

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK

11 WEST 53rd STREET
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

SARAH NEWMAYER, PUBLICITY DIRECTOR

May 2, 1944.

TO Art Editors
City Editors

Dear Sirs:

As already announced, the public opening of our big fifteenth anniversary exhibition Art in Progress will be Wednesday, May 24. The members' opening and preview will be Tuesday evening, May 23.

Contrary to our usual Tuesday press preview, however, we will hold our press preview on MONDAY, May 22, from 2 to 6 P.M. to avoid conflict with the press preview of the Metropolitan Museum, which had already chosen Tuesday. We are requesting that reviews of Art in Progress for the daily papers be published on Wednesday, May 24, the day of the public opening. As the Metropolitan had previously designated Sunday, May 28, as the day for reviews of its big exhibition, we should like to request reviewers to use the following weekend of June 2, 3 and 4 for the weekend reviews of our Art in Progress exhibition.

All this may seem rather complicated but it is actually a simplification of dates that would otherwise conflict. I hope that you will all find it convenient to use Monday, May 22, as the preview day and publish your daily reviews on Wednesday, May 24, and your weekend reviews the weekend of June 2. If you have any questions will you please telephone me at Circle 5-8900.

Sincerely yours,



Sarah Newmeyer
Publicity Director

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11 WEST 53rd STREET
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SARAH NEWMAYER, PUBLICITY DIRECTOR

May 8, 1944.

TO Art Editors
City Editors

Dear Sirs:

This is in reference to my letter of May 2 regarding our large fifteenth anniversary exhibition, Art in Progress, which opens to the public Wednesday, May 24.

I requested in that letter that weekend reviews of our exhibition be held for publication the second weekend following (June 2-4) to avoid conflict with reviews of the Metropolitan exhibition the weekend of May 26-28.

In response to my letter, several critics have telephoned me they prefer not to postpone their reviews of our show. In fact, editors of two newspapers have refused to permit their critics to delay the reviews.

I am therefore withdrawing my request for a postponement of the weekend review and asking only that the critics observe the Wednesday, May 24th, date for reviews in the daily newspapers. The timing of the weekend review will be left to each critic's individual decision.

I regret exceedingly that this conflict in dates arose. We try to avoid such conflict, but in putting on a very large show such as our fifteenth anniversary exhibition it is sometimes impossible to get everything ready for the time originally planned.

Sincerely yours,



Sarah Newmeyer
Publicity Director

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 1944

FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION IS LARGEST IN HISTORY
OF MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The largest exhibition in the history of the Museum of Modern Art will be presented to the public Wednesday, May 24, when the Museum opens its fifteenth anniversary show Art in Progress. For the first time all departments of the Museum will be represented simultaneously in a single exhibition. Filling the three gallery floors and spreading out into the sculpture garden, it will include sections on painting and sculpture, architecture, industrial design, dance and theatre design, photography, posters, films, circulating exhibitions, and art for young people. The exhibition will be on view throughout the summer, closing October 8. The Museum's sculpture garden, where luncheon and tea are served, will also open on May 24.

The Museum was organized in the summer of 1929 when three New York women--Miss Lillie P. Bliss, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan--invited four other people--A. Conger Goodyear, Mrs. W. Murray Crane, Frank Crowninshield, and Paul J. Sachs--to meet with them to establish the Museum of Modern Art. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., was appointed Director of the Museum. On November 7, 1929, the Museum's first exhibition Cézanne, Gauguin, Seurat, van Gogh was opened to the public in the Heckscher Building at 57th Street and Fifth Avenue.

