

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY

QUARTERLY

Number Thirty 1964

JEAN LURCAT



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EDITORIAL

Attendance Figures: Attendance figures are often considered with mixed feelings. They give no indication of the quality of the subject viewed, nor that of the viewers. Often, two exhibitions of equal quality will draw totally different attendances. With these qualifications in mind, it is still very gratifying to note that for the first six months of this year, the attendance was 58,748, while for the same months of 1964 it was 35,565 — an increase of 23,183. No outsize exhibition attendance is the cause of this increase, but an overall improvement in daily attendances. This encouraging swelling of numbers reflects the general blossoming of the visual arts in Auckland over the last two years — in the auctions, the dealer galleries, and the sales experienced by artists.

JEAN LURCAT (b 1882—) French

LE VENETIAN (cover)

Aubusson tapestry 84 x 94 inches

Signed — *Lurcat* (woven) lower right, *Jean Lurcat* (label) verso

Presented by the New Zealand Government, 1964, from the French Cultural Fund.

Lurcat first became interested in tapestry in 1915. It is to him that we are indebted for the revival of twentieth-century French tapestry-making.

Lurcat studied painting in Nancy in the studio of Victor Prouve, coming to Paris in 1918 to study under Bernard Naudin. Mobilised in 1914 he wrote anti-militaristic poems and articles, and was sent to prison. After the war he travelled in Spain and the Sahara Desert. His paintings reflect these countries: 'large landscapes with a feeling for space and

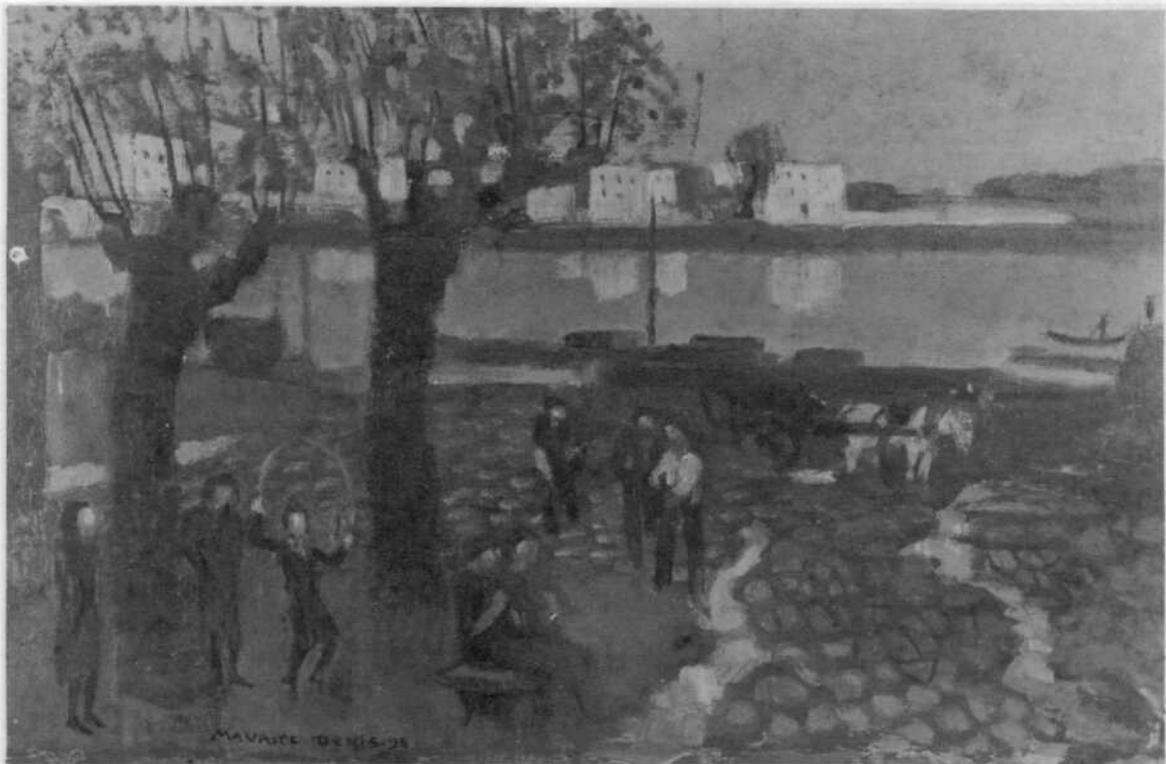
dreams'. Surrealism had a considerable influence on his work. He has never given up painting: nevertheless his most significant and important work is in the field of tapestry.

