that they have ever mounted. The sculpture is dullish; and the best piece, though even here the photograph (Fig.66) is taken from the only really satisfying angle, is Wilton's tinted plaster bust of James Wolfe. The gallery has been fortunate in being able to benefit from remissions of death duties, and other kinds of tax concession. This has enabled it to acquire, from the Northwick Park Collection, the exquisite early self-portrait by Gainsborough; Romney's peachesy little study of Lady Hamilton, as likely a candidate as any to take up the phrase 'as pretty as a picture'; and Reynolds's Warren Hastings of 1766–8.

This portrait turns out to be something of a disappointment. The composition, the placing of the figure in relation to the table and the curtain and, indeed, to the rectangle of the canvas itself, is all that is fine enough, but it still does not quite make up for Reynolds's deficiencies as a craftsman. The drawing is in places poor; in Hastings's left arm, the treatment of the relationship between the wrist, the cuff and the sleeve of the coat is surprisingly weak. More serious still is a disparity in the artist's treatment of the figure and the face, an attitude shared with the participation of assistants. The treatment of the blue velvet collar, for example, implies a degree of versimilitude that is not to be found in the painting of the skin, in either face or hands, or in the hair.

Altogether more successful, both as a coherent piece of painting, and as the imprecation of a person of consequence, is the later (1785) Reynolds of Boscotell (Fig.68). This cost £25,000 and superseded the bituminous copy (or studio version) which the Gallery already owned.

Highlights from the earlier periods include: two Honthorsts, one of Charles I receiving the Orange Hospital at the Orange Grove exhibition, the other a modestly regal whole-length of Charles's sister, Elizabeth of Bohemia; what is believed to be the only surviving contemporary portrait of Lady Jane Grey, a full-length of c.1550; and a version (Fig.67) of Holbein's 1527 portrait of Sir Thomas More now in the Frick. This cost £15,000; and even though the Gallery itself contributed only a portion of the sum, it seems a great deal to have paid for what no one has claimed is any more than an early copy, and one that is, moreover, in far from pristine condition.

The modern material includes several good things, the self-portrait of Gwen John, for instance, as fine and as delicate an example of her powers as one is likely to find anywhere; a 1927 Sickert of Churchill; two rather mannered drawings of Edith Sitwell, by Wyndham Lewis; and Patrick Heron's analytical cubist image of T. S. Eliot (1940), a portrait that does little to illuminate the character of the poet; though it tells one a good deal about the style of Mr Heron.

KEITH ROBERTS

El Lissitzky

The exhibition now on view at Basle Kunsthalle is a moving event for those who knew Lissitzky, and a revelation for those who did not. Here is the aware of a great artist, whose contribution to twentieth-century art deserves to be remembered, not merely as the participation of one among many, but one, rather, who may be hailed as an eminent protagonist of formative thinking in our day.

El (Eleazar Markovich) Lissitzky (1890–1941) was a near-contemporary of Casimir Malevich, whose famous painting Black Square on White Ground (1913) marked the transition from early Suprematism, the 'superanism' of pure emotion in art', to its later phase which sums up by the expression of pure non-objectivity'. This, in turn, generated the beginnings of Russian Constructivism of which Lissitzky may be considered the chief exponent.

Trained as an architect under Joseph Olbrich at Darmstadt Technical High School before, in his private drawings were, then, mainly concerned with historical buildings he came across during his study trips. Back in Russia at the outbreak of war, he illustrated a number of books, notably on Jewish subjects, in a colourful style influenced by folklore and folk art which he greatly admired. In 1919, Chagall, then Head of the Academy of Art in Vitebsk, his native town, appointed Lissitzky to a professorship in architecture and graphic design. When Malevich, too, was invited to join the Academy, close collaboration ensued between them. It is rather that Lissitzky's PROUN idea began to emerge. (The name PROUN is derived from the initials of the Russian word for 'Newly established art form')

Lissitzky's twin propensity as painter and architect was ideally matched and so, within a comparatively short period, he turned out a series of his finest PROUN pictures which soon established his reputation as an original artist. A PROUN to Lissitzky, was not merely a picture, nor solely architectural design. It was an interplay of pictorial as well as structural qualities. Elements which to Malevich had been imbued with a touch of transcendental meaning were, in the hands of Lissitzky, recast into 'objects' of material substance, a challenge, at the same time, to a corresponding notion of space. It has been claimed that this development was an outcome of Lissitzky's acquaintance with Vladimir Tatlin, widely known for his designs for a spirally-shaped monument to the Third International. This was only partly correct. For when, in 1922 and after, Lissitzky again visited Western Europe, he found some of his fellow artists in Germany, Switzerland, and Holland pursuing similar trends, the idea having been 'in the air'.

