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**SFMOMA TO BE SOLE AMERICAN VENUE FOR
MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE OF MARC CHAGALL**

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will be the sole venue outside Paris for a major retrospective of the work of painter Marc Chagall from July 26 through November 4, 2003. *Marc Chagall* will include approximately 65 paintings and 88 works on paper— including many never before seen in the United



Marc Chagall, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1939, oil on canvas; 45 7/8 x 35 1/8 in.; Collection Musée de Grenoble, gift of the artist, 1951; © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

States—from all periods of the artist's seven-decade career. Organized jointly by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, in conjunction with the Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall, Nice, and SFMOMA, the exhibition is the first comprehensive look at this artist since 1985 and offers a unique opportunity to reevaluate a body of work that is universally renowned but often underestimated. Jean-Michel Foray, director of the Chagall Museum in Nice and the Fernand Léger Museum in Biot, France, has organized the retrospective; overseeing the San Francisco presentation is Janet Bishop, SFMOMA curator of painting and sculpture. The exhibition is sponsored by Bank of America and Visa USA. A fully illustrated catalogue will be produced in conjunction with the exhibition; the hardcover edition is published by SFMOMA in collaboration with Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

Chagall's work is distinguished by surrealistic inventiveness, as well as by a use of humor and fantasy that draws deeply on the resources of the unconscious. Strong and often brilliant colors infuse his canvases with a dreamlike, nonrealistic simplicity, while the combination of imagination, religion and nostalgia conveys a joyous quality. One of the key themes addressed in the exhibition will be how Chagall's conception of the artist as a messenger from a better and more spiritual world drew him away from the modernist movements of his time. Over the course of his lengthy and prolific career, Chagall distanced himself from prominent avant-garde art movements: in Paris in 1911 he refused to formally align himself with the Cubists; in Moscow in 1920 he broke with the Suprematist group; and in Paris in 1924 he refused to join the Surrealist group. Yet Chagall selectively appropriated aspects of the modernist program—Cubism's fracturing of space, Surrealism's privileging of the dream world, Modernism's liberation of color from the constraints of description—and used them to structure themes drawn from his roots in Jewish and Russian vernacular culture and his emotional and spiritual life. "Chagall's intentional remove from these classifications contributed to a career that

has not been subjected to adequate scholarly and critical consideration,” states Bishop. “This exhibition provides substantial new insight into the artist and his work.”

Marc Chagall (1887–1985) was born in Vitebsk, Russia, the eldest of nine children in a poor family of Hasidic Jews. He was educated in art in Saint Petersburg and, from 1911 to 1914, in Paris. His childhood in a deeply religious household inspired the subject matter for Chagall’s many paintings depicting Jewish life, folklore and Bible stories. He returned to Russia in 1915 and after the Russian Revolution was director of the Art Academy in Vitebsk and designed decor for the State Jewish Chamber Theater in Moscow. Chagall painted several murals for the theater and executed the sets for numerous productions, many of which are featured in this exhibition. In 1923 he moved to France, where he spent the rest of his life, except for a period of residence in the United States from 1941 to 1948. He died in St. Paul de Vence, France, on March 28, 1985.

Marc Chagall includes work from all major periods of the painter’s artistic activity—the Russian years (1910–23), which included his stay in Paris from 1911 to 1914; the Paris years (1924–40); the American years (1941–47); and the Vence years (1948–85). The first part of the exhibition features Chagall’s early works, in which he attempted to find a balance between vernacular Russian-Jewish culture and the culture of modernity he discovered in Paris. Sections such as *Vitebsk* and *Bella in Flight* reveal Chagall’s exploration of these two differing aesthetic cultures and the resulting development of his distinctive and highly personal style.

The next major section within the exhibition addresses Chagall’s renunciation of the abstract avant-garde through the decor he created for the Jewish Theater in Moscow. This section, which features large-scale murals (including an image of Chagall himself) as well as many preparatory studies, illustrates the genesis of Chagall’s ideas of the artist as a messenger and a community member, which continued to be themes throughout his career. The exhibition features many significant paintings from this period, including *Introduction to the Jewish Theater*, 1920, and *Music*, 1920, both from the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

The exhibition continues with works made after Chagall moved back to Paris in 1924. Consisting chiefly of small paintings, works on paper and gouaches that have rarely been exhibited, it shows Chagall trying to understand and assimilate the culture of France, his new home. Featured from this period are the paintings *Angel with Palette*, 1927–36, from the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and *The Rooster*, 1928, from the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, and Chagall’s illustrations for the classic of French literature, the *Fables of La Fontaine*, and for the work of contemporary French poets. Also included is a major section of work related to the artist’s treatment of the Bible—a lifelong interest and subject.

