

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
NEW YORK

11 WEST 53rd STREET
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CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

SARAH NEWMAYER, PUBLICITY DIRECTOR

March 21, 1944.

TO City Editors
Art Editors
Feature Editors
Garden Editors
Recreation Editors

Dear Sirs:

You are invited to come or send a representative to

Press Preview of
LOOK AT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

A panel exhibition of neighborhood planning
designed by the Museum's Department of
Circulating Exhibitions

Tuesday, March 28
1 to 6 P.M.

in the auditorium galleries of
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street.

At one-thirty in the auditorium of the Museum MRS. MARY SIMKHOVITCH,
Vice-Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, STANLEY M. ISAACS,
President of the Board of Directors of United Neighborhood Houses, and
CLEVELAND ROGERS, member of the City Planning Commission, will speak on
a short program arranged by the United Neighborhood Houses of New York.
The program will begin promptly at 1:30 P.M.

Sincerely yours,


Sarah Newmeyer
Publicity Director

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING EXHIBITION OPENS AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

A practical step in postwar planning has been taken by the Department of Circulating Exhibitions of the Museum of Modern Art in the preparation of an exhibition on neighborhood planning. The exhibition will open in the auditorium galleries of the Museum Wednesday, March 29, and will remain on view through May 28. Duplicates of it will be sent all over the country.

The exhibition, entitled Look at your Neighborhood, is composed of twelve panels, each 30 x 40", depicting by means of photographs, drawings, diagrams, charts, plans and brief text the inadequacy of haphazard building in our present towns and cities and the need for comprehensive planning to make the postwar world a better living place for the individual, the family and the community.

The exhibition starts with the individual and stresses his role throughout. The first panel puts to him directly the following pertinent questions, pointed up by humorous sketches:

DO YOU

- Spend hours getting to and from your job?
- Want more sun and air, more open space and a pleasanter view?
- Walk miles for your daily shopping or waste time looking for a place to park your car?
- Wish you had a place to leave your youngest?
- Worry about your children getting run over?
- Wish you had better opportunities for exercise and play?

The next panel shows present unhappy living conditions in cracker-box rows of houses, crowds of people struggling to get home, and streets jammed with traffic. From there on, the panels show how a community must be planned around the needs of an individual and family and illustrate the specific advantages a good neighborhood must have, such as

- Good housing
- A park
- An elementary school
- A community center
- A shopping center
- Service shops and light industries

The final panels show how a good neighborhood can either be built on vacant land or can replace slum areas in cities; also that a well-planned neighborhood community may stand alone as a village or become an integral part of a city. The twelfth panel indicates the extensive construction work which will inevitably take place in the postwar world. How to use that tremendous upsurge in building

activity to the best advantage of the individual, the family and the community, is the object of the exhibition. 2A

To make the exhibition available to the largest possible number of exhibitors, the Museum has used a technique new in exhibition methods. The twelve panels have been reproduced in full size, in black and white and one color, by an amazingly accurate photogravure and silk screen process; and an edition of two hundred sets has been struck off. Each set rents for the remarkably low price of \$8.00 for three weeks and sells for \$45.00 a set. Heretofore, the Museum has always undertaken the circulation of all its exhibitions; now, by offering this new exhibition for sale, a wider circulation within individual communities is made possible.

Designed by Rudolf Mock, architect, with the advice of Clarence Stein, one of the foremost planning experts in the United States, the exhibition is suitable for the use of civic organizations, schools and colleges, as well as other groups interested in postwar planning. Its scope is unusually wide, as the text avoids architectural or planning terms unfamiliar to the average layman or student.