'The acceptance of the authority of the painter', that is, the acceptance of the easel painting as the pre-eminently acceptable (and saleable) work of art, coupled with the refusal of too many tapestry — works' directors to believe in the worth of a contemporary style, had, by 1937, sadly reduced the ranks of the Aubusson weavers, making the situation of this local industry almost disastrous.

In 1939, Lurcat, Dubreuil and Gromaire were invited to Aubusson to work with the local weavers, to create and supervise a large series of tapestries. Our *Le Venetien*, probably made about 1950, is an example of the close collaboration between painter and weaver, and, along with many other works, justifies the faith of Francois Tabard, director of the firm who first arranged this collaboration.

On the subject of our tapestry, a recurring one in Lurcat's work, he has written: 'On one of those resplendent mornings in the Lot region I saw in the meadow next to my studio, a cock The bird was overwhelmingly proud. The sun enveloped him, polished up his breast, made it shine, in fact made him a sort of red God, a pharos, a phaelic symbol an astrahackle An image presents itself — a King! Versailles — the great monarch — the Roi Soliel! Hadn't I here the new poetic substance for a tapestry? I had it there in my hand, under my skin and in the germ! All that had to be done after that was to translate it into plastic form.'

C.McC.



MAURICE DENIS 1870-1943 French
LE PORT DE PECQ (1896)

Oil on canvas 121 x 181 inches

Signed and dated *Maurice Denis* — 96

Maurice Denis was born at Granville and, after a brilliant career at the Lycee Condorcet, studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts for a short time. He was attending classes at the 'Academie Julian' in 1888 when Paul Serusier returned from a stay in Brittany, where, in company with his fellow art student Emile Bernard, he had been painting with Gauguin. The revolutionary ideas developed here by this group—the doctrines of 'synthesism' and 'symbolism' in painting—were communicated to Denis and his friends, who were fired by the new revelation.

In 1892 therefore, a circle of painters was founded which called itself by the private name of the *Nabis* (the 'prophets', the 'inspired'), and were to be known variously as *Cloissonists*, *Synthetists* and *Symbolists* &c.: Denis rapidly

became the spiritual leader of the group, which also included Bonnard and Vuillard.

Denis was a prolific artist — as painter, muralist, and book illustrator (notably of Verlaine's *Sagesse*) —and, with his intellectual tastes, a well-informed, intelligent writer of criticism. His widely repeated dictum: 'one must recall that a picture, before it becomes a war horse, a naked woman, or some anecdote is essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order', is indicative of an earlier, and shared, approach — though it cannot be said that the subject plays an altogether subordinate part in Denis' work: he was never an abstract painter in any radical sense.

Le Port de Pecq was painted in 1896, the year after a trip to Florence, where Denis' study of the Italian primitive masters had a classicizing influence on his work. He was later to renounce the Art Nouveau, disgusted with the mass reproduction and vulgarization of its best ideas.

R.D.F.



OSSIP ZADKINE b 189 French
WOMAN WITH A GUITAR

Etching 66/90 21 x 15 inches
Inscribed *O Zadkine*

Like most of his contemporaries, Zadkine worked first in the rigorous discipline of Cubism — and elements of the style still remain in his work. However, a formula that so encourages static elements could not long attract an artist as poetic and lyrical as Zadkine.

Zadkine's is a sculpture of movement, and although the time element of Cubism is essential to it, it demanded a far more organic treatment of light and a freer interpenetration of form and plane.

The formal qualities of the sculptor's style have been carried over into this etching — the theme itself, the musician, is central to his work. It has been said that with the theme, Orpheus, Zadkine has approached closest to his essential being; if music is composed of 'sonorously moving forms', then this sculptor's art truly 'aspires to the condition of music'.

H.K.

ALEXANDRE ARCHIPENKO 1887-1964 French
GONDOLIER (1914)

