

The Museum of Modern Art

50th Anniversary



THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, is this year celebrating the 50th Anniversary of its founding in 1929. Acknowledged worldwide as the single most important collection of 20th-century art--painting, sculpture, drawings, prints, photography, architecture and design, and film--the Museum has been instrumental in introducing the art of our time into the mainstream of modern cultural life.

More than one million visitors per year come to the Museum to see the Collection as well as to attend temporary exhibitions, film programs, and special events. A still larger public is served by the Museum's active publishing program, its library and educational activities, and its exhibitions circulated nationally and internationally.

An index of the breadth and diversity of the Museum's program is the schedule of major exhibitions with which the 50th Anniversary year will be celebrated: TRANSFORMATIONS IN MODERN ARCHITECTURE (February 23 - April 24, 1979); CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE: SELECTIONS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (May 18 - August 7, 1979); ANSEL ADAMS AND THE WEST (September 6 - October 28, 1979); ARTS OF THE TWENTIES (November 16, 1979 - January 22, 1980); EILEEN GRAY (February 6 - April 1, 1980); PRINTED ART (February 13 - April 1, 1980); and PABLO PICASSO: A RETROSPECTIVE (May 2 - September 16, 1980).

The Museum's Purpose

The Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929 by seven private citizens for the purpose of fostering public awareness and appreciation--and public use and enjoyment--of the visual arts of this century. The public's response was immediate and overwhelmingly enthusiastic, and within ten years, during which it was obliged to move four times into progressively larger temporary quarters, the Museum had opened the doors of the building which it still occupies in midtown Manhattan, on West 53rd Street, midway between Fifth Avenue and the Avenue of the Americas.

On the occasion of the opening of the Museum's present building in May 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the American public in a nationwide radio broadcast, in which he said, in part:

In encouraging the creation and enjoyment of beautiful things we are furthering democracy itself. That is why this museum is a citadel of civilization.

As the Museum of Modern Art is a living museum, not a collection of curios and interesting objects, it can, therefore, become an integral part of our democratic institutions--it can be woven into the very warp and woof of our democracy. Because it has been conceived as a national institution, the museum can enrich and invigorate our cultural life by bringing the best of modern art to all of the American people.

The Museum's Collections of painting and sculpture, drawings, prints, photography, film, architecture, industrial and graphic design, numbering over 100,000 items in all, are by now unrivalled anywhere in the world. It was the first art museum to recognize the motion picture as an art form, and as early as 1935 had begun to collect and preserve significant films, many of which would otherwise have been lost forever. In recognition of its ongoing program of film preservation and its continuing support of the motion picture as an art form, the Museum recently received an honorary Academy Award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences. Similarly,

the Museum recognized photography as a fine art, and was collecting and exhibiting photographs as such, long before other major museums. As a pioneer in the fields of architecture and of graphic, industrial, and textile design, it has brought about profound changes affecting the lives of all Americans. In every area, the Museum's holdings include masterworks of prime importance. The effect of the Museum's pioneering multi-departmental concept, now followed by other institutions around the world, has been to encourage an understanding of the close interrelationships of the arts and of the total environment that conditions and nurtures them all.

The Museum's Collections

The Museum's Collections are the fountainhead of its entire program. They provide a core of continuity, a context for study and comparison, and a testing ground for the emerging masters of modern art. Individually, many of the works on display afford the visitor rich and uniquely enjoyable experiences. Among the master paintings in the Museum's Collection are van Gogh's The Starry Night, Mondrian's Broadway Boogie Woogie, Matisse's Dance, Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, Andrew Wyeth's Christina's World, and Jackson Pollock's One (Number 31, 1950), to name but a very few. Together, the works in the Museum document the vitality and diversity of modern art, make more understandable the currents of thought and feeling that pervade our age, and provide an historical and esthetic context for the Museum's programs and activities.

Program of Temporary Exhibitions

Through its program of temporary exhibitions, the Museum has kept an ever larger, more knowledgeable, and more receptive public abreast of both significant recent developments in the modern visual arts and new interpretations of major modern artists and art historical movements. Temporary

exhibitions, both at the Museum and in traveling circulation, often become historical events in themselves. They announce and culminate artistic vogues, cap individual careers, question men and ideas and social trends. The range of these exhibitions extends from retrospective studies of the work of major modern and contemporary artists--such as CEZANNE: THE LATE WORK, MATISSE IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, MARCEL DUCHAMP, EDWARD WESTON, DIANE ARBUS, FRANK STELLA, SOL LEWITT, and JIM DINE'S ETCHINGS--to examinations of the cultural and esthetic contexts of major historical moments--such as THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE ECOLE DES BEAUX-ARTS, MIRRORS AND WINDOWS: AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY SINCE 1960, "WILD BEASTS": FAUVISM AND ITS AFFINITIES, DRAWING NOW: 1955-1975, IMPRESARIO: AMBROISE VOLLARD, and MODERN MASTERS: MANET TO MATISSE. In addition, the Museum's ongoing PROJECTS series of exhibitions is a continuing review of some of the latest tendencies in contemporary art.

