

The MoMA in Berlin

(A Guided Tour by / Eine Ausstellungs-Führung von Dr. Franziska Uhlig,

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Neue Nationalgalerie to the Exhibition „The Museum of Modern Art in Berlin“. My name is Franziska Uhlig. I will be your guide today. First you need headsets. Headsets will be convenient for you, because you won't hear any noises during the tour. It is noisy in the exhibition because due to the many visitors. Headsets make it possible for you to concentrate on the paintings without having to look at me includes to hear me.

I'd like to know how many people are in this group? Who is the leader of the group? I will need your help at the audio-guide-station / signature/. During the time in which we take the headsets, leave any coats and sweaters at the coat-check. It is warm in the gallery and the carrying of clothes on arms is not allowed. Finally turn off all mobile phones.

Now for some information concerning your Headset. Please put on the channel number... and turn it on beside. There you can also regulate the volume. And now we can make sure that all the headsets functions. Can you hear my voice? Who doesn't hear my voice on the headset?

Now some information concerning the guided-tour. The tour takes about 1 h. If at any time you prefer to look at the paintings without the guide, please give your headset to your neighbour or to me. Because we really need all the headsets back for the next group. Thank you very much.

Finally I have to tell you that cameras and to take notes are not allowed. It is also not allowed to take drinks or food in the exhibition rooms.

One more thing: Please let a service man by the stairs have a short look in your bag. It is for all of our safety.

Our next short stop is Downstairs:

Some more information: You will find the bathrooms if you look towards the first exhibition room, they are right. Left you will find the cafeteria and the bookshop.

If you are interested in the history of the Museum of Modern Art you can find a lot of information on this wall. I don't recount so much of this history during the guided tour. My guided tour includes/ emphasizes more questions about seeing in general and seeing pictures in particular.

Finally my guided-tour works according to the maxim: less is more.

(And one more thing: Please, I beg your pardon for my English. My English is an autodidactic English. I grew up in a country, where it wasn't possible to learn and to speak English. I learned Russian. Please believe me, I really do my best / I will do my best. If you don't understand something, please ask me and also correct me. Thank you very much!)

This one-time-opportunity to see masterpieces of the MoMA in Berlin is the result of a very old desire of the founding director of the MoMA – Mister Barr. Mister Barr's favoured architect for the building for the masterpieces from MoMA was Mies van der Rohe. And Mies van der Rohe is the architect of this building, the Neue Nationalgalerie. Therefore, the new director of the MoMA, Mister Elberfield, decided to lend the masterpieces from MoMA for six months to the Nationalgalerie Berlin. The Curators of the MoMA were very happy that their paintings could be displayed in new ways, in new relations which each other, and also in new lights and space situations or positions. Indeed the result of this work of the curators is wonderful.

Now just a few words about the MoMA – the short name for the Museum of Modern Art. The MoMA was founded in 1929. It is one of the first of the American-exhibition-institutions. The collection is not the result of one enthusiastic collector or his financial possibilities, but of the commitment of a lot of members of New York high society. Often the friends and curators of the museum were collectors as well and at the end of their lives they donated their entire collections to the Museum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First we shall look at one of the latest works by Henri Rousseau, named „The Dream“, from 1910. I have a deep love of Henri Rousseau because of his work ethic. He was a worker, he had a big family and he painted only in his spare time and without any academic education in the arts. Rousseau is one of the first of the modern naive painters. He was in touch with practically all-important persons of a lot of art circles in Paris in the late nineteenth century. He was a friend of the composer Eric Satie, of the symbolist poet Stefan Mallarmé, of Picasso, Matisse and other known painters and also of the very important American Family of collectors, the Steins. Because of his social activities Rousseau was involved in many art-discourses /discussions of his time. These discussions concerned questions such as “what is a painting? or “why are paintings useful?”. But Rousseau never decided to change his naïve painting style in favour of cubism or symbolism or neo-impressionism. He always remained loyal to himself. And this is indeed not easy. Just think about, how you would feel, if somebody came to you and told you that you were pursuing something in a different way than the way they were, which is of course better. Exactly this was the normal situation for Rousseau in art and discussion circles.