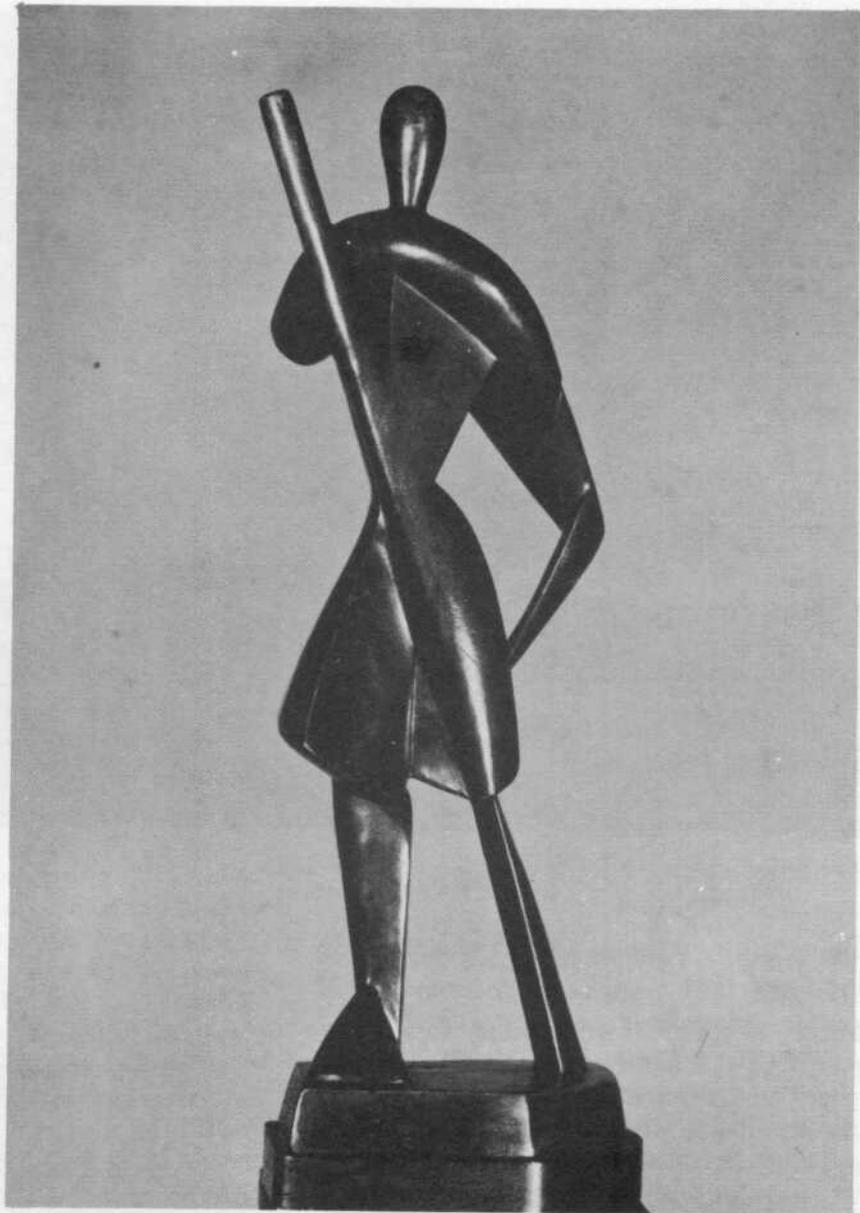
Bronze 33 inches

Signed *Archipenko* 1914 Ed. 4/12

The Mackelvie Collection (1963)

This work is a reduced replica of the large figure (h.66 inches; Perls Gallery, New York). When Archipenko made his work he was closely associated with Brancusi and Duchamp-Villon in finding a more formal treatment of sculpture. Both he and Duchamp-Villon were influenced by the Futurists; and in fact, Boccioni held an exhibition in Paris in June 1913. Golding (*Cubism*, Faber & Faber, 1959, p.170) makes the point that Duchamp-Villon's *The Horse* (1914) (Museum of "Modern Art, N.Y.) showed strong Futurist characteristics. We can therefore, both in subject and style, link the *Gondolier* with this same year. The articulation and forms of both *Gondolier* and Duchamp-Villon's *Seated Woman* are strongly reminiscent of an artist's lay figure, which perhaps suggested to both artists a link between human and machine — anticipating the tailor's dummy motif of the Italian Metaphysical painters.

Archipenko's formal declaration (Gils *Bias* 14 December 1912) of dissociation from the Cubists and their principles was followed in the next year by his signing Guillaume Apollinaire's *L'Antitradition Futuriste, Manifeste-Synthese* (20 June 1913). And in the next year he exhibited in the first exhibition of Futurist art in the Galleria Sprovieri, Rome (April-May 1914). Also, in a letter from Carra to Sprovieri (Paris 29-3-1914: Gambillo & Fiori, *Archivi del Futurismo*, 1958, I, p.322). Archipenko had expressed his willingness to have an exhibition at the Sprovieri Gallery. This did not take place, and his first large exhibition in Italy was at the Biennale, Venice, in 1920. However, the connection between Archipenko and Futurism was a strong one, despite Boccioni's opinion: 'The sculpture of Archipenko has fallen into archaism and barbarism' (letter to Vico Baer, Paris, 21. June, 1913, *Archivi del Futurismo* II p.48). This may have been prompted by artistic testiness since Archipenko was in no



