

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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INFLUENTIAL WORKS BY JEAN DUBUFFET TO BE INSTALLED

AS PART OF NATIONAL GALLERY PERMANENT COLLECTION ON SEPTEMBER 17;

SELECTED FROM RECENT STEPHEN HAHN FAMILY GIFT

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Significant work by French artist Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), who inspired a new direction in twentieth-century art, will be added to the National Gallery of Art's permanent collection in the upper level galleries of the East Building on September 17, 1995. The Dubuffet installation represents a partial and promised gift to the Gallery from the Stephen Hahn Family.

The Stephen Hahn Family Collection, consisting of twenty-one oil paintings, twelve works on paper, and two sculptures produced by Dubuffet from 1943 to 1962, includes some of the artist's most groundbreaking work. Dubuffet's *l'art brut* (raw art) is composed of coarse mixtures of oil paint with sand, ashes, and other debris, and his images were influenced by examples of primitive art, such as children's drawings and urban graffiti.

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"Dubuffet's artistic philosophy and its evocation in his work have had continuing impact on the art of this century," said Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art.

"His new way of viewing and representing the world caused outrage and debate, but ultimately resulted in an expanded vocabulary for creating art. Through the generosity of the Stephen Hahn family, many of Dubuffet's finest works now will be on public view."

Included in the installation is Grande traite solitaire (1943), a major example of Dubuffet's work just prior to his development of a dark, more primitive style. Garish colors are thickly applied to the image of a milkmaid and a cow, which fills the canvas. The figures have the proportions and comic ungainliness of marionettes. The work is at once childlike in its denial of modeling and perspective, and utterly commanding in its monumental impact. Dubuffet would return to the subject of the cow, an easy target for his satirical wit, during the 1950s, in pictures such as Vache la belle allègre, also in the Hahn collection.

Corps de dame jaspé (1950) is one of Dubuffet's renowned series of deliberately crude, distorted images of the female nude. He said of the series, "It pleases me...to juxtapose brutally, in these feminine bodies, the extremely general and the extremely particular, the metaphysical and the grotesquely

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trivial. In my view, the one is considerably reinforced by the presence of the other."

In Façades d'immeubles (1946), the artist depicts the city in a graffiti-like figurative style that he adapted from the art of the street itself. The work anticipates the series of "Paris Cirque" street scenes of the early 1960s, including L'Arnaque, in which stick-figure inhabitants ignore both each other and the gaudy signs surrounding them.

Among the other works on view will be Bertelé bouquet fleuri - Portrait de parade (1947), an imposing example of Dubuffet's grotesque portraits of artists and writers in his circle.

In all of these works, Dubuffet sought to abandon the values of modern society to gain access to primal experience. This largely self-taught artist, who twice gave up painting in his frustration over developing a personal style, eventually created a tactile, visceral approach that bypassed preconceptions of beauty and conventional expectations about what art should be.

Other works by Dubuffet in the National Gallery's permanent collection are a painting, La dame au pompon (1946); a sculpture, Site à l'homme assis (1969-1984); and 85 prints, as well as a portfolio and bound volume.

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