Now some words about this painting. It is interesting to think about what we see and what we feel when we look at this painting. First Rousseau shows that the woman on the canapé is dreaming. She is dreaming of the opposite of his civilisation. She dreams of the wilderness. The wilderness takes the form of an exotic jungle. In the center of wilderness is painted a primitive man playing a kind of flute. In the eighteenth century, the wilderness or primitive cultures were among the most important of philosophical subjects. The philosophical and scientific community posed questions such as, what does foreign mean? How can we recognise foreign cultures? What is foreign exactly? These are questions from Rousseau’s namesake from the Rousseau of the eighteenth century and from Diderot. And Diderot answered, that we can not recognise the foreign. We recognise only the differences to our own cultures, but not the foreign itself.

Another interesting thing about this painting is that by its techniques it gives the impression of a dream. But when we look attentively, we realise, that Rousseau didn't paint a jungle. He painted only some petals and some leaves of exotic plants – Sansevieria, such kinds of Palms and so on. He didn't paint the jungle like in photography or in a film. He didn't paint an essential copy of the jungle-reality. This difference between what we think to see and what is really depicted suggests how the imagination functions. What we see in fact, are leaves and petals. Our imagination creates the continuous impression of a jungle.

Something else happens while we look at Rousseau's Dream. You don't have the feeling, that there is a landscape. Rather you have the feeling of seeing a metaphorical space. Why? Normally a young naked woman on a canapé is not part of our experiences of walking through gardens, landscapes or jungles. To put such different experiences on one surface produces the feeling of metaphorical space, of fantastic images. At the time of Rousseau, this was a very popular method for symbolist writers or painters to produce Fantasy and Fiction. Questions like these – how does the imagination function, how does fiction function or how does seeing function – are all subjects of classical modernism.

Our next stop is Georges Seurat. He is the founding figure among the founding figures of the classical modernism. His painting technique had a broad reception. A lot of painters copied Seurat's kind of painting, such as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, Georges Braques, Henri Matisse, Kasimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Alexei Jawlensky or Wassily Kandinsky.

At the first glance, Seurat's paintings seem to show the normal view outside of a window, for example you open in the morning or in the evening your window from a hotel on the Atlantic coast. The paintings don't tell so much a story. Seurat prefers to show an objective look of the visible world. On the other hand Seurat was interested in questions of seeing colours. What happens while seeing colours? Such questions are normal for young painters, because they had to organise their perception quite new. Seurat created in the early 1880s a kind of painting similar to seeing colours and

forms. He imitated the process of seeing in his paintings. For imitating the natural light he takes only pigments, which are similar to the colours of the rainbow. He mixed the pigments similarly to the optical mixture. According to Seurat those small one-coloured points are comparable to the colours of light-waves, which touch the nerves in your eyes. Seurat organised pigments in a similar way to colour-photography, in TV or on movie-screens, but at a time, when all of these technologies didn't exist. Seurat painted with something like a mirror between his eyes and his perception. The knowledge from seeing is the mirror. He studied the scientific literature of sensational physiology. This explains why his paintings don't correspond to our normal every-days perception.

Our next stop is Picasso. Picasso also had had a deep love of Seurat, because of Seurat's idea, to divorce what we see. But Picasso was more interested in questions of space than in questions of colour. This I'd like to show you by an early cubist work, the *Bathing woman* from 1908. In this painting Picasso combined different ways of describing space – an Euclidian way of describing space and a modern physics way of describing space. Where we can see this? We see the arms and legs like cylinders, we see these conical breasts, and you see this spherical shape of the abdominal region. Here space is modeled after basic shapes like the spherical, the cylindrical or the conical shape. According Euclid space is the result of an addition of basic shapes. Euclid's way of describing space can not describe the space on the other side of a body. But outside of the body is also space. For the physics around 1900 space is, where energy is. Movement is a kind of energy. Movement needs time and therefore time and movement are criteria of space.

