





# Still Life

THE OBJECT IN AMERICAN ART 1915-1995

# STILL LIFE

THE OBJECT IN AMERICAN ART, 1915-1995

SELECTIONS FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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With a contribution by William S. Lieberman

The American Federation of Arts

**RIZZOLI**  
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#### EXHIBITION ITINERARY

Marsh Art Gallery  
Richmond, Virginia  
January 3—February 28, 1997

The Arkansas Arts Center  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
March 28—May 23, 1997

Newport Harbor Art Museum  
Newport Beach, California  
June 20—August 15, 1997

Philbrook Museum of Art  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
September 12—November 7, 1997

The Society of the Four Arts  
Palm Beach, Florida  
January 9—February 8, 1998

Salina Art Center  
Salina, Kansas  
March 6—May 3, 1998

Metropolitan Life Foundation is pleased to join The American Federation of Arts and The Metropolitan Museum of Art to bring you *Still Life: The Object in American Art, 1915-1995—Selections from The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue highlight the vitality of the still-life paintings produced in this century. The sixty-six works are drawn from the collections of one of the preeminent museums in the world and present, through a variety of subjects, the different painting styles of over fifty artists. We are delighted to be part of this important project, which celebrates the richness of the American still-life tradition.

*Harry P. Kamen*  
Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer  
Metropolitan Life Insurance Company

"I loved painting in blues in those days," remembered Reginald Pollack when asked about this mostly blue *Interior* from 1958.<sup>1</sup> The work was created during Pollack's twelve-year stay in Paris, from 1948 until 1959. It was only after he got to Paris that he decided to become an artist. He had worked as a studio apprentice for the painter Moses Soyer before World War II, and after the war he kept afloat as a freelance window designer for New York department stores. But in 1948, with support from the G.I. Bill, he settled in Paris to teach himself to paint. There, he encountered the greatest influence on his life as an artist, the sculptor Constantin Brancusi.

Pollack first visited the famous master at his studio at 11 Impasse Ronsin in 1948. He left awed, as well as eager to find his own studio at the Impasse, a collection of five rows of artist's studios in Montparnasse built around the turn of the century. With the exception of Brancusi's large studio, the others were simple rooms with high, skylighted ceilings, but no kitchens, bedrooms, or bathrooms—just a sink with a cold-water tap.<sup>2</sup> In the early 1950s, the studio right next to Brancusi's became empty, and Pollack moved in. It was a ruin; the ceiling had half fallen in and the rotting walls had been painted clay-pot red by its former occupant, the painter Odilon Redon. It took Pollack three months to restore the room and paint it white. "Brancusi was the patriarch of the Impasse," Pollack recalled.

"He inspired instant respect."<sup>3</sup> In fact, Pollack regarded himself as an apprentice to Brancusi, who was then in his late seventies. He often visited the old artist, helping him with odd jobs around the house. From time to time, Brancusi, who himself never accepted invitations, would ask Pollack and his wife over for champagne and biscuits.

*Interior* is one of a series of works that celebrates the light-suffused studio at the Impasse, in which Pollack spent his formative years. Whereas the walls are almost empty—except for two tacked-up pictures—the room is cluttered with stools and chairs, objects that the artist still collects. The loosely brushed composition represents his awkward, yet luminous attempt to construct space through strokes of color. He was attempting to apply the lessons he had learned by looking at the interiors of Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse. SR

1 Reginald Pollack, conversation with author, August 28, 1995.

2 This information on the Impasse Ronsin is taken from an article by Pollack about living next door to Brancusi. See Reginald Pollack, "Shaman and Showman," *Art & Antiques* (May 1988): 94 ff.

3 Pollack, conversation with author.

Works that encompass a multiplicity of subjects and a variety of painting styles represent the ongoing vitality and diversity of the still-life tradition.

Among the artists discussed:

JOE ANDOE

JENNIFER BARTLETT

STUART DAVIS

JIM DINE

JANET FISH

MARSDEN HARTLEY

FRANZ KLINE

YASUO KUNIYOSHI

CATHERINE MURPHY

DONA NELSON

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

SABINA OTT

HORACE PIPPIN

FAIRFIELD PORTER

JAMES ROSENQUIST

DAVID SMITH

RUFINO TAMAYO

MARK TANSEY

ANDY WARHOL

JONATHAN WEINBERG

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