About the Artist

Georges Rouault is an isolated figure in twentieth-century art. He remained outside of the group movements that dominated the century, yet was possessed of a fixed and persistent artistic vision. Born in Paris in 1871, he was apprenticed as a youth to a stained glass workshop. In 1891, he entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and studied under Gustave Moreau. He was involved with the Fauvists (including Henri Matisse) and began participating in major exhibitions. Rouault’s recurrent subjects include judges, clowns and prostitutes, who serve as vehicles for moral and social critique and reflections on human nature. Christian themes, particularly the passion of Jesus, are a dominant strain in Rouault’s work. In addition to paintings, drawings, and prints, he also executed ceramics and designs for tapestry and stained glass, as well as the set for Diaghilev’s ballet 1929 ballet *The Prodigal Son*. Rouault is credited as an influence on the German Expressionists. A highly regarded figure in France, he was given a state funeral upon his death in 1958.

“Aggressive, sparse, grandiose” . . . and eloquent

*Miserere et Guerre* was originally conceived as a collaborative project with the poet André Suarès, and Rouault composed the majority of the images between 1914 and 1918. The books never appeared, but he continued to rework the plates in succeeding years. Rouault writes in the preface to the series:

... Most of the subjects date from 1914–18. They were originally drawn in India ink, and later, at Ambroise Vollard’s [Rouault’s powerful Parisian art dealer] request, were transformed into paintings. He then had them transferred to copper plates. It was apparently desirable that a first impression on copper should be made. With these as a starting point, I have tried, taking infinite pains, to preserve the rhythm and quality of the original drawing. I worked unceasingly on each plate, with varying success, using many different tools. There is no secret about my methods. Dissatisfied, I reworked the plates again and again, sometimes making as many as fifteen successive states; for I wished them as far as possible to be equal in quality. . . .

The works were printed in an edition of 450 in 1927 (although they were not exhibited until 1948), and they are a milestone in expanding the technical and expressive range of the print. Following the photographic transfer of his ink drawings to large copper plates, Rouault made use of aquatint, drypoint, roulette, and other intaglio printing techniques to extensively rework the original images.

A devout Catholic, Rouault’s faith informed his work, which at times seems to serve as a vehicle for moral judgment and retains vitality and relevance today. Rouault himself said, “All of my work is religious for those who know how to look at it.” Born out of the unprecedented violence of the First World War and Rouault’s intense compassion for the marginalized and underprivileged, *Miserere et Guerre* stands as a singular achievement in the realms of printmaking and religious art. The works speak as forcefully and poignantly today as when they were first printed over 80 years ago, and can be appreciated for their technical achievement, stark beauty, human insight, and spiritual integrity.

Museum of Contemporary Religious Art (MOCRA) • Saint Louis University

Located at 3700 West Pine Blvd (a pedestrian mall) on the campus of Saint Louis University. Maps and parking directions are available on the MOCRA website.

Museum hours are Tuesday — Sunday, 11 A.M. — 4 P.M.

voice (314) 977-7170 fax (314) 977-2999 e-mail mocra@slu.edu web mocra.slu.edu

Groups are welcomed. Please contact the museum staff to arrange a visit.

March 8 – July 31, 2011

There are only a few complete sets of *Miserere et Guerre* in American collections. MOCRA is pleased to offer the rare opportunity to see all 58 works in this landmark in the history of printmaking and twentieth-century art.

Miserere et Guerre
THE COMPLETE SERIES OF ETCHINGS

Miserere et Guerre, No. 55, L’aveugle parfois a consolé le voyant. (Sometimes the blind have comforted those that see.), c. 1927. Image © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

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Georges Rouault
No. 58, “C’est par ses meurtrissures que nous sommes guéris.” (“And with his stripes we are healed.”) Isaiah 53:5, 1922.
No. 36, Ce sera la dernière, petit père! (“This will be the last time, father!”) 1927.
No. 57, “Obéissant jusqu’à la mort et à la mort de la croix.” (“Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”) Philippians 2:8, 1926.
No. 47, “De profundis ...” (“Out of the depths ...”) Psalm 130:1, 1927.