

The Museum of Modern Art

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RECENT ACQUISITIONS SHOWN AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The Museum of Modern Art's annual exhibition of paintings, sculptures and constructions recently added to its collections will be on view from April 6 through June 12. Seventy works, dating from 1908 through 1965, by 68 artists from 20 countries have been selected and installed by Dorothy C. Miller, Curator of the Museum Collections, from a larger group, the rest of which will be shown later this year in small special exhibitions.

The international character of the Museum Collections is well illustrated in the exhibition although 27 of the artists represented are American. Of the others, one is Argentine, one Australian, three Canadian, one Colombian, one Cuban, five British, one French (although a number are living in France), three German, two Hungarian, two Iranian, one Israeli, seven Italian, one Japanese, one Moroccan, three Polish, one Portuguese, five Spanish, one Swedish and one Yugoslav.

The exhibition occupies the Main Hall and adjacent ground floor galleries, and continues in gallery 19 on the second floor. In the small east gallery a preamble to the main body of the exhibition contains eight earlier works, with one exception, by artists already represented in the Collection: Carlo Carrà, Stuart Davis, André Derain, Julio González, George Grosz, Victor Pasmore, Mark Tobey and Vieira da Silva. The rest of the exhibition is strictly contemporary, with works done chiefly in the 1960s by some 55 artists not previously represented in the painting and sculpture collections.

In one bay of the Main Hall three major acquisitions form a memorial group: two of these works are by distinguished Americans who have died within the last few months, Hans Hofmann and Frederick Kiesler. The third is a painting by the Hungarian-French/Vasarely which has been given in memory of G. David Thompson, noted art collector, trustee of the Museum and member of its acquisitions committee.

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The Hofmann painting, Memoria in Aeternum (dedicated by the artist to Carles, Gorky, Kline, Pollock and Tomlin), was first shown in the Museum's one-man exhibition in 1963 and is the third painting by Hofmann to enter the Collection. Although the Museum owns drawings by Kiesler and has frequently exhibited his sculpture and architectural work, his bronze Landscape is the first of his sculptures to be acquired. New York friends of G. David Thompson chose the Vasarely painting as a memorial in recognition of the fact that he was the first major collector of Vasarely's work in this country.

Lively contrasts are to be found throughout the exhibition. In the Main Hall a brilliant 13-foot optical construction by the Israeli Agam, first shown in THE RESPONSIVE EYE at the Museum last spring, contrasts with abstract paintings of subtlety and refinement by Denny, Dorazio, Feitelson, Macdonald Wright, Town and others. In a small darkened gallery nearby a motorized construction by the Hungarian Schöffer combines colored light with the motion of metal parts. Other kinetic and optical works are shown here and in gallery 19 on the second floor, which is devoted to optical art, some acquired from THE RESPONSIVE EYE, some more recently. Artists in this category include Bell, Bengston, Celentano, Cunningham, Fangor, Le Parc, Levi, Olson, Riley, Tadasky and others.

Striking contrasts continue in the northwest section of the exhibition. A large freely figurative painting by Kitaj is flanked by precise realist works by Pistoletto, Colville and López García. Abstract expressionist works by Marsicano and Farreras are shown with near-monochromatic paintings by Fernández Muro, Martin, Mikus and Quinte. Still other directions are found in the paintings by Lichtenstein and Warhol, the plexiglas relief by Kauffman and the painted constructions by Stazewski and Machlin.

The last extensive report on the Museum's painting and sculpture acquisitions was presented on February, 1965. Since then, other acquisitions have been announced in three smaller shows: ASSEMBLAGE shown last spring; THREE MAJOR SCULPTURES

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(Moore, Lipton, Rickey) last summer and THE KAY SAGE TANGUY BEQUEST of 36 works, in the autumn. Usually about half the acquisitions are purchases, half gifts. Many of the gifts have been solicited; that is, the Museum has sought out a donor for a work it has already selected. Other gifts have been proposed by the donors themselves, who often permit the Museum its choice from the work of a living artist.

Unlike many museums, The Museum of Modern Art has no funds from endowment or from budgeted income for buying painting and sculpture. It does have one large purchase fund, replenished frequently by Mrs. Simon Guggenheim since 1938, which, as the donor stipulates, is devoted to works of exceptional quality and lasting interest. Three other purchase funds given annually by the Larry Aldrich Foundation, Philip Johnson and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, are used chiefly for new works by younger artists. Several smaller sums make up the balance of available purchase funds except for contributions given for specific works.

All acquisitions are studied, discussed and voted on by the Committee on the Museum Collections, under the chairmanship of James Thrall Soby, before being submitted to the Board of Trustees. Other members of the Committee, which meets monthly, are William A. M. Burden, Ralph F. Colin, Walter Bareiss, Armand P. Bartos, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim, Philip Johnson, Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon, Mrs. Bliss Parkinson, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, Peter A. Rübel and Mrs. Bertram Smith. Ex-officio member is David Rockefeller, Chairman of the Board. Works of art are brought before the Committee by the curatorial staff of the Museum in consultation with the Director of the Museum Collections, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and subcommittees on Drawings and Prints, Photography and Architecture and Design.

Because this exhibition, like most acquisitions shows, contains a high proportion of recent work, it illustrates the risks deliberately taken in forming the Museum's Collection. The statement made in 1942 by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., still applies: "The Museum is aware that it may often guess wrong in its acquisitions.

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When it acquires a dozen recent paintings it will be lucky if in 10 years, three will still seem worth looking at, if in 20 years only one should survive. For the future the important problem is to acquire this one: the other nine will be forgiven -- and forgotten. But meanwhile we live in the present, and for the present these other nine will seem just as necessary and useful, serving their purpose by inclusion in exhibitions here and on tour, so long as their artistic lives shall last. Sooner or later time will eliminate them."

Photographs, checklist and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw,
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