

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART SENDS ROAD TO VICTORY EXHIBITION TO
HONOLULU, ENGLAND AND SOUTH AMERICA

When the bombs fell on Pearl Harbor a sculpture exhibition from the Museum of Modern Art was on view in the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Fourteen months later the same gallery showed the Road to Victory exhibition, also from the Museum of Modern Art, which had as its high point a photographic enlargement of the bombs as they fell on the destroyer Shaw in Pearl Harbor that fateful day of December 7, 1941. Against this photograph of the great destruction another enlargement showed Nomura and Kurusu, Japanese Ambassador and peace negotiator, roaring with laughter, thus bringing dramatically together the disaster and its cause.

"We planned to show the Road to Victory exhibition on the first anniversary of Pearl Harbor," said the Director of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Edgar Schenck, recently arrived in New York, "but it was delayed in reaching us. Shipment to Honolulu was finally made possible by the cooperation of the Office of War Information. The exhibition is the first and only major show that has reached us since December 7, 1941 and it is a striking and practical illustration of how art can be used to further the war effort.

"Approximately 70 percent of the Japanese-American children in the High and Junior High Schools of Honolulu saw the Road to Victory exhibition and for the first time had a graphic illustration of the resources and power of the United States. This is true of most of the 12,000 children of all races who saw the exhibition. Very few of them, even those of native-born American parents, have ever seen what is to them all their homeland. The magnificent photographs of the farms, cities, factories and people back home give a many-faceted picture of the United States that is intensely moving and reassuring to those far from the mainland."

Mr. Schenck said that the Honolulu Academy of Arts has been open and functioning at capacity every day since Pearl Harbor. The attendance has been good, and at least 50% of the visitors are from the armed forces. A great many war workers, who two years ago were doing construction engineering work in the United States, also visit the art exhibitions at the Academy. In fact, it is because in the past year the great recreational and morale value of art has been proved that Mr. Schenck has made his flying trip from Honolulu. He is here to see what can be done to further an art program for men in the armed forces overseas. He is particularly interested in developing further cooperation between the Honolulu Academy, the armed services, and government war agencies.

"In not merely continuing but actually increasing its circulating exhibitions during war time," Mr. Schenck said, "the Museum of Modern Art is rendering an inestimable service, particularly to smaller museums which often do not have ready access to the best in art or the facilities for effective installation characteristic of the Museum of Modern Art. In the case of a museum such as ours, thousands of miles removed from the resources of the mainland, this service is doubly appreciated.

"The enormous value of the Road to Victory exhibition is obvious. That value is increased a hundred-fold because it was not shown as propaganda but as an art exhibition of fine photographs selected by Lt. Commander Edward Steichen, U.S.N.R., whose own reputation as a great photographer is world-wide. The text by Carl Sandburg makes it much more than a photography show, and the Museum's arrangement of the pictures in mounting sequences of drama and climax added tremendously to the effect not only on the Japanese-American children, who had no real idea of the United States mainland, but on the men of the armed services stationed in Honolulu to whom it brought the impact of home. It gave these men great pleasure to see the familiar scenes they had so recently left behind them and to see the record of their own and other armed forces in action."

Soon after Mr. Schenck's arrival in New York, the Road to Victory exhibition which had been shown for a month in the Honolulu Academy came back from its long journey. At the request of the Special Service Office at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, arrangements were made immediately to send it there where it will be seen by the thousands of men stationed in that camp. This is only one of five editions of the Road to Victory exhibition and the first to be shown in any Army camp. The original, or first edition, which was on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York through the summer of 1942, is in this country and has already been seen in Cleveland, Chicago and St. Louis, and will go to San Francisco and Portland, Oregon. Four slightly smaller editions were designed for travelling overseas. One of these was sent to England. After a tremendously successful showing in London, where 66,000 saw it in less than three weeks, it is now touring the British Isles. The two remaining editions with the Sandburg text translated into Spanish, are being sent within the next few days to Uruguay and Colombia, South America, at the request of those two governments.

To United States citizens of the mainland, roused to the pitch of immediate action by war which struck with such terrible effect 3,000 miles from the home shores, the small details of that Sunday morning treachery are of intense interest. Mr. Schenck and his 7-year-old daughter, Mary, were up and about early while Mrs. Schenck and the younger child were asleep. Assisted by Mary, Mr. Schenck was frying sausages and making waffles for Sunday morning breakfast when they heard the sound of anti-aircraft. This did not disturb either of them as they often heard the ack-ack guns at practice. But Mary went out to watch the puffs of smoke and returned to say to her father: "Daddy, they're using live ammunition this morning."

Mr. Schenck was a bit skeptical and asked her how she knew.

With the surprising knowledge of childhood she replied: "The puffs are black instead of white."

Mr. Schenck strolled out on the veranda, saw his daughter knew what she was talking about, and rather loftily explained to her that it was good for the ack-ack gunners to practice with live ammunition once in a while; might come in useful some time in the future. As he spoke, the shells began to fall and he knew "that moment" had arrived. He rushed back into the house as his wife called out from the bedroom: "For Heaven's sake, will you please stop moving that furniture around!"

But Mr. Schenck had already turned on the radio and heard the urgent call for all civilian defense workers immediately to man their posts. He went to the museum and set in motion the previously prepared plans for safeguarding the collections. He then made the rounds of his Civilian Defense Committee, which was in charge of libraries and private art collections in the city.

Once the emergency work was over he took up the job of combining civilian defense with museum directorship--two activities which he has continued ever since. Although half of the galleries of the Honolulu Museum have been turned over to the Red Cross, the rest of the museum shows exhibitions which are changed every month or so, the material being drawn from the museum's own works and that of other collectors on the Islands. Among other activities since Pearl Harbor, there have been several large exhibitions of paintings by Honolulu artists.

The entire experience of the past year-and-a-half has more firmly than ever convinced Mr. Schenck that art need not be confined to an ivory tower at any time; especially in time of war and national disaster it has its own vital contribution to make.