

# The New Criterion

## Art

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### Exhibition note

by [Leann Davis Alspaugh](#)

On "Mystic Masque: Semblance and Reality in Georges Rouault, 1871-1958" at the McMullen Museum, Boston College.

"Mystic Masque: Semblance and Reality  
in Georges Rouault, 1871-1958"  
McMullen Museum, Boston College.  
August 30-December 7, 2008

Georges Rouault (1871–1958) has never been a crowd-pleaser. Though he was virtually ignored by the art world for decades, anniversary exhibitions in France, New York, and Boston have reintroduced this challenging artist.

Rouault was born in a cellar during an attack by the Communards against the Germans in Belleville, a working-class district of Paris. As France recovered from the Franco-Prussian war, the country went through a time of intense anticlericalism. Soon afterwards, a cultural reaction against secularism set in; one result was the Christian democratic movement and its push for a socially responsive church. Rouault's father fervently admired Lamennais, the Breton priest who suffered papal displeasure for his democratic writings, and he passed on t ...

**Leann Davis Alspaugh** writes about art, literature, and opera.

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