

# MIT List Center

## Jacques Lipchitz Sacrifice III

The German invasion of France in 1940 forced Lithuanian born Jewish artist Jacques Lipchitz to flee to New York. With no money or knowledge of English, he channeled his despair into his art making. Lipchitz began creating massive, emotive figures relating to the Bible or classical themes, as well as to his own joys and sorrows. Curator emerita of Williams College Museum of Art, Deborah Rothschild.

I think the idea of an innocent being murdered upset him deeply, and motivated him to make work dealing with this theme. In "Sacrifice III," the subject becomes a metaphor for the Jewish people, who Lipchitz thought of as the innocent victims of a horrible war.

Here, Lipchitz depicts the ancient Jewish ritual of slaughtering a rooster as a means of taking on a worshipper's sins. Usually, the animal was killed mercifully with a quick severing of the neck. In Lipchitz's interpretation, an imposing figure brutally stabs the bird with a dagger to the chest.

The more or less static rectilinear masses of the figure contrast with the curving Baroque forms of the cock, whose feathers, comb, wattles and chest protrude in all directions. This contrast adds to the sense of an implacable aggressor brutally attacking a panic-stricken and powerless victim. The bird's bound feet, wide eyes, open mouth, which one can imagine squawking in terror, further emotionally involve us in its plight.