This led to a string of animated discussions on the respective merits of different art movements and groupings, such as Malevich's Suprematism, the various brands of Constructivism, the principles of De Stijl, the teachings of the Bauhaus give and take being general as well as generous. Lissitzky formed close friendships with Hans Arp, Theo van Doesburg, C. van Eesteren, Mies van der Rohe, Moholy-Nagy, Kurt Schwitters, Mart Stam and others. He was invited to contribute to various magazines, including Das Kunstblatt, Merz, Tschac, Studio, and others. He also reprinted his story of The Two Squares, previously published at Vitebsk. With Arp he edited Die Kunstismen, and his treatise 'Typographische Tatsachen' appeared in Gutenbergschrift, 1925.

While at Hanover he produced, in 1923, a number of letters like Keucker Gesellschaft, and in 1927 designed, for the Landesmuseum, a special gallery (deliberately destroyed by the National Socialists in 1936) 'allowing abstract art to do justice to its dynamic properties'. This as well as an earlier design of his at the International Art Exhibition in Dresden the year before, had been anticipated by the Cabinet in the Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung of 1923. This Cabinet, recently rebuilt at Eindhoven and now to be seen at Basle, was a striking example of painting, sculpture and architecture integrated into a unit of which the visitor feels himself to be a part.

Lissitzky's exceptional ability for structural design, his bold ideas for utilitarian architecture, as evident from his drawings of a projected office block in Moscow – where he returned for good in 1931 – his accomplishments as a typographer, his book covers and his posters – including the magnificent job he did for Zurich Kunstgewerbemuseum in 1929 – his photographs, photographs and montages, the delightful lithographs and preliminary sketches he did at Hanover for the folder Victory over the Sun, and, last but not least, his early illustrations, all displayed at the Kunsthalle, are in itself an impressive and comprehensive impression of his achievement and demonstrate the artist's versatile genius. But it is the PROUNs that impress themselves most strongly on the mind (Figs.69, 70). Lissitzky willed them to be objects, and we are brought face to face with them as 'objects' of an, admittedly, unusual nature. They seem to rise, and to soar, to hover and to float, and we, ourselves, accept all this as being perfectly compatible with what appears to be their bodily presence. Small wonder then, if even experts do not always agree on the correct view of a PROUN. Let alone the case, the PROUNs, reproduced here as published in the official catalogue.

The parts making up the identity of a PROUN are mostly adaptations of geometrical forms and their stereometric equivalents. Bright colours are used very sparingly. Even brick red, some slate blue, a stroke of yellow, are set against a wide range of greys and buffs, creams and off-whites, an occasional brown, and practically always, some black.

The effort involved in getting together this unique exhibition on a comprehensive scale for the first time, is in itself an extra-
69. *Proun ID*, by El Lissitsky. 1919. Canvas, mounted on plywood, 71.5 by 96 cm. (Kunstmuseum, Basle; exh. Kunsthalle, Basle.)


Munch at the Guggenheim Museum, New York

The Munch exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York is the first on such a scale in the United States since the retrospective of 1950 which was seen in Boston and at the Museum of Modern Art. In many respects the two are comparable; in others quite different. Each contained the same number of paintings (sixty-four in 1950, sixty-seven in 1965) of which three-fourths were earlier than 1900, the year Munch entered a psychiatric clinic in Copenhagen and before his return to Norway where he remained until his death in 1944. Consequently the later work has again been qualitatively slighted in favour of earlier and more familiar pictures, and once again its reassessment has been made more difficult by so slim and arbitrary a selection. There is also a sameness about the two exhibitions. Grateful as one must be for the opportunity to see so many of the artist's best works from public and private collections throughout Scandinavia, and of those with long memories it seems a pity that no less than thirty-one, or almost half, of the paintings from 1950 have turned up again. Nor is the current selection qualitatively superior to the earlier. There are certain interesting large and linear compositions, like Fertility of about 1898 (from the Sieryl Bergesen Collection, Oslo) which seem to lead stylistically to the Oslo murals of 1911-14, but among the familiar works one misses Pupette, Ashes, and The Day After, all of 1894, as well as In Hell and Self-portrait with Cigarette, both of 1895, which present the extraordinary, psycho-passionate Munch. Munch's own approach to his art, his self-assured command of visual facts and his anxious, compulsive revelation of psychic torment (see Figs. 72-4).