The painting is presenting to you through a kind of telescopic eye. The painting makes it possible for you to see the both parts of the bottom or both parts from the back. You see the face in profile and frontally in three quarter view for example. That means, that you move in your imagination around the figure as you see it.

Once more this painting shows a concept of seeing. The concept stays in opposition to the photographic model of seeing. During the nineteenth

century photography was a very popular model of seeing. Often photography was described as the better eyes. But photography imitates the seeing in particular. The picture of the camera doesn't have a memory. Picasso shows with this kind of telescopic eye, that seeing things is not possible without memory, without knowledge. A picture of the camera doesn't know something from the back. But you know, that things have a back. You know that the same things look out different. You can recognise this best by photos of yourself. Often you don't like yourself shown in such a photo. That's why you compare the photo of yourself with your visual impression of yourself. That is possible because of your memory. They accumulate your visual impression produced through the time. This example shows that memory is an important part of seeing. Picassos painting insists on memory as part of seeing. Therefore Picasso didn't organise the painted shapes according to the photographic model of seeing, this you see the back parts of the bathing woman.

The memory as part of seeing is also the subject of our next stop: Claude Monet.

In art history the nineteenth century is characterised as an era of innovation: in the production of the artist's materials, in the usage of these materials and in the modern styles of painting they generated. New kinds of painting techniques are an answer to the feeling from the „new age“. A lot of painters generated new kinds of painting-techniques, such as George Seurat, Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh or even Claude Monet. The impressionists such as Monet transfer the knowledge from the innocence eye in painting technique, in the usage of materials. The notion of innocence eye means on eye, that doesn't know anything about body, that doesn't know any other sensational information par example from the hands or from the perception. Some words of Monet explain the notion of the innocence eye. Monet saw to his scholars, that they have to observe parts of nature so long as they forget what nature is, so long as they see only colour dots and not lines of bodies for instance.

But I will tell you other things about this painting: At the time, when he was painting this picture, Monet was almost blind. This very intensive description

of what happens to water is a memory-picture. We know this because Monet had had three eye-operations without results. Some persons believe, that Monet departs from seeing while painting the series of sea roses pictures. The intensity of such memory is clear, if you think of a photo of such a scene. The photo doesn't accumulate so much information, so that you can paint such a big and fully happening painting, a painting from 13 meters and 2 meters 50.

The duration and intensity of this memory is described with some information over the preparation of such a work. Another artist writes that he needed three months for selecting the colours of the palette for a much bigger painting. What does painter think about when choosing the colours for a major works? Par example for sea roses Monet chooses/ selected an opaque green pigment. The opacity of the green pigment imitated the flats of the leaves. But the green pigments for the water must be transparent. The transparency of the colours created the feel of space while you look in a sea. The transparency of the pigments creates an optical delusion of space. Transparency and opacity are chemical qualities of pigments.

On the other hand Monet must choose the colours to play upon the idea of the colour of water. Monet must choose this pigments before he goes shopping for the colours. And this implies, that he created the details of this painting more in his memory than in front of a real situation in the nature. One more interesting aspect of this work is the reception of Monet's sea-roses-paintings. In the 1920^s and still in the 1950^s the critics of art opined that the picture is not abstract enough. Nobody was interested on the late paintings of Monet. But the moment, when the colour-field-painters was established in New York, the prices for the late paintings of Monet started to rise. Only very rich collections like Beyeler in Basel or the MoMA in New York could pay so much money for the famous late paintings from Monet. This story tells us that our vision is cultural determinate. The moment that we get a key for understanding some pictures, we feel touched by them. But without such a key we have the feeling that the picture is foreign.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now I will begin a tour through the exhibition. Please follow me. For those who have a deep love for excellent colouring pictures, I recommend this late works by Pierre Bonnard.

