



APPLETON ART CENTER

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Appleton Art Center Organizes Major Exhibition Featuring Work by Marc Chagall

(APPLETON, WI 9/11/08)— Russian-born painter Marc Chagall (1887-1985) ranks among the most celebrated artists of the 20th century. An exhibition of over 100 works by the modern master—including paintings, drawings, hand-colored etchings and lithographs—will be on view in the center’s Reigel and Dietrich Galleries from September 12, 2008, through November 15, 2008. It is the first major exhibition dedicated to Chagall in the Fox Cities.

Made possible, in part, by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board, a state agency, *Chagall* is an exhibition conceived of, and organized by Appleton Art Center.

“Each of us at Appleton Art Center is proud to present the extraordinary work of Marc Chagall to Northeastern Wisconsin,” remarked art center executive director and exhibit curator, Timothy Riley. “Chagall’s profound optimism, firm belief that visual art could and should inspire humanity, and his joyful use of color, line, and symbol makes him one of most approachable masters of modern art,” Riley said.

Appleton Art Center received important loans from the Beatrice and Patrick Haggerty Museum of Art at Marquette University, Lawrence University, the David Barnett Gallery (Milwaukee), Vivian and Ralph Jacobson (Pinehurst, NC), and other individuals throughout the United States.

Born in the village of Vitebsk in Byelorussia, Moische Seagal (later known as Marc Chagall) was raised in Jewish family living life the artist himself described as “impoverished and happy.” In 1906 Chagall began painting in Vitebsk before moving to St. Petersburg to continue his artistic studies a year later. By 1910, Chagall was working in Paris alongside modern master painters such as Robert Delaunay, Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, Fernand Léger. Chagall absorbed the lessons of his contemporaries, who helped to define the early modern art movements such as cubism and futurism, but he refused to be identified with any one particular group or movement.



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After several prestigious exhibitions in Paris and Berlin, Chagall returned to Vitebsk in 1914 just before the outbreak of World War I. The next year, in Vitebsk, Chagall married Bella Rosenfeld, the first great love his life and a major source of inspiration.

Chagall Etchings and Ambroise Vollard

Chagall returned to Paris in 1923 after receiving a commission from well-known dealer Ambroise Vollard, who worked closely with Renoir and launched the careers of Cezanne and Picasso. Vollard asked Chagall to illustrate an edition of the satirical novel, *The Dead Souls* by Russian author, Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852). *The Dead Souls* etchings marked the beginning of a fruitful relationship between Chagall and Vollard. An etching from the *Dead Souls Series* is on view at Appleton Art Center.

Chagall was invited by Vollard to create another series of etchings to illustrate an edition of *The Fables* a classic work by French literary great Jean de la Fontaine (1621-1695). Despite an outcry from French critics, Vollard defended his choice of Chagall—a Russian, a Jew, and a foreigner—to illustrate a series of etchings for La Fontaine's *Fables*. Chagall's *The Fables* series, created between 1927-1930, captures the fanciful spirit of La Fontaine's work. Visually *The Fables* series fueled the Chagall's fertile imagination and demonstrate a spontaneous style incorporating animals, rich flowers, and human forms that would appear in his work for the rest of his career. Five etchings from *The Fables Series* are in the exhibition.

While Chagall was still completing his work for *The Fables*, Vollard approached him to create a third, and even more demanding series of etchings—105 illustrations for the *Bible*. Chagall started the project with great enthusiasm and journeyed to the Holy Land for inspiration. Chagall commented on the *Bible*, "Since my earliest childhood I have been captivated by the *Bible*. It has always seemed to me to be the greatest source of poetry of all time. Ever since I have sought its reflection in life and art. The *Bible* is like an echo of nature, and this is the secret I have tried to convey." Chagall completed 66 of the 105 printing plates by 1939, when he fled Europe. As World War II began and Chagall traveled to the United States, work on *The Bible Series* was halted. Chagall resumed work on the series in 1952 and it was finally published the complete



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series of etchings in 1956. Twenty-nine hand-painted etchings are included in the exhibition. Chagall's *Bible Series* has often been described as the best Biblical-based etchings since Rembrandt.

Fifty lithographs, a graphic medium that appealed to Chagall, depicting scenes of Paris, the circus, musicians, and Biblical scenes are also included in the exhibition.

A rare drawing, executed on the frontispiece of the book, and dedicated to Ralph Jacobson, a retired Chicago attorney now living in North Carolina is on loan from Ralph and his wife, Vivian, who worked on behalf of Chagall for a decade. "We are honored to share our Chagall drawing with the public for the first time. He would have loved to see an exhibition of his work in a city like Appleton," remarked Vivian Jacobson.

Several special events, including a concert by NYC composer and pianist, Seth Weinstein, are scheduled in conjunction with the exhibition. See www.appletonartcenter.org for details.

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