In 1948 Chagall moved to St. Paul de Vence in the south of France, where he spent the remainder of his life. Featured works from this period include his popular Mediterranean landscapes. Paintings from Chagall’s late period demonstrate the unwavering humanity of the artist and his work.

A lavishly illustrated exhibition catalogue features 240 pages and approximately 150 color plates. The volume includes an introduction by curator Jean-Michel Foray and a heavily illustrated chronology of the artist’s life by Chagall’s granddaughter, Meret Meyer Graber, and Jakov Bruk. Hardcover and softcover editions of the catalogue, the former published by SFMOMA in association with Harry N. Abrams, are available at the MuseumStore and at www.sfmoma.org. The hardcover catalogue is available for \$60; the softcover is available for \$29.95.

SFMOMA's Education Department will present a variety of programs and public lectures to further enhance visitors' experience of the exhibition. An opening day lecture, *Chagall, An Intimate View*, will be presented by Bella Meyer, art historian, on Saturday, July 26 at 2 p.m. in the Phyllis Wattis Theater. Meyer, Chagall's granddaughter, lectures worldwide on the work of her grandfather. In this talk she shares memories of Chagall and reflects on the impact of his art and personality. The 2003 video *Chagall, Beyond the Real* by François Levy-Kuentz will be screened in the Koret Visitor Education Center, Thursdays, July 31, August 14 and 28, September 11 and 25, and every Thursday in October at 7 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays, July 26 through September 27 at 1 p.m.; and Fridays and Saturdays October 3 through November 1 at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. This brand new French production makes use of statements and letters by Chagall to offer compelling insights into his art. The video screenings are free with Museum admission. Additional program information is available on the Museum's Web site at www.sfmoma.org.

The exhibition was conceived by Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, with the Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall, Nice, and co-organized with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition is sponsored by Bank of America and Visa USA. Additional support for this exhibition has been provided by The Helen Diller Family Supporting Foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, Phyllis and Stuart G. Moldaw, The David B. Gold Foundation, and the French American Cultural Foundation. Transportation generously provided by American Airlines. This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. Media sponsors: San Francisco Chronicle; SF Gate.com; Classical 102.1 KDFC; Viacom Outdoor; and ABC7, KGO-TV.

Tickets/Hours during *Marc Chagall*

Admission to the exhibition *Marc Chagall* will require a special ticket. Museum hours will be expanded during the run of the exhibition. Details follow below:

Expanded Museum Hours during *Marc Chagall* (July 26–November 4, 2003)

Open daily (except Wednesdays): 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Open late Thursdays and Fridays: until 9 p.m.

The SFMOMA MuseumStore and Caffè Museo will also observe these expanded hours.

***Marc Chagall* Tickets**

A special ticket is required for admission to the *Marc Chagall* exhibition, for an additional \$5. This ticket includes regular SFMOMA admission (see prices below) and is applicable at all times. Special tickets for *Marc Chagall* go on sale beginning June 1, 2003, at the Museum, online at www.ticketweb.com, or by phone at 866/468-3399.

A special *Marc Chagall* audio tour, produced by Antenna Audio, is available for \$6 general; \$5 SFMOMA members, students, and seniors. Advance hotel and ticket packages are available by calling 1-888-STAY-N-SF or visit www.sfvisitor.org.

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Hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays) 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; open late Thursdays until 9 p.m.; summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day) 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Admission prices: Adults \$10; seniors \$7; students with ID \$6. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings, 6 to 9 p.m., admission is half price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by MUNI, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans and Caltrain. Hourly, daily and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415/348-0971.

Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415/357-4000 for more information.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is a private, not-for-profit institution supported by its members, individual contributors to Donor Circle, corporate and foundation support, federal and state government grants, and admission revenues. Annual programming is sustained through the generosity of Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, The James Irvine Foundation, and the Koret Foundation. Thursday evening half-priced admission is sponsored by Banana Republic. Online sponsor: BayArea.Citysearch.com. Reduced admission for seniors is sponsored by Pacific Bell. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by The Charles Schwab Corporation Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Carole and Robert McNeil Docent Award in honor of Benjamin McKendall Jr., 1999 award.

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