A preview of the exhibition, held in association with United Neighborhood Houses, was attended by prominent New Yorkers. Among them were Stanley M. Isaacs, President of the Board of Directors of United Neighborhood Houses, Cleveland Rodgers, member of the City Planning Commission, and Mrs. Mary Simkhovitch, Vice-Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, all of whom spoke briefly. Mr. Isaacs said in part:

"I am delighted that this great Museum of Modern Art has planned such an interesting exhibition, and is furthering so effectively a cause in which United Neighborhood Houses has been interested for many a year. The objective of city planning is to develop opportunity for a fuller life for those who live in the city and the surrounding region. This exhibition graphically helps people to understand what a fuller life can be. These panels show that a properly served neighborhood necessarily involves the people who live in the neighborhood in the planning of their neighborhood.

"I hope that people all over America will have an opportunity to study this exhibition and make sure that the program for their community is what they themselves need. Here in New York, as in other parts of the country, we are planning for the future. Above all, the people themselves must share that responsibility, for they are planning their own future and the future of their community. We should have faith enough in democracy to make sure that we follow the democratic process at home. This exhibition suggests a sound pattern for democratic planning."

Mr. Rodgers said in part:

"It is significant that this interesting exhibition is being sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art. So much emphasis is placed on engineering, on the architecture of specific buildings, on zoning and other matters, we are inclined to forget that City Planning is, or should be, an art. Mr. Lewis

Mumford says the City is art. Certainly there are several broad definitions of art which cover City Planning: 'Skill in the adaptation of things in the natural world to the uses of human life,' is one from Webster.

"We may glimpse some of the future's possibilities in recent achievements in and around New York City. Highways give Civic Art its form and unity. The comprehensive system of parks and parkways, expressways, some of the new housing, Rockefeller Center and other features, completed or planned, are bringing about a marked transformation in the Metropolitan area.

"We are making progress, but much remains to be done. New York still has miles of slums and blighted areas where millions live in deplorable surroundings, but the larger patterns are emerging. Modern democratic cities are the products of many forces and cannot be shaped by fiat. We have the resources and the skills, but something is lacking.

"If we are to have better cities we must want them badly and feel strongly about them. There must be a merging of all the arts and sciences and a new fusion of feeling to give modern City Planning real meaning. And this must begin in the homes and neighborhoods where people live. Your exhibition should help. It is altogether fitting that the Museum of Modern Art should provide leadership in furthering modern City Planning, which may become the greatest and most useful of modern art manifestations."

Mrs. Simkhovitch said in part:

"What the neighborhood is and may be fixes the pattern of our American life. Properly planned, our city neighborhoods (and rural communities also) can ensure a stable existence for the coming generation which, while leaving enough freedom to experiment in, will reduce the casual haphazardness of existence and provide an ordered life full of the rewards which reason alone can effect in the midst of chaos.

"But the neighborhood can never plan efficiently except in the larger framework of city, state and national action. Social security, housing, an adequate standard of living, are national problems; but what happens is highlighted in the day-by-day happenings of neighborhood existence. A neighborhood which becomes conscious of a need for a plan will direct its attention not only to municipal action, but to the state and nation, not forgetting that there are many problems which can be met either by private enterprise or through cooperative techniques.

"What made the strength of pioneer life in this country was the sense of boundary. The family's self-sustaining economic life, bolstered by school and church created a good but tough life. In Town Meeting the life of the community was organized. Everything necessary was contained in that compact unit. As we have moved on to wider fields we have gained much. We are now in the way of becoming world citizens. As the world shrinks we shall feel more at home in it. But these wider and ever wider loyalties will lose their meaning, if we do not hold on to those primary obligations which have the rich substance of day-by-day living. I learn about the world from my neighbor. He has a story of interest and concern. He has his own background, tradition, and outlook. He is my teacher. I do not have to go far afield to find out what the world needs. It is all implied in our daily neighborhood relationships. For the neighborhood is the microcosm of that larger world we hope to live in. If we fail there, we are likely to fail in the larger world. There never was a time when the word neighbor meant as much as it does today. For the neighbor is beginning to realize he is master of his fate if he lives in a purposeful fellowship of neighbors, which is perhaps a pretty good definition of that vast and hazy word democracy."