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★ JOSEPH CORNELL ★

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART 11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 10019 956-7501

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JOSEPH CORNELL RETROSPECTIVE TO OPEN AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

JOSEPH CORNELL, the last in The Museum of Modern Art's series of exhibitions celebrating its 50th Anniversary, will open to the public in the second floor galleries on November 17, 1980. Loans from major museums, private collections, and works from the artist's estate that have never been seen publicly, make up the exhibition of some 200 constructions and 75 collages, which will remain on view through January 20, 1981. It is directed by the Museum's Senior Curator of Painting and Sculpture, Kynaston McShine.

Cornell is best known for his small-scale box constructions, in which he juxtaposed familiar but unrelated objects, pasted papers and reproductions, to portray his private visions of tangible and imaginary worlds. McShine writes of Cornell's work: "Founded in the magic and mystery of the poetic experience, his collages, films, and constructions are affirmations of serenity, recollection, enchantment, beauty, the extraordinary." Enclosed by glass, Cornell's boxes contain sometimes free-moving, sometimes anchored trinkets: balls and cubes, marbles, seashells, watch parts, butterflies, thimbles, clay pipes, cordial glasses, as well as maps of cities and the stars, strips or blocks of print, postage stamps; all found objects or gleaned from secondhand shops and dime stores. "Everything can be used," Cornell once said,

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"but one doesn't know it at the time. How does one know what a certain object will tell another?"

Cornell was largely self-taught. He used what he read and interpreted from his research, and managed to encompass foreign culture, particularly that of 19th-century France and Renaissance Italy, in many of his constructions. The Renaissance understanding of perspective is recalled in certain of the Observatory series. Although he never traveled, his work contained, in the words of Kynaston McShine, "...evocations of hotel chambers, the Grand Tour of Europe, palaces, constellations, and sea journeys."

His first pieces were linked with Surrealism, a label he rejected, though he acknowledged the influence of the movement on his work, but Cornell broke away early from the literalism, the doctrines of the Surrealists and, for a while, utilized the formal aspects of Cubism. Soon he freed himself from those limitations and thereafter was not a part of any group, but began to make forays into a less structured style and one closer to his unique vision. He drew on the broad base of 20th-century abstraction, but repeatedly recalled 19th-century Romanticism by using the bibelots of the Victorian era to express his fascination with the past. In his introduction to the exhibition catalog, McShine describes Cornell's boxes as "reliquaries for the fragment, the souvenir, the talisman."

Joseph Cornell employed central themes and symbols which often fell naturally into progressions of ideas. His Habitats and Aviaries are among his better-known work; for example Habitat Group for a Shooting

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Gallery (1943) uses cutout parrots and cockatoos as its subjects, with shattered glass and red paint representing blood. The multiple reproductions in the Medici series, which spanned more than a decade from the early 1940s to the 1950s, combined with mirrors, convey a sense of shifting reality. In Central Park Carrousel, In Memoriam (1950), belonging to his Observatory series, Cornell further enhances the depth of the shallow box with mirror, and the main, semicircular shape within the box contains an inset of the constellation Orion. The use of wire mesh again suggests a bird cage.

Like his constructions, Cornell's collages, though two-dimensional, retain the juxtaposition of images that marks his individuality. When he began to concentrate his energies on his boxes, he used collage mainly for work to be reproduced in print. He contributed covers and essays to View magazine, a Surrealist publication, and produced entire issues of Dance Index, including articles on Romantic Ballet. In his later boxes, however, he combined construction and collage for the rich, mnemonic effect which was, and remains, unique. In the 1950s, Cornell returned to collage as his chief interest, bringing with him the techniques of space and depth he had developed for his boxes.

A 296-page catalog containing the introduction by Kynaston McShine and essays by Dawn Ades, Carter Ratcliff, P. Adams Sitney, and Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, is published by The Museum of Modern Art to accompany this retrospective. Comprised of 32 color plates and more than 300 black-and-white illustrations, the catalog reproduces not only the works contained in the exhibition but other landmarks of Cornell's oeuvre, providing a broad critical survey of the artist.

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A film program will also be presented by the Museum, in the Roy and Niuta Titus Auditorium, comprised of "collage" films that Cornell himself made from other films, those that he conceived and directed, and a short film about Cornell by Larry Jordan. The films will be divided into two programs, selections and dates as follows:

Program I (58 minutes)

ROSE HOBART
 CORNELL, 1965 (Jordan)
 BOOKSTALLS**
 THE AVIARY**
 GNIR REDNOW ("the end is the beginning")**
 ANGEL**

Program II (63 minutes)

COTILLION/MIDNIGHT PARTY/CHILDREN'S PARTY**
 NEW YORK-ROME-BARCELONA-BRUSSELS**
 BY NIGHT WITH TORCH AND SPEAR**
 THE LEGEND FOR FOUNTAINS**
 NYMPHLIGHT**

**silent film, no piano accompaniment

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| Thursday, November 20 at Noon: | Program II |
| Friday, November 21 at Noon: | Program I |
| Saturday, November 29 at Noon: | Program I |
| Sunday, November 30 at Noon: | Program II |
| Thursday, December 4 at Noon: | Program I |
| Friday, December 5 at Noon: | Program II |
| Saturday, December 6 at Noon: | A trilogy: COTILLION/MIDNIGHT PARTY/ CHILDREN'S PARTY** (20 minutes) |
| and repeated at 1:00 p.m. | |
| Thursday, December 11 at Noon: | Program II |
| Friday, December 12 at Noon: | Program I |
| Thursday, December 18 at Noon: | Program I |
| Friday, December 19 at Noon: | Program II |
| Saturday, December 27 at Noon: | Program I |
| Sunday, December 28 at Noon: | Program II |
| Friday, January 2 at Noon: | Program I |
| Thursday, January 8 at Noon: | Program II |
| Friday, January 9 at Noon: | Program I |
| Thursday, January 15 at Noon: | Program I |
| Friday, January 16 at Noon: | Program II |

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Upon its closing on January 20, 1981, a version of the exhibition will travel, under the auspices of the Museum's International Council, to the following: Whitechapel Gallery in London (March 2 - April 12, 1981); Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf (May 4 - June 14, 1981); Palazzo Pitti, Florence (July 6 - September 13, 1981); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville, Paris (October 12 - December 6, 1981); and the Art Institute of Chicago (January 23 - March 21, 1982).

For further information, please contact Luisa Kreisberg, Director, (212) 956-2648, or Sharon Zane, Associate Director, 956-7295, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019.
