

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 110

FOR RELEASE:

Wednesday, Oct. 4, 1961

PRESS PREVIEW:

Tuesday, Oct. 3, 1961

11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Assemblage, a method initiated by major artists early in this century, which has been increasingly practiced by young artists here and abroad since World War II, is the subject of a major exhibition The Art of Assemblage at the Museum of Modern Art from October 4 through November 12. Two hundred and fifty works by 130 artists were selected for the show by William C. Seitz, Associate Curator, Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions, who has also written the accompanying book.*

An "assemblage" (a more inclusive term than the familiar "collage") is a work of art made by fastening together cut or torn pieces of paper, clippings from newspapers, photographs, bits of cloth, fragments of wood, metal or other such materials, shells or stones, or even objects such as knives and forks, chairs and tables, parts of dolls and mannequins, and automobile fenders. The symbolic meaning of these objects, not originally intended as art materials, can be as important as their realistic aspects.

Seitz writes:

When paper is soiled or lacerated, when cloth is worn, stained or torn, when wood is split, weathered or patterned with peeling coats of paint, when metal is bent or rusted, they gain connotations which unmarked materials lack. More specific associations are denoted when an object can be identified as the sleeve of a shirt, a dinner fork, the leg of a rococo chair, a doll's eye or hand, an automobile bumper or a social security card.

Collage and the method of juxtaposition are relevant to the basic questions raised by 20th century art--the nature of reality, the nature of painting itself, and the methods by which creative thought is organized.

Every work of art is an incarnation: an investment of matter with spirit. The term 'assemblage' has been singled out with this duality in mind, to denote not only a specific technical procedure and form used in the literary and musical as well as the plastic arts, but also a complex of attitudes and ideas. Just as the introduction of oil painting in 15th century Flanders and Italy paralleled a new desire to reproduce the appearance of the visible world, collage and related modes of construction manifest a predisposition that is characteristically modern.

The exhibition opens with cubist collages of 1913 and 1914 by Picasso, Braque and Gris, and continues with Severini and Carrá, who, with other futurists, were making typographical collages by 1915. These are shown as examples of the new way in which 20th century artists incorporated reality in the picture without imitating it.

Dada, the international movement christened in 1916 which demonstrated that art could be created with any elements whatsoever, is represented by collages of Max Ernst composed of pasted photographs and half-tones (1920), a George Grosz oil portrait of

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* The Art of Assemblage by William C. Seitz. 176 pages, 150 plates (11 in color). Published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed by Doubleday & Co., Inc. \$6.50

the same year incorporating real buttons and magazine advertisements and many other works. Among 13 works by Marcel Duchamp are some of the famous "readymades" such as a bottle dryer, unaltered, which, in 1914, he proclaimed to be a work of art.

An entire gallery is devoted to 35 collages by Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) whose ideas and works prefigure controversial recent developments. His small, beautifully composed pictures are made of bus and train tickets, stamps, wrappers, newsprint, buttons and other refuse which he collected in his pockets as he walked in the streets..

Surrealist objects from the late 20's and 30's, dramatizing the aesthetic of irrational juxtaposition, include a construction of painted stone, shell, wood and mirror by Miro, another by Tanguy of painted wood and stuffed cloth and a composition of wood and miscellaneous objects--among them miniature boxing gloves--by André Breton. Shown together in one gallery are fourteen works by the American Joseph Cornell, who, beginning in the 1930's, created evocative arrangements enclosed in glass-covered boxes incorporating pasted reproductions, wine glasses, marbles, maps and flowing sand.

Later work in the exhibition is introduced by Robert Motherwell, who has worked in collage or combinations of collage and painting for more than 15 years, who along with Esteban Vicente is the leading exponent of the papier collé among the painters who brought about the resurgence of abstract art in the United States after 1945. Other works in this gallery are collages by Ann Ryan, Perle Fine, a large oil on cut up canvas and cloth by Marca-Relli, and pasted papers and charcoal by Vicente.

For younger artists, Seitz says the tone was set in great part by Willem de Kooning.

In his totally committed battle between pure art and the street, in his examination of hypnotizing details in tabloid photographs, and in the transfer of newsprint to pigment...de Kooning recorded the impact of commercial culture in post-war art. Although he was surely not an isolated voice, he intensified the interest in 'pop culture' -- in the expendable art and literature that became so important as a subject for...so many painters and assemblers. For a new generation and in another spirit, de Kooning's adulterative gesture may have had an effect not unlike Picasso's in 1912.

