

## "Artists and the Theatre" on exhibit in Mandeville

**February 25, 1982**

"Artists and the Theatre," an exhibit offering a broad chronological survey of the contributions of 28 artists to the theater, will open Saturday, March 20, in the Mandeville Art Gallery at the University of California, San Diego.

Organized by Beatrice L. Kerman of New York's Museum of Modern Art, the exhibit is a selection of highlights from the museum's Theatre Arts collection.

An opening reception will be held at the gallery from 6 to 8 p.m. on Friday, March 19. Admission to the gallery and to all events is free and the public is invited to attend. Gallery hours are noon to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. Free parking is available on weekends. The gallery will be closed Easter Sunday, April 11.

The exhibition includes 60 works on paper ranging in date from Leon Bakst's and Natalie Gontcharova's designs for the Ballets Russes of the second decade of this century to David Hockney's 1980 stage design for the New York Metropolitan Opera Company's production of Francis Poulenc's "Les Mamelles de Tiresias."

In this century in which the impetus toward fusion has played a vital role in the transformation of art, it is not surprising that many of our foremost painters and sculptors have been ardent collaborators in the performing arts.

The exhibition takes, as its starting point, designs for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes productions. Drawing together the greatest composers, choreographers, dancers and artists of his day, Diaghilev effectively transformed ballet into a synthesis of the arts.

The visual splendor of the early Ballets Russes productions is suggested by Leon Bakst's opulent and exotic 1913 costume design for the title role in "The Firebird" and Natalie Gontcharova's elaborate and fanciful stage decor conception, "The City Square" for "Le Coq d'Or" (1914).

Among the many artists who collaborated with Diaghilev are Michael Larionov, represented in the exhibition by his 1915 cubist-influenced costume design for the ballet "Chout" and his 1921 Neo-Primitivist stage decor for the ballet-burlesque "Le Renard;" Robert Delaunay, represented by his 1918 stage decor for Michel Fokine's "Cleopatre;" and Pablo Picasso, represented by "Two Dancers," a pencil study depicting Diaghilev's dancers at rehearsal, later commissioned as the program cover for the company's 1919 London performance of "La Boutique Fantasque."

Documenting the widespread involvement of avant-garde artists in theatrical, cinematographic and ballet production in the 1920s are Sonia Delaunay's inventive costume studies for the Dada evening "Soiree du 'Coeur a Barbe'" performance of Tristan Tzara's play "Le Coeur a Gaz;" Fernand Le/ger's 1922 designs for the Ballet Suedois' experimental productions "Skating Rink" and "La Cre"ation du Monde;" Alexandra Exter's 1924 Constructivist costume design for Yakov Protazanov's science-fiction film "Aelita;" Laszlo/ Moholy-Nagy's 1923 decor design for Walter Hasenclever's play "Menschen;" and Oskar Schlemmer's 1916-1919 schematic costume studies for his "Triadic Ballet" and 1922 designs for the mechanical cabaret, "The Figural Cabinet," performed at the Bauhaus in 1922.

Theatrical designs from the 1930s and 1940s include works by the Neo-Romantic painters Eugene Berman and Pavel Tchelitchew, and Marc Chagall's brilliantly colored watercolors for his and Leonide Massine's "Aleko," produced by the Ballet Theatre in 1942.

Recent designs for the theatre include Jim Dine's drawings for the San Francisco Actors Workshop's 1966 iconoclastic production of William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and 1967 costume design for an unstaged dramatic adaptation of Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray;" David Hockney's designs for the 1966 London production of Alfred Jarry's play "Ubu Roi," and Robert Wilson's decor designs for his and Philip Glass' 1976 opera "Einstein on the Beach."

An important aspect of the contemporary avant-garde theatre has been the "happening" of the late '50s and '60s. In the "happening" artist acts as instigator, conceiver and participant in a multimedia, environmental performance, perhaps the most complete manifestation of the hybrid theatrical event. Illustrating this in "Artists and the Theatre" are Jean Dubuffet's study for his 1972 spectacle "Coucou Bazar: Bal de Phourloupe;" Red Grooms' watercolor drawing for the happening "Shoot the Moon!," filmed by Rudolf Burckhardt, and Jean Tinguely's sketch for "Homage to New York," his mechanical construction which self destructed before an audience in The Museum of Modern Art's garden in 1960.

The "Artists and the Theatre" exhibit will be on display until April 25.

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