

Miserere
Rouault

AUCKLAND CITY

ART GALLERY

JULY NINETEEN FIFTY-SEVEN

ROUAULT produced this series first in drawings in indian ink between 1914 and 1918. The artist then, at Ambroise Vollard's request, produced the plates with a great deal of care, sometimes making twelve to fifteen states. The plates were completed in 1927, but not published until 1947. Rouault looks upon the *Miserere* as a significant opus in his art for the plates are not only superb as art, but constitute one of the major humanist statements of the twentieth century.

Miserere

- 1 'Have mercy on me, O God, after thy great goodness'.
- 2 Jesus reviled. . . .
- 3 eternally scourged. . . .
- 4 takes refuge in your heart, poor vagabond.
- 5 Lonely sojourner in this life of pitfalls and malice.
- 6 Are we not in chains?
- 7 believing ourselves kings.
- 8 Who does not wear a mask?
- 9 Sometimes the way is beautiful. . . .
- 10 in the old quarter of Long Suffering.

- 11 To-morrow will be fair, -said the ship-wrecked.
- 12 The difficult task of living. . . .
- 13 to love would be so sweet.
- 14 So-called good-time girl.
- 15 In the mouth that was sweet, the taste of gall.
- 16 The Society lady fancies she has a reserved seat in Heaven.
- 17 Emancipated woman, who has lost her bearings.
- 18 The prisoner is led away. . . .
- 19 his counsel, in hollow phrases, proclaims his total indifference. . . .
- 20 beneath a forgotten crucifix.
- 21 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth'.
- 22 In so many different domains, the noble vocation of sowing in hostile land.
- 23 Street of the Lonely.
- 24 Winter, scourge of the earth.
- 25 Jean-Francois never sings alleluia. . . .
- 26 in the land of thirst and terror.
- 27 'Mortality hath her tears. . . .'
- 28 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall live'.
- 29 Sing Matins, a new day is born.
- 30 'We . . . were baptized in his death'.
- 31 'Love ye one another'.
- 32 Lord, it is thou, I know thee.
- 33 and Veronica is still among us with her veil of compassion. . . .
- 34 Even the ruins have perished.
- 35 'Jesus will be in agony, even to the end of the world. . . .'
- 36 This will be the last time, father!
- 37 'Man is a wolf to man'.
- 38 The Chinese invented gunpowder, they say, and made us a gift of it.

- 39 We are mad.
40 Face to face.
41 Portents.
42 'Wars, dread of mothers'.
43 'We are doomed to death, we and all that is ours'.
44 My sweet land, where are thou?
45 Death took him as he rose from his bed of nettles.
46 The just, like sandalwood, perfume the axe that strikes them.
47 'Out of the depths (have I cried unto thee, O Lord)'.
48 In the winepress, the grapes were crushed.
49 In a noble heart pride reigneth not.
50 'Tooth and nail'.
51 Far from the smile of Rheims.²
52 The law is the law, hard though it be.
53 Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows.
54 'Onward, the dead!'³
55 Sometimes the blind comfort those that see.
56 In these dark times of vainglory and unbelief, Our Lady keeps her Eternal vigil.
57 'Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross'.
58 'By his bruises are we healed'.

NOTES

1 This refers to the French law of December, 1905, ordering the removal of religious images from Courts of Justice.

2 The reference is to the famous 'Smiling Angel' statue over the left door of the west portal of Rheims Cathedral, fortunately not destroyed by the German bombardment.

3 This was the battle-cry of a French soldier, used to rally his comrades during the battle of Verdun in 1916.