The fifteenth anniversary show, opening May 24, is the Museum's 258th exhibition. In the book Art in Progress which the Museum will publish simultaneously with the exhibition, the following statement appears in the foreword:

"To the best of its collective ability and the extent of its resources, by means of its collections, its exhibitions and its publications, the Museum of Modern Art endeavors to minister to the enjoyment of contemporary painting, sculpture, graphic art, architecture, industrial design, theatre and dance design, photography, and the films, and to be helpful to those whose task or pleasure it may be to study them. It does not propose to be the final arbiter of the relative importance and accomplishment of the various schools of thought about art, or the different conceptions of modern beauty. Neither is it a complacent repository of established values. It is rather a center of artistic life to indicate the inspiration of the vigorous protagonists of the living arts and to clarify the beliefs and sensibilities which animate them."

So successful were the Museum's exhibitions from its inception, that within two years a new home at 11 West 53 Street was found for

its expanding activities. On February 9, 1932 the Museum opened its first exhibition International Modern Architecture at the new address and established its Department of Architecture. The second department to be established was the Library, in the Fall of 1932. The same year the Museum sent out its first travelling exhibition A Brief Survey of Modern Painting.

In the Fall of 1933 a Department of Circulating Exhibitions was established. The Film Library of the Museum was founded in May 1935 and, because there was not enough room in the West 53rd Street building, occupied a suite of offices at 485 Madison Avenue. From 1935 on, various other departments, including Membership, Publications, Photography, Exhibitions, Industrial Design, were established, although activities relating to most of them had existed since the early days of the Museum. The Educational Project was begun in 1937 and the Dance Archives established in March 1940 and later changed to the Department of Dance and Theatre Design.

A few statistics may indicate the Museum's growth and accomplishments: the Museum has held 257 exhibitions in New York and published 90 books of which 274,000 copies have been sold, exclusive of the 173,000 copies distributed to members. The Library has more than 10,000 volumes and 7,000 slides. The Circulating Exhibitions Department has arranged 2,655 showings of its exhibitions in the United States and abroad, and has at present a program of approximately 130 exhibitions with 550 bookings annually.

The Film Library has acquired 17,730,848 feet of film which would take approximately 3,300 hours to run, or 408 eight-hour days of continuous projection. From these archives numerous programs have been made up in series or separately for showing at the Museum and for circulation to other non-commercial institutions throughout the country. In addition to the daily programs at the Museum itself, 819 other organizations or groups have shown its films. Of these, 451 have used the Museum programs regularly, the rest occasionally. Users include 58 universities and 83 colleges, many Army camps, U.S.O. clubs, churches, libraries, hospitals and prisons--institutions as varied as the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, Yale University School of Fine Arts and Cornell University Theatre.

The Museum's exhibitions fall into four categories: 1) one-man shows; 2) exhibitions devoted to a particular modern movement; 3) survey exhibitions; 4) public affairs exhibitions. Art in Progress is the Museum's third general survey of the living arts and cross section

of its own activities. The other two were the fifth anniversary exhibition Modern Works of Art, in 1934, and the tenth anniversary exhibition Art in our Time held in 1939 at the opening of the Museum's permanent home at 11 West 53 Street to which the Museum moved after a two-year sojourn in the Time-Life building in Rockefeller Center. For the sake of the record the Museum closed its last exhibition Prehistoric Rock Pictures from the Frobenius Collection on May 30, 1937 in its original building at 11 West 53 Street before the move to Rockefeller Center. It opened the new building on West 53rd Street with its tenth anniversary exhibition on May 11, 1939.

Monroe Wheeler, Director of Exhibitions and Publications for the Museum, has planned and directed Art in Progress, each section of which has an individual director. The sections of the exhibition, and statements in the catalog relating to them, are as follows:

First Floor

DANCE AND THEATRE DESIGN, exhibition directed by George Amberg. "Here we have an opportunity to contrast theatre designs by certain artists with their major canvases which appear in the painting section, and they may seem to invite comparative, if not competitive, appreciation.... Theatre drawings require a special effort to interpret their scenic implications as well as their spatial realization. But if this peculiar artistic idiom speaks to the chance beholder with directness, it will be found just as revealing in meaning and as rich in emotion as any conception 'for art's sake.' And true artistic vision will clearly transcend the apparent negligence of design, conveying artistic significance to its every expression.

