

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR WEDNESDAY RELEASE

TIMELESS ASPECTS OF MODERN ART, FIRST OF THE MUSEUM'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITIONS

Introducing a series of special exhibitions to relate modern art to the arts of other epochs and to clarify its place in our century, Timeless Aspects of Modern Art will open on November 17. The exhibition, directed by Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Curatorial Departments, will occupy the ground floor of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, and will remain on view until January 23, 1949. Later exhibitions in this educational series will deal with Modern Art in the Modern World and with background material on the development of the major contemporary movements.

"Modern Art is not an isolated phenomenon in history," says Mr. d'Harnoncourt, "but is, like the art of any period, an integral part of the art of all ages, as well as an expression of its own epoch." The exhibition points this out through juxtaposition of the work of modern artists and of work from other eras and cultures, giving a sense of their close relationship. This display is not for the purpose of discovering influences or derivations but is rather to demonstrate affinities and analogies, "to act as a reminder that such 'modern' means of expression as exaggeration, distortion and abstraction have been used by artists since the very beginning of civilization to express their ideas and emotions."

Affinities of many types, from stylistic to those of content, are portrayed in a wide range of art forms. They are based on the artists' preoccupation with such varied factors as rhythmic movements, mathematical order, rendering the inner structure of things, religion. For example, emphasis on structure is the link between such differing works as a 13th-century Chinese painting, a Cézanne landscape, a cubist work by Picasso and an 18th-century Piranesi. Stylized geometric forms are found in African carvings, in an archaic Greek horse and a horse by the contemporary American sculptor Mary Callery. In the serenity of Lehmbruck's Standing Youth, this stylization becomes the bearer of an emotional content that grows to religious fervor in a Romanesque Crucifix, in Rouault's Christ Mocked by Soldiers and in Hyman Bloom's The Synagogue. A formal element may be traced step by

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step from a 9th-century Coptic Madonna and Child, to a stone head by Modigliani, figurines from the Cycladic Islands of the 3rd millennium B. C., an archaic Greek bronze, a predynastic Egyptian clay figure and Brancusi's Bird in Space.

The mysterious and fantastic is the strain that runs through the paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, Piero di Cosimo and Yves Tanguy. This turns into complete fantasy shown in a work by Paul Klee strikingly juxtaposed with an ancient Indian copper disc from the Argentine, and a work by Miro next to a painted bowl of the ancient Maya and a set of Eskimo masks.

The exhibition, of necessity based in part on personal interpretation, is presented not as a dogmatic statement but as an invitation to the visitor to undertake his own explorations.

Excerpt from a statement by Picasso, 1923, which appears as an introductory label to the exhibition:

"To me there is no past or future in art. If a work of art cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, of the great painters who lived in other times, is not an art of the past; perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was. Art does not evolve by itself, the ideas of people change and with them their mode of expression. When I hear people speak of the evolution of an artist, it seems to me that they are considering him standing between two mirrors that face each other and reproduce his image an infinite number of times, and that they contemplate the successive images of one mirror as his past, and the images of the other mirror as his future, while his real image is taken as his present. They do not consider that they all are the same images in different planes."