The 1950 exhibition also contained three times as many prints and watercolours as the present one, and their reception then the paintings was discussed and generously illustrated in the catalogue by Professor Frederick B. Deknatel, of Harvard, whose introduction remains, after fifteen years, one of the clearest analyses of Munch's art and life. In the Guggenheim catalogue there are sixteen adequate colour plates and all the paintings are illustrated but none of the other material. There is a useful chronology, but the brief introductions by the ranking Munch scholars in Norway, Sigurd Willoch, Director of the Nasjonalgalleriet and Johan H. Langgaard, Director of the Munch Museum, are disappointingly perfunctory.

So much for comparative and, on the whole, negative considerations. The exhibition itself is handsome; it contains many of the most important pictures, and, given the peculiarities of the museum's architecture it has been relatively simply and sensitively installed. Now that five years have passed since this monument to Frank Lloyd Wright's dislike of any other art than his own was opened, and the shock of descending the circular ramp has lessened, the many architectural virtues of this idiosyncratic structure can be appreciated. But there is no escape from looking at works of art while walking downhill, and of always turning to the left to confront them hanging with monotonous regularity by twos and threes in separate bays have, for this viewer, become even more distracting. Because all the paintings have been brought the same distance and the partitions between the bays prevent comparisons and recalls (unless one walks uphill), the cumulative experience of studying sixty pictures can be both monotonous and fatiguing. The only interruption occurs in the rectangular mezzanine near the ground level, where Thomas M. Messer, the director of the museum and of the exhibition, has hung together five life-size male portraits (necessarily because the ceiling height of the ramp is too low to accommodate them). There, where the men in the paintings are standing so solidly on one's own, the partitions can stand firmly on one's own. Mr Messer has, however, used the partitions to show preliminary drawings and prints, as well as later graphic versions of certain subjects so that even if the selection of prints and drawings was meagre, they were admirably chosen to demonstrate Munch's preoccupation with certain themes and his tendency to move from a reasonably literal representation to more intensive colouristic and linear syntheses, most notably in the several versions of The Kiss or Embrace of 1892 and the Madonna of 1893-4.

The overall representation were so excellent that the general indifference of the public and of the younger generation of students is the more puzzling. There has been relatively little written about it and less spoken, at least among this reviewer's acquaintance and among his students who are usually responsive to what is happening only seventy miles to the west of New Haven. It cannot be that Munch is overly familiar to us, otherwise than through reproductions, for only three of the paintings were lent by museums in the United States, and there are very few in private collections. Can it be that he is better known as a graphic artist (there are good examples in many museums and an exceptional collection in the Boston Museum) so that the paintings, many of them on the same themes, look like tentative and often turgid preliminary exercises? Or is it that his best works are too saturated with fin-de-siecle symbolism and with a linearism frequently perilously close to decorative manipulation that now, convalescing from our recent enthusiasm for art nouveau, Munch looks to us tired and old-fashioned? Is his symbolic content no longer central to the experience of his art? It is clear that his attitude towards women too sterile, even too melodramatic, as in the startlingly inept and ugly Beast (Female Nudé) of 1902 from Hanover which looks like a prudish illustration for Wedekind? Or finally, may not Munch be greater than we can perceive at the moment because with him we cannot play the games of the artist, of finding in him seeds and sources of what came after, whether he willed it or not, that kind of art-historical hindsight which a few years ago almost persuaded us that Gustave Moreau was all the time trying to be an abstract expressionist instead of an empirical constructionist of very tall tales? I found it possible to play this game only once, with the beautifully luminous Starry Night of about 1893, from the J. H. Andresen Collection in Oslo, an almost square canvas filled with a few simplified shapes of trees and shore, in a restless restless restless and oddly off-hand just under the very tall tales? I found it possible to play this game only once, with the beautifully luminous Starry Night of about 1893, from the J. H. Andresen Collection in Oslo, an almost square canvas filled with a few simplified shapes of trees and shore, in a restless restless restless and oddly off-hand just under the

There was another picture whose dates, 1905 to 1927, embrace the most successful period of Central European Expressionism. This was the Death of Marat, from the Munch-Museet, a large canvas 6 ft wide whose gruesome dull blood-reds and greys and oddly off-hand just under the

The received opinion that Munch's work declined in expressive and stylistic intensity after 1909 and his return to Norway from the excitments of Central Europe was not contradicted by this exhibition. If anything the later works