"No single exhibition can possibly deal with the entirety of scenic problems. Of necessity the drawings presented had to be limited in size and subject. In order to create an overall unity for styles so widely divergent, all the drawings were selected from the highly poetic and imaginary sphere of lyric theatre and ballet, in the hope of providing a consistent contrapuntal line going through the polyphonic richness of color and design. Properly translated in terms of space and light, of movement and function, these drawings may convey infinitely more meaning and pleasure than seems immediately expressed."

Designs by artists not only of the United States but France, England, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Russia, Italy, Spain, Hungary, Germany, Mexico, Switzerland, are included in the exhibition. Among them are works by Aronson, Bakst, Beaton, Berard, Berman, Cadmus, Chaney, Chirico, Enters, Ernst, Gontcharova, Jones, Larionov, Laurencin, Lauterer, Picasso, Rivera, Roca, Soudeikine, Tchelitchew, Vertes, Watkins and others.

Wire figurines designed and executed by Ruth Vollmer will be used to display dance costumes especially created for the exhibition by Chagall, Dali, Léger, Schawinsky and Seligmann. Two dance figurines have been designed and executed by Alexander Calder.

PHOTOGRAPHY, exhibition directed by Nancy Newhall. "The Museum has drawn upon its own Collection of more than two thousand examples to present a brief survey of a century's achievement. Creative photography has been divided into three categories: the abstract image, the lyric image, the objective image.... The dominant intention of a man's lifework has generally been the basis for placing him in one category or another, although the chief twentieth-century photographers have contributed powerfully to all three.... The Collection is already the most important and representative owned by any American museum. Although its first item was acquired eleven years ago, its main development has been in the shadow of four years of war."

The photographers whose work is shown include Berenice Abbott, Ansel Adams, Eugene Atget, Mathew Brady, Dr. Harold Edgerton, Walker Evans, David Octavius Hill, Helen Levitt, Lisette Model, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Barbara Morgan, Eadweard Muybridge, Dr. Eliot Porter, Man Ray, Edward Steichen, Ralph Steiner, Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, William Henry Fox Talbot, William Vandivert, Weegee, and Edward Weston.

MODERN POSTERS, exhibition directed by Monroe Wheeler. "The basis for judging posters is, roughly speaking, this: a poster is a kind of picture mechanically reproduced, intended to be seen at a distance, usually outdoors, having some purpose of instruction or advertisement. Thus it partakes of the varied esthetics of pictures in general--paintings, drawings, and other works of graphic art. It has no esthetic of its own, except the restraints having to do with its practical purpose; persuasion, promotion, propaganda, and one peculiar problem, the matter of sheer visual potency--the necessity of making an appeal and making sense even at a distance.

"Like all forms of twentieth-century art, the poster has evolved in accordance with new esthetic concepts, and of these cubism and abstract art have proved the most stimulating and beneficial. They were responsible for the application of geometrical principles to poster design and for emancipating it from the apathy and timidity of commercial tradition. The finest posters of our epoch may be attributed to the imaginative deployment of the elements of space, color, type and illustration which the abstract movement incited."

The small posters are installed in the seldom-used, narrow corridor at the extreme east of the first floor of the Museum. This corridor has a door to the garden. After viewing the posters in the corridor, the visitor may walk into the garden and look back at the very large posters displayed along the length of the plate glass wall of the Museum's first floor.

Posters by artists not only of the United States but Czechoslovakia, England, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Spain and Switzerland are included in the exhibition. Among them are posters by Atherton, Bayer, Beall, Carigiet, Carlu, Cassandre, Fougasse, Herkendell, Kauffer, Kukryniksy, Matter, Nason, Schawinsky, Shahn, Soglow and Tschichold.