Ettore Colla's large iron sculptures in the exhibition are composed entirely of used farm implements; Stankiewicz uses abandoned parts of industrial, automotive and electrical equipment; Dubuffet creates sculpture of clinkers, and portraits of butterfly wings; Louise Nevelson makes entire walls of old stair spindles, and fragments of what were once useful and decorative objects of wood.

As collagists from Gris to Man Ray and Cornell have done before, Cohen and Baj employ mirrors: "...this strange object that dissolves its own surface but brings into being a counterpart of the real world." Dolls and mannequins, common in surrealist objects and used by Edward Kienholz, Bruce Connor and others, can elicit a range of amusing, erotic, ludicrous or horrifying references. Arman uses separate parts of the body, as in Little Hands. John Latham works almost exclusively with old books:

"Revered or feared, for centuries treasured or burned, how can one imagine their full potential as expression of form and symbol?"

Seitz also points out that the delight with mechanization extolled by many earlier artists is now lacking. John Chamberlain makes his sculptures from salvaged, smashed, bent and rusted car bodies; Jason Seley uses automobile bumpers; Jean Tinguely, cast-off bits and pieces of industrial debris. César crushes eviscerated auto body shells. Christo Coetzee uses discarded bicycles.

The finished works of assemblage are often closer to everyday life than either abstract or representational art. Some of the objects in the exhibition such as Victor Brauner's Wolf Table (stuffed head and tail, wooden tabletop and legs), Edward Kienholz' Jane Doe (a mannequin head set on a sewing table surrounded by a floor length skirt) or George Hermes' The Poet (a table, a horn and a pile of old papers) resemble furniture more than sculpture.

The final step--from art to the presentation of objects assembled in ordinary daily acts and without esthetic intention--is seen in Daniel Spoerri's "snare pictures" in which unplanned groups of household utensils have been glued together and presented vertically rather than horizontally. The same "new realism" is reflected in the lacerated posters by Jacques de la Villeglé, Raymond Hains and François Dufrêne, who scrape posters from walls and present them as pictures.

Following the New York showing, The Art of Assemblage will be shown at The Dallas Museum for Contemporary Arts (January 9 - February 11, 1962) and the San Francisco Museum of Art (March 5 - April 15, 1962). The works of art in the exhibition have been lent by artists, private collectors, and museum and galleries here and abroad.

Photographs and additional information are available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N.Y. CI 5-8900.

the art of

assemblage

Juan Carlos Mesa

The President and Trustees of The Museum of Modern Art request the pleasure of your company at the Members' Preview
on Tuesday evening, October 3 from 5-11 o'clock 11 West 53 Street New York 19 This invitation will admit two

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*Sent to Phil. Bulletin
Inquirer*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 29, 1961

The Philadelphia Museum of Art has loaned seven works to an exhibition of "The Art of Assemblage" opening at the Museum of Modern Art on October 4. The exhibition, consisting of over 250 collages and other varieties of art assembled from paper, cloth, wood, metal, manufactured objects and other unorthodox materials, is the first to demonstrate fully the importance of collage and its expanded forms.

The works on loan from the Philadelphia Museum are five "readymades" by Marcel Duchamp--objects such as a steel comb, a ball of twine in a brass frame, and a bird cage filled with marble blocks, proclaimed by Duchamp to be works of art; a construction by Miro of painted stone, shell, wood and a mirror; and a Kurt Schwitters assemblage of painted and carved wood, wire mesh, paper and cardboard and other objects.

The exhibition, which will be on view through November 12, was directed by William C. Seitz, Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions and author of an extensive book on assemblage published in conjunction with the show.

For additional information and photographs contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N.Y. CI 5-8900.

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Richard Stankiewicz' 1961 sculpture, made from a water boiler, oil filters and sheet steel, has been loaned by Mr. and Mrs. Burton G. Tremaine of the Miller Company, Meriden, to an international exhibition of "The Art of Assemblage" opening October 4 at the Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition, consisting of over 250 works of art assembled from cloth, paper, wood, metal, manufactured objects and other unorthodox materials, is the first to demonstrate fully the importance of collage and its various expanded forms. It will be on view through November 12.

Sent to Florence Berkman, Hartford Times

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Marcel Duchamp's Tu m', a 1918 oil painting with a real washing-brush, safety pins and a nut and bolt, has been loaned by the Yale University Art Gallery to an exhibition of "The Art of Assemblage" opening at the Museum of Modern Art on October 4. The exhibition consisting of over 250 works of art assembled from cloth, paper, wood, metal, manufactured objects and other unorthodox materials, is the first to demonstrate fully the importance of collage and its various expanded forms. It will be on view through November 12.

Sent to New Haven Register and Yale Daily News