, it drew huge crowds and catapulted the Futurists into the European avant-garde.