

FROM

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

TEN WEST EIGHTH STREET · NEW YORK 11, N. Y. · SPRING 7-0770

Communicate with MARGARET McKELLAR, Executive Secretary

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Release Date

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WHITNEY MUSEUM TO INCREASE FUNDS FOR AMERICAN ART

The Trustees of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, announced today that the Museum will dispose of its collection of American art prior to 1900 and will use the proceeds to increase its funds for the purchase of contemporary American art.

The announcement reads as follows:

The Whitney Museum has always devoted itself primarily to the work of living American artists. This is in accordance with the aims of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in founding the Whitney Studio gallery in 1914 and the Whitney Studio Club in 1918. With the opening of the Whitney Museum in 1931, the chief emphasis continued to be on contemporary art. But the Museum also devoted a considerable proportion of its activities to the American past. A series of historical exhibitions was held, including surveys of landscape, genre and watercolor painting in America, of folk art and Shaker crafts, and one-man shows of leading historic figures such as Feke, Earl, Audubon, Cole, Blythe, Rimmer, Newman, Homer, Ryder, Blakelock, Duveneck and Nast. Through the years the Museum built up its collection of 19th-century works. It also sponsored research and publication in American art history.

Since the Museum was founded, general interest in the American past has increased greatly. Important exhibitions have been held throughout the country, extensive research has been carried on in museums and colleges, and museums have added to their historical American collections. As a result, American works of the 18th and 19th centuries have become increasingly difficult to acquire. It became apparent that the Whitney Museum could never expect to accumulate a historical collection equal to those of older institutions. But while almost all our museums now cover the history of American art, relatively few are devoted primarily to contemporary art. The Museum has therefore decided, in order to use its resources and facilities most effectively for the benefit of American art, to concentrate on contemporary art, using the word "contemporary" in the broad sense of present-day art and its origins back to 1900.

In carrying out this policy the Museum will dispose of its collection of American art prior to 1900 and will use the proceeds to increase its purchase funds for contemporary works. The historic collection, consisting of paintings, watercolors, drawings, prints and sculpture, includes examples by Allston, Eakins, Homer, Hunt, La Farge, Martin, Mount, Newman, James and Raphaelle Peale, Theodore Robinson and Twachtman, prints by Audubon and the Currier & Ives artists, and an important group of folk portraits and landscapes. Plans for the disposal of the collection will be announced later.

This does not mean that the Museum will cease all its activities in the older field. It plans from time to time to hold outstanding historical exhibitions, and it will continue to publish books on American art history and to promote research through the American Art Research Council, founded by the Museum in 1942.

The Museum's future program each year will include the two annual exhibitions of contemporary art, one of paintings and the other of sculpture, watercolors and drawings; a retrospective show of a living artist, and one or two general exhibitions in the contemporary field. Next season, its last on Eighth Street before moving to its new building on West 54th Street, its schedule will include the two annuals and a memorial exhibition of the work of Arshile Gorky. For the first season on 54th Street, that of 1951-2, it plans a showing of its permanent collection; the two annuals, which will be on a larger scale because of increased gallery space; a retrospective exhibition of the work of John Sloan, and an exhibition of post-war tendencies in American art. A selection from the permanent collection will be on view at all times. In its new building the Museum will be able to have on continuous exhibition about 250 works by contemporary American artists. A new illustrated catalog of the collection will be published in the fall of 1951.