

Marc Chagall's Biblical Message Exhibit at the Louvre – 06/23/1967

00:00:03

Adam Saulnier: At the Palais du Louvre, at the Galerie Mollien space, a large crowd of spectators was drawn by the private inauguration of the Chagall exhibit, The Biblicals of Chagall. As a painter, Chagall is a member of the School of Paris. This year he is turning 80 years old. He was born in Russia, in 1887. Practically speaking, he has always worked in France, and the exhibit is a series of paintings depicting the story of the Bible. The exhibit was inaugurated by Mr. André Malraux, the French minister of cultural Affairs.

00:00:46

André Malraux: The first thing that strikes me is this: here we have a huge crowd, as at all art openings, and openings have a lot in common with weddings. There are weddings where everyone seems happy, those are the ones that go smoothly, and there are weddings where everyone seems sad. In this case, it's an art opening where everyone seems joyful, and everyone seems joyful because, in the color of what we're looking at, there's a power of exaltation in that it moves, but not in a directly artistic or esthetic way, it deeply moves every person who looks on. Of course, I've more or less kept track of what Chagall has been doing. There's something in common with what could be called all the biblical works of his old age. But there remains something that had never appeared to this degree before Chagall. It's that, in sum, the Old Testament is prophetic, grandiose, but there are no golden legends. Deep down, that golden legend, those angels and all those old rabbi musicians and characters crossing the sky, all that has been around for quite some time and in a lot of different locations. Millions and millions of Jews have carried that in their hearts, over at least, the past 2000 years. So it's surprising to remark that not a trace of that remains. It's as though Europe had no fairytales. Here, on the one hand, Chagall provides a vast fairytale of Israel, and on the other hand, at the same time, he gives it an incredible poignancy through color. It has never been so grand. Lastly, something that isn't at all of the golden legend element: beauty, and definitively, a certain seduction that's relatively accessible to the masses. He gives them each something that belongs to the highest category of the museum, no matter which one he's in. It's been said that there's definitely some piece by Chagall that can be placed across from any great painter. I absolutely believe that. We're looking at one of the greatest colorists to have ever lived in the history of painting.

00:02:57

Adam Saulnier: And now Marc Chagall has distanced himself from the crowd, from his admirers, to explain to his grandchildren what he thinks of his own painting.

00:03:09

Marc Chagall: I wanted to convey that meaning, you know, of the poetry that I found to be greatly expressed in the Bible. Above all, I considered the Bible to be a work of poetry at the highest level and, to me, that's an incredible thing. I hope that, later, when you're older, you'll find out whether or not I'm right. Whether or not I made a mistake. So, of course, I just want to say words of love to you,

all that which is included in this biblical message. Not just for you, but also for friends and for all humanity.