The first floor concludes with a small exhibition showing some of the facilities and services of the Department of CIRCULATING EXHIBITIONS. In the catalog Elodie Courter, Director of the Department, writes in part as follows:

"Both the large and small Museum exhibitions are sent on tour, and reduced versions of major shows are prepared by the Department for institutions which cannot accommodate the comprehensive collections. In addition, the Department undertakes to provide exhibitions for small museums, colleges and schools which more directly meet their special needs than the shows originating in the Museum. The Museum has made available a total of 65 collections of painting, 46 of architecture, 27 of photography, 16 of posters, 15 of commercial and industrial art, 13 of graphic arts, 12 of color reproductions, 10 of sculpture, 7 theatre and dance exhibitions, 4 film shows, and 55 exhibitions on the various arts prepared in collaboration with the Museum's Educational Program.

"By specializing in one field, by providing authoritative information on subjects treated in its exhibitions, by devising methods of packing valuable works of art which are safe and almost fool-proof, by designing exhibitions for traveling which successive exhibitors can install easily and effectively, the Museum has been able to render a unique service to this and other countries. The planned extension of these activities to meet the needs of the smallest and poorest institution will mean that the citizen of the next decade will be more adequately informed of contemporary events in terms of the arts of various countries. Other countries are already establishing similar visual educational programs and it is to be hoped that in the future the exchange of cultural material will promote both national and international understanding of the world we live in."

A wall design in the main hall of the Museum indicates by means of still pictures and statistics the work of the FILM LIBRARY. The real exhibition of this section will, however, be on display as

usual in the form of film programs to be shown twice daily and three times Sundays in the Auditorium of the Museum. A new program for the summer will be announced shortly.

Second Floor

PAINTING AND SCULPTURE, exhibition directed by James Thrall Soby. "This exhibition is devoted to the period which has always been the Museum's concern--the late 19th and the 20th centuries. We have tried to include works both of fulfillment and of promise: works widely recognized as masterpieces of modern art; and works by younger artists of rising power and authority. In neither category is the representation comprehensive, but we hope that in both it will be found pleasureable and rewarding.

"Wherever possible the leaders of 20th century art have been represented by the most forceful examples available. Though tenderness may be no less commendable than strength, calm than passion, grace than impact, it seems useful in these times of growing conservatism to reaffirm the vigor, daring and revolutionary fervor of those who led painting from the brilliant topsoil of Impressionism to rougher--and deeper--ground."

The entire second floor is devoted to the painting and sculpture section of Art in Progress. Among the artists whose works are shown are Albright, Arp, Barlach, Bellows, Berman, Blume, Brook, Burchfield, Cashwan, Cassatt, Cézanne, de Chirico, de Creeft, Degas, Demuth, Despiau, Epstein, Evergood, Feininger, Flannagan, Gauguin, van Gogh, Graves, Gropper, Gross, Hartley, Hopper, Klee, Kokoschka, Lehmbruck, Levine, Maillol, Mangravite, Marin, Matisse, Matta, Mondrian, Moore, Orozco, Picasso, Quirt, Rivera, Rouault, Rousseau, Seurat, Sheeler, Sloan, Stella, Tanguy, Tchelitchew, Toulouse-Lautrec, Utrillo, Watkins, Weber and Zorach.

Third Floor

DESIGN FOR USE, exhibition directed by Serge Chermayeff. This section of Art in Progress shows the various human and mechanical factors that influence the shapes of things we use in everyday life. The first part illustrates the influence of mechanical progress, new materials and revolutionary technical discoveries in the form of such familiar things as scissors, razors, radios and telephones. It further shows the difference between organic design, which seeks first of all to provide us with better tools for living and creates its forms through a well-planned integration of function and technology, and eclectic design that borrows unrelated forms and hides the purpose of an object in a "package of style."

The second phase of Design for Use deals with the new plastic materials and molding processes which are possibly the greatest single influence on the shape of useful things of today and tomorrow. Here it can be seen how science, through this new development in materials and processes, has freed us from many of the limitations of the old materials and enabled us to realize a more complete union between function and form.

