

MEMORANDUM

To: _____
From: ELIZABETH THOMPSON
Date: _____
Subject: Release

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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or thereafter

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MARK ROTHKO by Peter Selz. 44 pages, 29 photos (6 in color). Published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed to booksellers throughout the world by Doubleday and Co., Inc. \$2.25.

Mark Rothko, a 44-page monograph by Peter Selz, will be published by the Museum of Modern Art on March 7* in conjunction with a major exhibition of Rothko's paintings selected and installed by the author. The book is the first to be devoted to the controversial American artist, whose highly original style is characterized by large floating rectangles of color. Twenty-seven paintings dating from 1945 to the present are illustrated, six in color.

Mr. Selz traces the evolution of Rothko's style from surrealist watercolors of the mid-forties; canvases of the late forties in which he used diffuse flat areas of brilliant color; to the greatly simplified works of the fifties in which most conventional visual elements have been eliminated.

Rothko's brilliant color is largely subdued in his recent paintings. In 1958 he painted a series of dark reddish-brown murals in which the characteristic solid forms are abandoned for open rectangles. In subsequent canvases he has combined the somber palette of the murals with the figuration of previous periods.

Although Rothko has eliminated the figure as a symbol, his primary concern is with humanist values, as Mr. Selz notes:

"Holding tenaciously to humanist values, he paints pictures which are in fact related to man's scale and his measure. But whereas in Renaissance painting man was the measure of space, in Rothko's painting space, i.e. the picture, is the measure of man...."

These silent paintings with their enormous, beautiful, opaque surfaces are mirrors, reflecting what the viewer brings with him. In this sense, they can even be said to deal directly with human emotions, desires, relationships, for they are mirrors of our fantasy and serve as echoes of our experience."

The book includes, in addition to Mr. Selz' critical essay, a brief biography of the Russian-born painter. Rothko came to the United States in 1913 at the age of ten. After two years at Yale University he settled in New York where he studied briefly at the Art Students League. He has exhibited extensively here and abroad since 1929 when a number of his paintings were selected for a show at the Opportunity Gallery in New York.

A bibliography of thirty entries and a list of Rothko's exhibitions with references to reviews make the book particularly useful for students. A catalog of the current exhibition, which will be on view through March 12, is also included.

Mr. Selz, Curator of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions, is the author of German Expressionist Painting, New Images of Man and co-editor of Art Nouveau.

Review copies and photographs are available from Nancy Reed, Assistant Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. CI 5-8900.

*Note to out-of-town reviewers: Since Museum of Modern Art books are frequently published in conjunction with an exhibition there is an unavoidable lag between the date they go on sale at the Museum and delivery date to booksellers throughout the country. Although local publication date of Mark Rothko is March 7, the book will not be available in bookstores outside New York until July.