

NOT TO BE MISSED

Some Outstanding Current Art Events In the Flood of Recent Shows

By HOWARD DEVREE

SINCE the spring season has been unusually heavy with several consecutive weeks presenting forty to fifty exhibitions each, it may be well at this relative breathing space to look back for a moment and emphasize some of the more important events which the art minded public definitely should not miss in the welter of activities.

The most recent of these attractions is perhaps as serenely beautiful an event as one is likely to find in our distracted times—selected flower paintings of the last four centuries in a wonderfully colorful loan exhibition at the Wildenstein Galleries. Highly timely for the Easter season, this display brings together some eighty paintings from public and private collections—the earliest a "Vase of Flowers" by Ludger Tom Ring, a German artist of the mid-sixteenth century, and another panel by Jan Breughel a century later, both still fresh and bright. The small center gallery is given over to the seventeenth century Dutch flower painters and their contemporaries—space-filling compositions of the solidly and frankly decorative style so long in vogue as overmantel ornaments, heavy and naturalistic to modern eyes.

A Galaxy

In the two large galleries the theme is revealed in the work of masters of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in all its diversity, from Delacroix and Courbet to Dali and Klee and Picasso. In between, in the widest manner of styles and varying degrees of sensibility are paintings by Renoir and Fantin-Latour (eight each), by Odilon Redon (five), Monet (four), Manet (four), Bonnard, Matisse, Vuillard, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Derain, Rouault, Pissarro, Rousseau, Seurat, Sisley, Utrillo, Vlaminck, Soutine, Berthe Morisot and Augustus John. The American contingent—Hassam, Heade and Beigel—is rather inconspicuous.

Fantin-Latour makes good the claim to be a distinguished minor master. The Renoirs, dating from 1870 to 1909, throw interesting lights on the painter's development. And one Manet, through the subtlety with which the stems and grasses under water in the glass vase are managed, would make the visit memorable.

The continuing exhibition of three outstanding American "expatriate" artists—Whistler, Sargent and Mary Cassatt—at the Metropolitan Museum throws an illuminating beam on the three individuals; but, more than that, it reveals much of the currents of art in the years from the beginning of impressionism down into the first decade of this century. The development of Sargent into the most fashionable portrait painter of his time; the emergence of Whistler from realism into his so personal brand of impressionism; the participation of Mary Cassatt in the main stream of impressionism and her contribution to it are made clear.

And there are individual paint-

ings in the exhibition which are of exceptional interest for one or another reason. Here are Whistler's so celebrated portrait of his mother; his "Battersea Bridge Nocturne" with all his uncanny ability to evoke forms in mist; and his suggestive fireworks nocturne which makes one think of some present day nonobjective painting. Sargent's Marquand portrait, "Madame X" and the portrait of Pulitzer show him at his best. And Cassatt in her low keyed harmonies and in her peculiarly anonymous portraits stands up well as a fine if limited artist in her own right.

A gifted if limited artist also, Edouard Vuillard suffers somewhat from the overlarge retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Reduced by a third to a half of the 130 oils the show would have left less of an impression of repetition in his work—a repetition that makes itself felt in his flat treatment of figures, his introduction of so much detail and his obsession with pattern in the wall paper, the rugs and incidentals. Someone, perhaps H. G. Wells, once said of Henry James that one read him for the exercise in clambering over his vast metaphors; and one might say in Vuillard's case that one goes to these pictures for their subtle harmonies and tonalities of color rather than for interest in their subjects or for great originality of statement or design. But this is an extraordinary record of one phase of French life from 1890 to 1905.

Dynamism

At quite the other pole were the Italian futurists a decade later as may be seen by visiting the exhibition of paintings at the Sidney Janis Gallery. Here is dynamism and high color as breathtaking as the Vuillard canvases are breathless. Speed, mechanism, high color together almost leave the visitor with the feeling that he has been through a high production industrial plant and a subway rush hour with a blurred sense of abstract mechanized motion. At this distance one hardly wonders that the futurists wore out the movement so quickly. But individual examples such as Balla's "Abstract Speed" are powerfully evocative.

And then there is the loan exhibition of Matisse paintings at Paul Rosenberg's—a veritable old home week to Matisse devotees. Here are the "White Plumes" from the Minneapolis Institute, the "Egyptian Curtain" from the Phillips Gallery and a score of others.

The Guggenheim Museum has extended the showing of its Selection III, including some remarkable Kandinskys, two fine Modiglianis, one of the Delaunay "Eiffel Tower" versions, three small oils by Seurat, the big Picasso still-life acquired last year and the cubist period "Accordionist," along with a score of other modern paintings admirably installed.

SPRING COMES TO A GALLERY



"Gladiolas," by Albert Andre, and, below, "Flowers in Vase on Red Cloth," by Odilon Redon, in the Wildenstein loan show for benefit of Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association.

