



# The Peggy Guggenheim Collection of Modern Art

*Nicolas Calas, Elena Calas*

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Peggy Guggenheim was one of the most important (and celebrated) art world figures of the twentieth century. Born into a wealthy New York family, she traveled throughout Europe during the 1920s and 1930s where she was a witness to the major art movements through her association with artists such as Constantin Brancusi, Max Ernst and Marcel Duchamp, to name a few. With a keen eye and exalted social standing, she amassed one of the most significant modern art collections in private hands. This volume is the only complete book on her exceptional collection.

Through several essays and extended captions, every aspect of Guggenheim's collection, which was donated to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 1979 after her death, is explained. The breadth of the collection is astonishing: from the earliest examples of abstraction by Piet Mondrian to the controlled abandon of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings (whose career she single-handedly launched), her intuition regarding the important trends was almost clairvoyant.

The book begins with an essay devoted to the concept of structure as it relates to the cubist work of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque; the lyrically expressionistic work of Wassily Kandinsky and the spare constructivist work of Lissitzky, among many others. Guggenheim was also deeply interested in surrealist and dada work examples of which are well represented in the collection including the fantastical landscapes of Giorgio de Chirico and Max Ernst's whimsical collages.

Sculpture formed an important part of Guggenheim's collection, many of which were installed to glorious effect on the well-manicured grounds of her home in the Grand Canal, Palazzo Venier dei Leoni. With exceptional care and thoughtfulness, she was able to strike a remarkable balance between more classically-inspired work, such as the soft and refined curves of Henry Moore's figures, and more avant-garde work of Alberto Giacometti whose ghostly, attenuated figures were some of the most haunting works produced this century. In the end, the book chronicles not only the development of a great collection and the life of the socialite eccentric who built it, but, more importantly, the history of modern art.

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