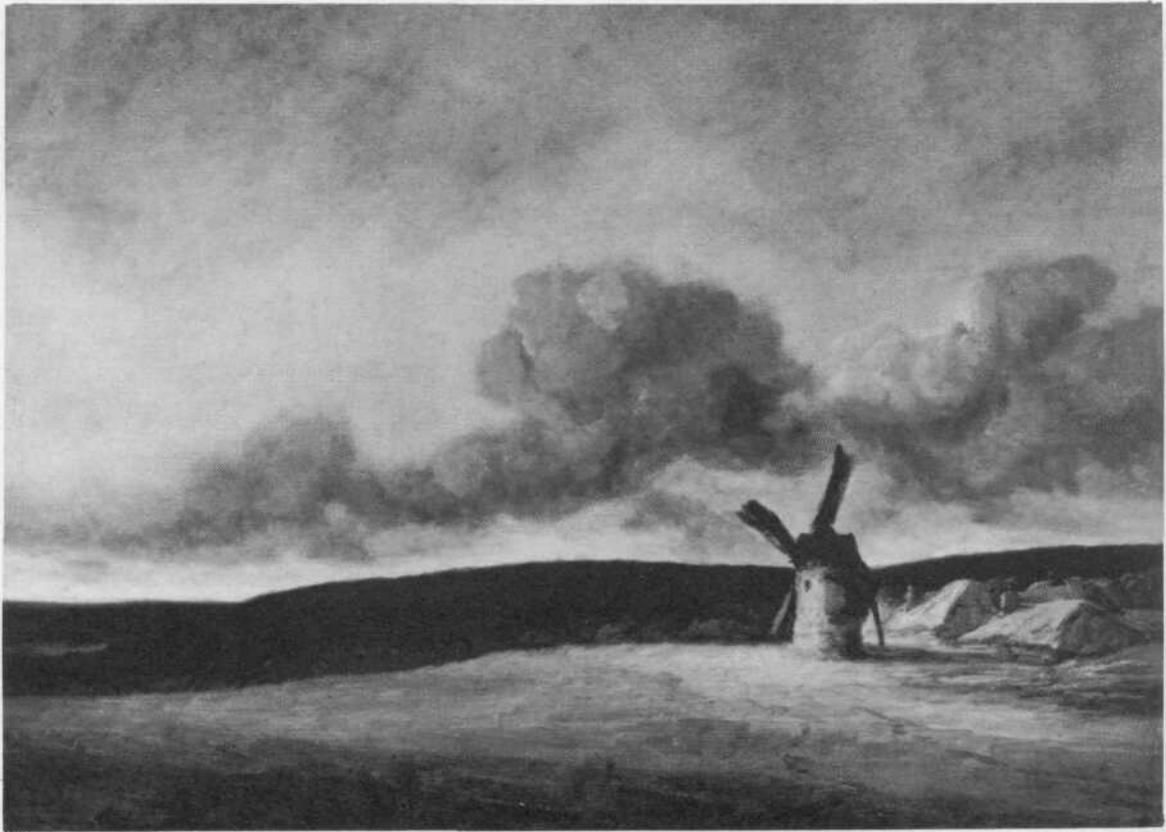
doubt himself that he was aiming at '... extreme simplification of form' (Archipenko, *Tekhne*. N.Y. 1960, p.49), which was what Boccioni required.

As far as Archipenko's own art is concerned, it would appear that *Medrano I* 1912 shows the first use of a lay figure articulation. However, it does seem that the successful all round

movement of the *Gondolier*, through the recession and angling of planes, owes something to his study of Boccioni's sculpture, particularly *The Development of a Bottle in Space*.

With Archipenko's *Torso* of 1909, and *Gondolier*, the Gallery now owns two important works in the history of Twentieth Century sculpture.

P.A.T.



GEORGES MICHEL (1763-1843) **French**

WINDMILL IN A LANDSCAPE

Oil on paper on canvas 13 x 18 inches

Purchased 1964

Michel, whose life is still obscure, worked constantly on this motif of a windmill and landscape: a characteristic combination in the country around Montmartre and St Denis. His paintings are therefore difficult to date, since his style changes little. His main influences, at a time when the classical landscape was still in vogue, were the Dutch seventeenth century painters, especially Ruisdael. In this way, he is linked with the English landscape painters of the same period, like Constable, who had turned away from the landscapes of Claude to those of the Netherlands. Michel therefore is a precursor of the Barbizon School, whose main stimuli were Constable and the Dutchmen. As his best period is between 1810 and

1830, it is not surprising that he had little success in his own time.

