

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

January 5, 1972

John B. Hightower has submitted his resignation as Director of the Museum of Modern Art, it was announced today by David Rockefeller, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and William S. Paley, President. Mr. Hightower has served as Director since May, 1970, previous to which time he was Executive Director of the New York State Council on the Arts.

"The Museum," Mr. Hightower, "which has played such an extraordinary role in expanding the awareness of the visual arts of our time is by purpose and charter an institution that must remain reflective and interpretive. My own personal interests and inclinations are more oriented toward the application and introduction of the arts to all aspects and segments of society. Consequently, and with great reluctance, I am hereby submitting my resignation so that I can devote my energies to a broader range of cultural and social concerns."

In making the announcement Messrs. Rockefeller and Paley said, "We are accepting Mr. Hightower's resignation with deep regret. We greatly appreciate the contributions he has made during a period of transition for the Museum and in a time of greatly increased demands upon its services. Our deficit has been reduced substantially and new programs initiated. We join all our colleagues on the Board in wishing him a most satisfying and productive time in his future undertakings."

It was also announced that Richard Oldenburg, who has been Director of Publications at the Museum since 1969, will serve as Acting Director. He will be supported by an administrative committee consisting of the Museum's

top level curatorial and administrative personnel. Previous to coming to the Museum, Mr. Oldenburg, who is a brother of the artist Claes Oldenburg, was managing editor of the Trade Department at the publishing house of Crowell, Collier and MacMillan, Inc. He was graduated from Harvard in 1954.

A search committee will be appointed in the near future to recommend a successor to Mr. Hightower. It will consult with members of our senior staff, with representatives of the Professional and Administrative Staff Association and with others.

The full text of Mr. Hightower's letter follows.

January 5, 1972

Mr. David Rockefeller
Chairman of the Board
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York, New York 10019

Mr. William S. Paley
President
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York, New York 10019

Dear David and Bill:

The purpose of this letter is to submit my resignation as Director of the Museum of Modern Art to be effective as soon as it is practicable to do so.

The almost two years that I have been Director have been demanding ones for the Museum; indeed they have been trying for all major cultural institutions. Despite the difficulties and frustrations which continue to pose severe problems, I feel that the organizational and financial condition of the institution has improved measurably during the period of my directorship. The deficit which was originally projected at nearly \$1,800,000 for the past fiscal year was reduced over the course of that year by one million dollars to just under \$800,000. Further cutbacks implemented during the course of the current fiscal year as well as the initiation of a comprehensive development program indicate that our financial condition will improve still further during the next several years. The formation of the professional union among the staff at the Museum has led to what I consider to be an extremely effective

and workable contract which in the long run will, I am sure, be of benefit to the entire museum profession. The Projects series of exhibitions initiated early in 1971 has given us a chance to expose the work of younger and more experimental artists to what is for all the programs of the Museum a loyal and impressive public.

To be sure, the period of time has not been without tumult and a certain number of disappointments; it has, however, also been a period of meaningful accomplishments and very real rewards.

Nevertheless, I feel that my commitment to all the arts and their inherent capacities as a humanizing influence for society can better be pursued elsewhere. The Museum which has played such an extraordinary role in expanding the awareness of the visual arts of our time is by purpose and charter an institution that must remain reflective and interpretive. My own personal interests and inclinations are more oriented toward the application and introduction of the arts to all aspects and segments of society. Consequently, and with great reluctance, I am hereby submitting my resignation so that I can devote my energies to a broader range of cultural and social concerns.

My respect for you and the other members of the Board of Trustees remains legion. In particular, I want to say how much I admire and respect the members of the staff whose dedication and devoted concern for the Museum deserves and has my continuing respect.

Sincerely,

JOHN B. HIGHTOWER