



Zorach, Marguerite

American, 1887 - 1968

Marguerite Zorach, between 1910 and 1920, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC, 2007680358

BIOGRAPHY

Marguerite Zorach (née Marguerite Thompson) was born in Santa Rosa, California, in 1887 and raised in Fresno. She began drawing at a very early age. In 1908 Zorach enrolled at Stanford University, but within a few weeks, she left to join her aunt Harriet Adelaide Harris in Paris. Immediately upon her arrival, she visited the Salon d'Automne. There she saw works by Henri Matisse (French, 1869 - 1954), André Derain (French, 1880 - 1954), Albert Marquet (French, 1875 - 1947), and other modernists that would shape her painting style. With her aunt's introduction, Zorach began to frequent avant-garde circles: she met Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881 - 1973), befriended the sculptor Ossip Zadkine (French, 1890 - 1967), and became a regular guest of collectors and siblings Gertrude and Leo Stein. While studying with the progressive Scottish fauve painter John Duncan Fergusson (1874–1961) at the Académie de la Palette, she met her future husband, the artist William Zorach (American, born Russia (now Lithuania), 1887 - 1966). Before returning to California in 1912, Zorach spent seven months traveling throughout Asia.

In December 1912, she moved to New York, married William Finkelstein—the couple chose the new surname Zorach, William's given first name, together—and began associating with modernist painters such as Max Weber (American, born Poland, 1881 - 1961), Marsden Hartley (American, 1877 - 1943), and Charles Demuth (American, 1883 - 1935). The Zorachs' Greenwich Village home became a gathering place for artists and writers. Zorach exhibited at a number of important avant-garde exhibitions, including the Armory Show in 1913, the 1916 Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters, where she was the only woman included, and the first

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exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917.

Zorach's paintings of this time explore geometric flattening and surface pattern, and she drew influence not only from the fauves but also from the fractured planes of cubism. This interest in the modern decorative form also led her to work in textile, including tapestry, embroidery, and batik. Though she continued to paint, Zorach found the creative process of crafting textiles more suitable to the demands of motherhood; her children, Tessim and Dahlov, were born in 1915 and 1917, respectively. Zorach became well known for this work, and in 1929 Abby Aldrich Rockefeller commissioned her to complete a large-scale family portrait in wool. The success of her textiles contributed to the Zorachs' ability in 1923 to purchase a farm on Georgetown Island, Maine, where they spent most summers.

After 1920 Zorach's work became more representational, although her forms remained somewhat geometric and expressionistic. In 1925 she founded and was the first president of the New York Society of Women Artists. She was among the three American women included in the 1926 International Exhibition of Modern Art at the Brooklyn Museum, along with Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887 - 1986) and Katherine Sophie Dreier (American, 1877 - 1952). During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Zorach painted murals for the Department of the Treasury's Section of Fine Arts in post offices in Monticello, Indiana; Peterborough, New Hampshire; and Ripley, Tennessee. Due to deteriorating eyesight, Zorach stopped producing textiles in the 1940s. She continued painting until her death in 1968.

Catherine Southwick, Robert Torchia

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