Michel was never well off. Born of a peasant family, he received some help in his painting from Taunay and Bruandet. He appears to have led an itinerant kind of life, painting and doing a little dealing in Dutch paintings. He was twice married, in 1779 and in 1827, but neither marriage was very happy. He exhibited at the Salon from 1779 to 1814. These are the bare facts of his life. But his painting reveals a dedication to landscape, and one particular kind. His handling of paint has that felicity and sensitivity which we associate with masters in the latter half of the century, and yet at the same time it is a traditional felicity of French painting.

With the addition of this work, our collection of French painting, though still small, begins to acquire a cohesion of expression.

P.A.T.

EMILIO GRECO b 1913 Italian
STUDY OF A WRESTLER (1960)

Ink drawing

Inscribed *Emilio Greco, Roma, Novembre 1960*

Purchased 1964

HENRI GAUDIER-BRZESKA 1891-1915 British
WOMAN'S HEAD

Pencil 9 1/2 x 14 inches

Purchased 1955

Although at first sight drawing and sculpture might seem the most disparate of mediums, they share a common concern in the definition of volumes. For this reason it is not surprising that sculptors are generally also extremely competent draughtsmen, and capable of the production of drawings which are works of art in their own right.

Emilio Greco and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska are not exceptions to this, and it is quite correct to consider their drawing as a parallel activity to their sculpture, rather than a preparation for it. It is true, particularly of Greco, that both activities meet in a common subject

matter, but the *Wrestler* must be considered as a complete work in itself, and, in fact, post-dates the sculpture (*Quarterly 26*) by some twelve years.

The English painter and critic Patrick Heron has suggested two useful sculptural categories: Fruit, and Thorn. Although Heron concludes that a combination of both is desirable, the former label suggests a tradition of sculptural richness and generosity, to which both Brzeska and Greco would seem to belong. It is, perhaps, a Mediterranean tradition; but whatever its geographical origins it is a tradition firmly based in a belief in the vitality of organic forms and structures. Both these drawings are full of life and energy.

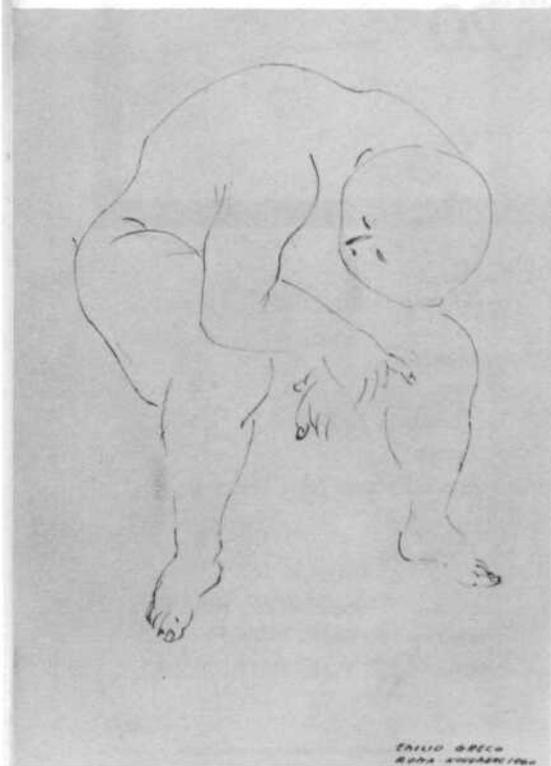
Greco's is the more sophisticated style, and even in this far from elegant subject his line is unerringly elegant. One cannot question the elegance of Gaudier — Brzeska's *Portrait of a Woman*, but his vision is obviously more expressive and direct than Greco's.

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's early death deprived the modern movement of one of its most promising sculptors, and in relation to this particular work and the Gallery's collection of modern sculpture, Brzeska's definition of the modern Vortex is worth some attention.

'And WE the moderns . . . through the incessant struggle in the complex city, have likewise to spend much energy.

'The knowledge of our civilization embraces the world, we have mastered the elements.

'Will and consciousness are our VORTEX'.



exhibition calendar

Master Prints from
THE ILOTT COLLECTION

August 20

Paintings by
NAIRN AND FRISTROM
from August 20

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