The auditorium exhibitions prepared by the Department of Film, which range from national film cycles and exhibitions of variations on a single theme, to retrospective reviews of the work of distinguished actors and directors, comprehensive historical surveys and samplings of current work, perform precisely this same historical function. Here too, the emphasis on the newly evolving is sustained: the CINEPROBE evenings give Museum visitors a chance to encounter the work of independent and experimental filmmakers, who come from all parts of the country and the world to screen their films and hold subsequent discussions with the audience. The annual NEW DIRECTORS/NEW FILMS program introduces American audiences to exciting new work by up-and-coming directors from throughout the world.

National and International Programs

Both domestically and internationally, The Museum of Modern Art has an active program of circulating exhibitions. Every year the Museum makes a wide-ranging selection of important exhibitions available to other institutions in the United States and Canada. Drawn both from its New York program and from the Collection, 8 exhibitions had a total of 20 showings in 1978 alone. These showings were scheduled in 17 cities in 11 states throughout this country and Canada. In addition, the Museum's Department of Film has a Circulating Program that serves several thousand universities, colleges, high schools, and film societies across the country with programs that illuminate the historical, technical, and artistic development of world cinema.

The Museum's program of internationally circulating exhibitions grew, as did its active domestic program, out of demand and involves the serious responsibility of encouraging cultural exchange among nations. For example, the exhibition THE NEW AMERICAN PAINTING, which was shown in eight major European cities in 1958 and 1959, not only introduced our art of the post-war years to Europe, but helped make it the most discussed and influential art in the world. Through such touring exhibitions the Museum's program reaches millions of people throughout the world, including Australia, Japan, and Latin America. Currently on view in major European cities is AMERICAN ART FROM THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, a presentation of important aspects of the Museum's holdings of modern American art in all mediums. The exhibition celebrates both The Museum of Modern Art's 50th Anniversary and the centennial of Switzerland's Berne Kunstmuseum, where the exhibition opened February 15 for its first showing.

Publishing Program

Since its founding, the Museum has published more than 500 books in what is the most active publishing program of any art museum in the world. Many of these books are recognized as the most scholarly and authoritative treatments of their respective subjects. The Museum pioneered in making exhibition catalogues authoritative and enjoyable books of lasting interest and usefulness. These books, many of which have been written by members of the Museum's curatorial staff, serve a wide spectrum of objectives and interests and influence the understanding and appreciation of modern art at many levels. Among the best known of the Museum's publications are Alfred H. Barr, Jr.'s classic monographs Matisse: His Art and His Public and Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art, John Szarkowski's Looking at Photographs, John Rewald's The History of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, Beaumont Newhall's History of Photography, and William Rubin's Picasso in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art and his Miró in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art.

Education Program

As an educational institution, the Museum's principal purpose has always been to develop in its public a sense of quality and a love of excellence even in the most utilitarian objects. This purpose has been strengthened by the Museum's pioneering sense of exploration into the new, coupled with its view of the interrelated nature of all modern visual arts, and its sense of context. The range of educational programs and activities organized by the Museum extends from services designed specifically to provide access to the Museum's facilities for individual students and faculty members, to projects intended to serve both the broad public and special segments of the community, such as programs of lectures and symposia arranged in conjunction with various exhibitions.

The New York City Public High School Program was begun in 1937. All 119 public high schools in the city receive annual Museum passes for teaching staff and single-visit student admission passes are also available. Four hundred students use them each month. The Museum participates in the Cultural Voucher Program, a project designed to promote services to diverse community organizations. There are special study hours at the Museum for college art and art history classes. In sum, the Museum's Department of Education works closely with staff throughout the Museum to develop and carry out programs for the Museum's varied audience.

The Museum's Library and the Study Centers of its curatorial departments are freely available for the use of scholars and students. The Library, with 70,000 volumes, serves more than 125 people every week.

Throughout the year, there is a whole range of special activities held at the Museum. These include poetry readings, the Junior Council Family Day, and evenings for students, among other events. Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday during the summer months, the Museum's beautiful Sculpture Garden is open free of charge. In addition, SUMMERGARDEN, now entering its ninth season, treats visitors to presentations by a variety of performing artists on Friday and Saturday nights.

The Museum's Future

Many additions have been made since 1939 in order to accommodate the Museum's growing collections and its vibrant program of temporary exhibitions. Nevertheless, space limitations are once again affecting the Museum's program. This, together with the increasing cost of quality services, has currently led the Museum to undertake an innovative expansion project through the development of its "air rights."

As Richard E. Oldenburg, Director of the Museum since 1972, recently observed, "The seemingly immodest hope expressed in the founders' 1929 prospectus, A New Art Museum, that New York 'could achieve perhaps the greatest museum of modern art in the world,' has been fulfilled." But, Mr. Oldenburg continued, the Museum's 50th Anniversary year, while "a happy occasion on which to review the Museum's achievements," is also "a time of planning for the future, where we face challenges and opportunities in some ways as great as those that confronted our founders in 1929."

The Museum's galleries, bookstores, auditorium, restaurant, and Sculpture Garden are open to the public every day except Wednesdays (and Christmas Day). In addition, the Museum is open until 9:00 p.m. on Thursday nights. Tuesday is "Pay What You Wish" day, when the regular admission fees are waived. The Museum's 40,000 members may enter freely and as often as they wish for all exhibitions. Found in all 50 states and numerous foreign countries, these members represent a broad cross-section of interests, attitudes and backgrounds, and are among the Museum's most loyal supporters.

The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition program is made possible in part by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency whose funds are recommended by the Governor and appropriated by the State Legislature.