For those who enjoy the slowness of looking, I recommend the next room with works by the cubists – by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braques, Juan Gris and a painter of the second generation of cubists Fernand Leger.

If you have a short look at this big work by Fernand Leger, you get a feeling for the utopia of the new age of social life. In the picture is combined the emphasis of the technological style of our life with a great idea of humanity. The women are relaxed, they are read to each other– one of my favoured luxuries. The artists of our next stop – the surrealists wouldn't support this idea of utopia because they had read too much Freud and other psychoanalytical literature. They can't believe in the reasonable human being. They are interested in the troubles and paradox produced from the inner-world of the body.

Surrealist painting theory is very complex. The surrealists are hard critics of the idea; a picture is an essential copy of reality. Which reality – they would ask? What do you see if you look in a mirror? The memory and your inner world produce interpretations of what we are seeing. On the other hand Surrealists are mainly interested on images of the inner world. Comparable to dreaming, where you have to interpret the picture, the inner world is imageless. Surrealist painters have to manage and negotiate this paradox. I'd like to show you three practises for creating pictures of the processes of the inner world.

First we shall look on this wonderful small painting by Max Ernst. We see a fence, then a small house, then we see a garden with some active persons. It is very important, that the acting persons aren't shown in the same kind of copy of reality than the boarding or the frame. The acting persons are represented in a kind of copy of reality, that they are symbols.

One more. The fence is touched with this wonderful fiction to protect against the bad world. But Max Ernst put the great tragedies of life in the garden: death, despair (Verzweiflung), desire without replay (das Begehren) as a mythic figure. One practice for creating images for the inner world of the body is to grasp on to old mythic figures or the figures of dramatic literature.

Another practise in producing images of the inner world of the body is shown by the work of our next stop: Meret Oppenheim's cup in fur from 1936. This object is not a copy of any dream-image of the inner world. Rather this object produces images in your head. It does this through a fantastic method comparable to that of Henri Rousseau's Dream-painting, the woman on the couch in the jungle. It is the mixture which go not conform to one another realities – our experiences of breakfast cups and our experiences of coats are completely different worlds of our inner world. This to in one goes not conform to our normal-all-day-usage of these things. Two in one switches our kind of experience into the mode of the fantastic. Before this cup you are not address as a rational acting person but rather you are address as one person who has a fantasy, a rich inner world life in the body. Meret Oppenheim's work "cup in fur" insists on this mode of our humanity. This work does this at a time, when the capitalisation of human capabilities is making ever more progress.

The third method of producing images of the human inner world is shown by a work by André Masson. The method of Meret Oppenheim's cup and the method of André Masson are very important for the art after 1945. Please follow me into the next exhibition room.

The title of this small picture is "The battle of fishes". But Masson didn't make this work in the mode of "today I paint a fight of fish". Rather, his method is to take some drugs/narcotics and to turn the rational off. The hand draws without knowledge, without rational control. The hand draws images from the inner world of the body. The method has been named "écriture automatique" or automatic/mechanical writing. This method is helpful in mapping the inner-world-images. Jackson Pollock and other painters in the fifteenth were looking at the method of mechanical writing of the surrealists and created their own methods such as dripping painting, action painting and so on. Now I'd like to change to the exploratory portion of my guided-tour.

