MAURICE STERNE

FROM FAMOUS TO FORGOTTEN

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Bakker Gallery

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Bakker Gallery presents its first Maurice Sterne exhibition, From Famous to Forgotten. The show will feature works not shown or previously offered for sale since Sterne’s death in 1957. Born in Latvia in 1878, Sterne was the first American artist to be honored with a one-person retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. The 1933 show included 174 of his pieces, two of which, “The Old Mill” and “Burmese Monks,” are included in this exhibition.

Maurice Sterne came to America with his widowed mother in 1889. His artistic interest was sparked while helping a designer in a map-engraving house and continued with study in mechanical drawing at Cooper Union. From 1894 to 1899 Sterne attended the National Academy of Design where he studied anatomy with Thomas Eakins. William Merritt Chase bought one of his paintings in 1902.

After winning the Mooney Traveling Scholarship at the National Academy of Design in 1904, he travelled to Paris where he first met Gertrude Stein’s brother, Leo. They would later meet up again in Italy where Sterne lived in Anticoli-Corriso for much of his life. He traveled throughout Europe continuing his studies of the masters in Germany and Italy and winding up in Greece in 1908 where he first started making sculpture.
Following a trip to Egypt in 1911, Sterne visited India where he did a number of oils and drawings of life in Benares. He was one of the first American artists to work in encaustic, mixing wax into his oil paints. Sterne continued to draw religious rituals and the people of Burma during his four-month stay in Mandalay. Starting in 1912, he spent nearly two years on Bali creating hundreds of drawings of daily life and intimate portraits on any paper he could find. In 1914 Maurice returned to America with these works where an exhibition was held at the Berlin Photographic Company in New York in 1915.

Although Maurice Sterne is perhaps best remembered today for his tumultuous affair and marriage to philanthropist, Mabel Dodge, from 1916 to 1923, he had already achieved considerable success and recognition as an artist. It was the summer of 1915 at the request of Dodge that he joined her in Provincetown. Sterne also followed Dodge to Taos, New Mexico where he painted a portrait of John Evans, Mabel’s son from her first marriage.
An exhibition of 85 his paintings, sketches and drawings were shown at the Art Institute of Chicago and "Maurice Sterne at Bali," an article by Dorothy DeFries, was published in International Studio about his exhibition at the Bourgeois Galleries in New York in 1917. He exhibited at the Boston Art Club in 1919. Sterne was awarded numerous prizes and commissions. His works are included in the permanent collections of many museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tate Gallery and the Whitney and in prominent private art collections around the world.

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