

The Museum of Modern Art

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Public Information

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART DEDICATES NEW GALLERY IN HONOR OF PHILIP JOHNSON

Architect Philip Johnson was honored today by The Museum of Modern Art in New York City as the renowned institution dedicated in his name a dramatic new gallery for the permanent exhibition of architectural drawings and models. Called the Philip Johnson Gallery, it is the first such space of its kind at any major museum in the world, and recognizes Mr. Johnson's more than 50 years of service to the Museum as a Trustee, architect, founding Director of the Department of Architecture and Design, and important donor of works to its unrivaled collection of 20th century art. The gallery is located on the fourth floor of the Museum's new West Wing, which will open to the public on May 17.

Heading the list of speakers at the dedication ceremony was William S. Paley, chairman of the Columbia Broadcasting System who is also chairman of the Museum's Board of Trustees. In his speech, Mr. Paley cited Mr. Johnson's close relationship to the Museum since its founding in 1929, and his groundbreaking contributions to its development as the foremost museum of modern art in the world.

"The world knows Philip Johnson as one of the great architects of the 20th century," Mr. Paley said. "But here at The Museum of Modern Art, we know him in a much more personal way. From the Museum's very first

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days--for more than half a century--he has been part of its heart and soul. He has poured into it his ideas, his resources, and his energy. These have done much to make The Museum of Modern Art what it is today: the premier institution of its kind in the world. His genius helped define the Museum in its formative years. His lifetime devotion to the Museum has touched all of us very deeply, and it is returned in our devotion to him."

Mr. Johnson, whose professional work over the last 35 years has received just about every major design award including the American Institute of Architects' Gold Medal and the Pritzker Architecture Prize, first joined The Museum of Modern Art staff in the early 1930s to co-organize with Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Lewis Mumford the seminal MODERN ARCHITECTURE: INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION. The 1932 show introduced the controversial work of new European architects such as Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier to American audiences and, ultimately, gave the modern architectural movement of the first half of this century its name, "The International Style."

Two years later, in 1934, Mr. Johnson directed the equally influential MACHINE ART exhibition. Works from this show of 20th century industrial design products became the foundation of the Museum's Design Collection. In his capacity as Director of the Architecture and Design Department from 1932-1936 and again from 1946-54, Mr. Johnson coordinated the organization of numerous other notable exhibitions, including MIES VAN DER ROHE (1947), FROM LE CORBUSIER TO NIEMEYER (1949), and PAINTING AND SCULPTURE IN ARCHITECTURE (1949).

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The Philip Johnson Gallery is some 2,500 square feet in size. Together with the Philip Goodwin Gallery for Design Collection works, which was dedicated in 1964, the two constitute the Museum's new, substantially enlarged exhibition spaces for architecture and design. The gallery's walls are hung with drawings by such 20th century master architects as Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Kahn, Eric Mendelsohn, Theo van Doesburg, and Mies van der Rohe (the latter represented by many of the famous drawings now in the Museum's Mies van der Rohe Archive). A selection of drawings by younger architects such as James Stirling, Aldo Rossi, and Michael Graves are also exhibited. The gallery's tiled center area contains architectural models of landmark modern buildings, including Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, Wright's Fallingwater house, and Norman Foster's Willis Faber & Dumas building in Ipswich, England.

The drawings and models spaces are separated by a low banquette on which visitors may rest and which can be used for seating during seminars or lectures before small groups. The gallery is also equipped with a stereo system and, according to Department Director Arthur Drexler, recorded programs of modern music will be presented on a regular basis. "The gallery can be used for teaching and has been laid out to facilitate certain kinds of impromptu events," he said.

Commenting on Mr. Johnson's diverse contributions to the Museum, Mr. Drexler, who worked as a Curator of Architecture and Design with Mr. Johnson in the early 1950s and later succeeded him as Director, said, "The Museum has benefited from connoisseurs who were at one time or another members of the staff, Trustees, and donors to the collection.

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Philip Johnson has surpassed the Museum's other virtuosos by being all these things while conducting a famous career as critic and architect. His contribution to the life of this institution, as to the life of architecture, is incomparable. This gallery named in his honor will remind posterity of an indispensable presence."

Mr. Johnson was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1906. He attended Harvard University as an undergraduate, receiving an A.B. in Philosophy in 1930. He returned to Harvard in 1940 to study architecture and graduated with a bachelor's degree from the School of Design in 1943.

Over the years, Mr. Johnson has served as chief architect of several important additions to the Museum complex along West 53 and 54 Streets. In 1953, he designed the famous Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, frequently referred to as the most attractive garden in Manhattan. He designed the Garden Wing and East Wing additions in 1964, increasing the Museum's exhibition space by some 15,000 square feet, as well as adding a new restaurant, offices, and meeting rooms. Earlier, in 1950, Mr. Johnson had designed an office annex to the west of the Museum's original 1939 building (the annex was razed to make room for the new West Wing).

Since 1932, when he gave the Museum one of its first significant European paintings, Otto Dix's 1926 portrait of Dr. Mayer-Hermann, Mr. Johnson has been an extremely generous donor to its collections of painting and sculpture, architecture and design, drawings, prints, and photography. Included among the more than 350 works he has given the Museum or provided purchase funds for are: Oskar Schlemmer's

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painting Bauhaus Stairway, Mark Rothko's Number 10, Flag by Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol's Gold Marilyn Monroe, as well as numerous stylistically important design objects and furniture pieces by Le Corbusier, Marcel Breuer, Gerrit Rietveld, Mies van der Rohe, and others.

Mr. Johnson, who was elected to the Museum's Board of Trustees in 1958, has also donated more than 200 architectural drawings covering various phases of his career, including his recent work with partner John Burgee on such well known projects as New York's AT&T building and Pennzoil Place in Houston.

In thanking the Museum and a committee of Trustees for voting to pay him this special tribute, Mr. Johnson said, "I am deeply indebted to The Museum of Modern Art for its decision to dedicate in my name this new gallery for architectural work--the first museum space, I am told, of its kind anywhere. It is a singular honor from a singular institution."

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