If you are interesting in the question as to how it is possible to represent something as complex thing as love, then have a look at the wonderful work by Joan Miro. If you are interested in the question of performance, then have a look at this wonderful work by Paul Klee named "the actor/mask" from

1924. The next room shows a collection of works by the Italian Futurists, such as Carlo Matta and Umberto Boccioni. If you are interested in questions on describing the infinite space, then have a look on the work by Brancusi named “the endless column”. Brancusi takes a mathematical formula practice – that of progression – for describing infinite space. If you are interested in Matisse – you can see ten very important early works by him.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now we change to the art after 1945. With this change in time we are finding new answers to the question, what is a picture? At a time, when medias such as photography or film seems to make essential copies of our world, painters use the possibility of picture more and more in exploring the mode of aesthetic experience. “Aesthetics” is a philosophical discipline, founded by Baumgarten in the eighteenth century for the education of the sensual cognitive faculties. The pictures show visual experiences. They don’t show copies of bodies, subjects or objects. For example you feel the experience of implosion when we you are standing before Ad Reinhardt’s work named “abstract painting” from 1963. Between you and the picture opens a foreign, hermetic space. Nothing happens. The picture doesn’t show the foreign world as in Rousseau’s Dream. Rather the picture produces your experience of the foreign. This has to do with some theoretical convictions related to the question “what is a picture?”. And it has to do with some political convictions. American intellectuals were shocked over the holocaust. For example Ad Reinhard and Barnett Newman liked to paint pictures, that produce a shock comparable to that over the human capabilities for annihilation / destruction (Vernichtung) and over the logic of destruction and over the sleep of reason by the scientists, who help in the construction of tools of destruction. If you read some writings from Barnett Newman, you will find more over that shock formulate.

Our next stop is with the American abstract expressionists: Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Clifford Still, and Helen Frankenstein, and behind the egg, Franz Kline.

The project of these artists is to formulate and to map more from inner world of the body, from the unconscious world. Most of these artists began as

Surrealists. Therefore, the curators put a surrealist work by Calder in this room. If you have the possibility to see early paintings or drawings of the Abstract Expressionists such as Jackson Pollock you will discover out this link. For years Pollock drew after his psychoanalytic sessions. But the drawings don't show the normal narration of such sessions. Pollock's drawings show gestures. And this is indeed the link to Pollock's understanding of the unconscious world. To map gestures as a part of unconscious is comparable to a great change in the scientific understanding of this subject. The change was brought about figures such as Henri Bergson, Jean Piaget and the philosopher Merleau-Ponty. They propagate a new understanding of our unconscious world. They visualize this unconscious world more in body-gestures than in symbols or figures or words like the Freudian school. You can think of drawings from children at the age of one and one and a half. They draw gestures, where there is nothing to recognise. One drawing they name "owl in the rain", another gets another name. The titles don't tell you what you see. But the children mean it. Never confuse drawings and titles! In the eyes of the children this is a great mistake. They remember special experiences on the shapeless drawings. They don't order experiences according to common standards or common visualizations. The gesture contains their memory of experiences. Jackson Pollock tries to find this inner-body-world of memory of experiences through gestures.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my last stop is by Claes Oldenburg, a Pop-Artist. The last work we will look at together is Oldenburg's work from 1963 named the "big-cake". Please follow me into the next room. Oldenburg and the other Pop-Artists, such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein or Tom Wesselman were interested in that phenomenon which sociology has named the objective or the common experience. These are experiences all people have. For example you all have the experience that a cake doesn't look like this in the supermarket. But often you have the experience that they taste like the cake here is looking. This difference between looking and tasting and the circumstance of eating cakes as terrible taste-experiences shows to you the workings of strategies of the seduction. They are calculating. The most of

such products are from the fast-food-industry. Normally one investigates only in the look and not in the taste. In other words, one investigates in the art of seduction. One knows how to make people into consumers. One knows how to make products which speak to our most private feelings, how to capitalize our private interests. This was a great philosophical and scientific subject in the late fifties and early sixties. In Adorno's critical theory you will find some statements about marketing the capitalization of such human feelings like love.

Ladies and Gentlemen

At this point I'm finished. Now start your work, your own adventure. I wish you a lot of interesting adventures. You have time until eight/then/twelve o'clock. Nearby is a cafeteria for a short break. But be careful with the cakes! Thank you very much for your patience with my English. And now I will take the headsets back. Then you are free from this. Tips or free liqueurs (?) are welcome!