In the last part of Design for Use, the visitor is given a glimpse of things to come. Here are shown a few examples of modern fighting tools such as airplane parts, a bomber nose and a boat hull. Fighting tools are the only objects made today that utilize fully the contribution of the new plastics. We can, however, easily recognize the promises of the new materials when it becomes possible to apply them for the creation of tools for better living in peacetime.

BUILT IN U.S.A., 1932-44, exhibition directed by Elizabeth Mock. "The modern architect has a broad view of the scope and social responsibilities of his profession, so that architecture becomes more than a matter of designing the shells of individual buildings. The architect deals with mechanical equipment, with furniture, textiles and utensils; he deals with the space around buildings and with the relationship of one building to another. The architectural process of rational analysis and creative synthesis carries over without break into design for the crafts and for industry, and into landscaping and city planning."

Forty-seven buildings and building groups selected by the

Architecture Committee of the Museum as outstanding examples of recent American architecture will be shown by means of enlargements, plans, models and color slides in continuous projection. These represent the work of architects in many parts of the country and include buildings in fourteen states.

MODERN ART FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, exhibition directed by Victor D'Amico. "When it was established in 1937, the Educational Program was undertaken to develop among children and young people an appreciation of the arts of their time. By this means we sought to confirm art as a continuation of our cultural tradition. The immediate aim was to make art vital and useful to children. Because most museums are organized primarily for adults, and the Museum of Modern Art was no exception, a special gallery was created for children and young people, where they could enjoy exhibitions planned for them, or selected and arranged by them.

"In the seven years of its existence the Educational Program has proved that the art museum has an important and vital role in art education. The museum is not a substitute for the school, but a complementary agent which enriches and extends the creative education of youth."

A series of 16 panels, on which are mounted photographs, photographic cutouts, materials and text, explain the aim and activities of this Department. These are supplemented by shelves and pedestals with additional material and models. The titles of the panels indicate the range of activities: What Children Like in Modern Art; Our Place in the Museum; New Teaching Techniques for Children; New Teaching Techniques for High School Students; Demonstrations by Artists; Art for the Schools of the United States; Dramatizing Art through Display; Understanding through Participation; Play Techniques for Learning; Designed for Children; Written for Young People; Teachers Need Training Too; Teacher Leadership and Cooperation; Art in Rehabilitation; Art Education Goes to War.

The Museum of Modern Art has been visited by approximately 3,400,000 persons in the fifteen years of its existence. The highest attendance for any single show in the old building on West 53rd Street was the van Gogh exhibition: 142,341, an average of 1,452 per day. The attendance in other cities throughout the country plus that in New York totaled 886,631. In the present building the highest attendance for any exhibition was 290,888 for Italian Masters, an average of 3,931 per day.

Trustees of the Museum are: Stephen C. Clark, Chairman of the Board; Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1st Vice-Chairman; Sam A. Lewisohn, 2nd Vice-Chairman; John Hay Whitney, President; John E. Abbott, Executive Vice-President; Mrs. David M. Levy, Treasurer; Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, William A. M. Burden, Mrs. W. Murray Crane, Walt Disney, Marshall Field, Philip L. Goodwin, A. Conger Goodyear, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim, Henry R. Luce, Archibald MacLeish, David H. McAlpin, Henry Allen Moe, William S. Paley, Mrs. John Parkinson, Jr., Mrs. Charles S. Payson, Beardsley Ruml, James Thrall Soby, Edward M. M. Warburg, Mrs. George Henry Warren, Jr.

NOTE to Editors and Writers:

As this largest show held by the Museum covers so many activities and fields it was necessary to write either one very long release or several shorter ones. Paper has been saved by the former method. For your convenience I have also included a brief history of the Museum and vital statistics to date. Those who refer frequently to the Museum may find it helpful to retain this release for future reference.

I should like to express to you my very great appreciation of your interest in the Museum and your many courtesies to it and to me. With best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Sarah Newmeyer
Publicity Director