

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

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September, 1955

## BACKGROUND MATERIAL - ART LENDING SERVICE

This fall (1955) the Art Lending Service of the Museum of Modern Art, 21 West 53 Street, New York City, after four successful seasons of renting and selling original works of art, is extending its unique service to make it available to people living in all parts of the United States. The rental service, established in 1951 by the Museum's Junior Council in cooperation with approximately 50 New York art galleries, now has a selection of paintings, sculpture, watercolors, drawings and prints by more than 200 artists. These original works of art can be rented for two or three month periods at fees ranging from \$5 to \$52. All the works of art are for sale at prices ranging from \$25 to \$750. The rental fee is deductible.

The works of art, which are greatly varied in style and medium, are selected by a committee of the Junior Council from New York galleries and approved by a Museum staff committee. Although the selection is constantly changing, as paintings go out on loan or are sold, a typical group available at one time might include abstract paintings by Jackson Pollock, a small mobile by Alexander Calder, a watercolor by John Marin, a large color woodcut by Frasconi, a surrealist picture by Max Ernst, a primitive by Clara McDonald Williamson, and a realist painting by Carroll Cloar. Paintings by relatively unknown artists as well as by world famous artists are included.

The Lending Service has its own gallery and office space on the sixth floor of the Museum annex, entered at 21 West 53 Street. Some of the works of art are displayed on shelves around the walls and others are kept in storage tills where borrowers can browse. Council members and staff are on hand Monday through Saturday, noon to 5:30, to show the collection and assist borrowers.

More than 700 people have taken advantage of this new service since it was inaugurated. Housewives, secretaries, television executives, writers, teachers, editors, doctors, businessmen and women, designers, musicians, brokers and art directors are among the borrowers, many of whom have purchased the work of art they rented after living with it for two or three months. Rentals from the Lending Service have even been given as wedding and Christmas presents.

The record of the Art Lending Service's first four years shows a steady growth in all directions. At the beginning 33 galleries and 126 artists were cooperating in the program. Now about 50 galleries participate and the total number of artists whose work has been represented has almost doubled. The number of works of art in the Lending Service has also increased. During the first season there were 393 works

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available; last year almost 600 were available. The number of borrowers and number of works borrowed has also increased. For example, during the first year there were 345 rentals to 175 people and 45 sales (about 13 per cent of the rentals) to 39 people. Last year there were 469 rentals to 244 people and 87 sales (more than 18 per cent) to 71 people.

An important measure of the success of the Art Lending Service is this increase in sales as the purpose of the service is to encourage the wider purchase of contemporary art. By setting low rental fees people can easily try modern art in their own homes, the only place they can achieve the special satisfaction that comes from living with art. The percentage of sales has risen steadily since the Service was inaugurated and the total value of works sold has more than doubled; \$8,675 the first year to \$19,005 the fourth year. The total value of works of art sold during the first four years is more than \$50,000.

The average selling price of works of art purchased has remained at about \$185 each year. Most of the rentals are in the \$5 for two months category (purchase price from \$25 to \$125) with the \$10 (\$126-\$200) and \$15 (\$201-\$300) running close seconds.

The Lending Service has also increased the geographical area that it serves. At first restricted to New York City and suburbs, the Service then expanded to cover the eastern seaboard, and now serves the entire country. The only requirement for the borrowers is that they be Museum members and that they pick up and return the works of art they borrow. If borrowers live too far away to come in themselves, they must pay shipping costs. The Art Lending Service also offers its facilities to colleges, schools and hospitals, with the stipulation that one member of the board be a Museum member.

Last year the Lending Service expanded in still another direction by making the works of art in its collection available to business concerns. Paintings from the Lending Service have been shown in a restaurant in New Jersey, in offices in Connecticut and New York and used in a promotional film made by a large corporation. Rental fees for commercial rentals are higher than for private homes with half the fee going to the artist whose work is borrowed. When paintings or sculpture are rented for reception rooms, for example, the fee is double that charged an individual who is renting a work of art for his own home. When a painting is used for direct business promotion, as in a store window or on television or in a film, the weekly fee is ten per cent of the purchase price. All works of art in the Art Lending Service collection are insured. The schedule of rental fees, based on the price range, is as follows:

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<u>Price Range Range</u>	<u>2 Months Rental Fee</u>	<u>3 Months Rental Fee</u>
\$ 25-125	\$ 5.00	\$ 7.00
126-200	10.00	15.00
201-300	15.00	22.00
301-400	20.00	30.00
401-500	25.00	37.00
501-625	30.00	45.00
626-750	35.00	52.00

The Service is sponsored by the Museum's Junior Council, a group of friends of the Museum under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Donald Straus, who sponsor many special events including exhibitions, film showings and evening symposia and discussion groups. Walter Bareiss, Chairman of the Art Lending Service, is a well-known collector and business man. Harmon H. Goldstone, Vice-Chairman, is a New York architect. Mrs. Robert Leonhardt, Treasurer, is a Certified Public Accountant. Mrs. E. Powis Jones, Selections Chairman, has worked closely with the Service since its inception and comes into the Museum daily except during the summer months when she and her artist-husband and three children move to the country.

Members of the Art Lending Service Committee are:

Mr. Arthur G. Altschul	Mrs. Roger McCollester
Mr. and Mrs. Armand P. Bartos	Mrs. Stanley Mase
Mr. Arthur Bullowa	Mrs. John B. Oakes
Mr. Winslow Carlton	Mr. Don Page
Mrs. Peter Farb	Mrs. Lawrence S. Phillips
Mr. Arthur W. Hepner	Miss Ann C. Resor
Mrs. Thomas L. Kempner	Mrs. Robert W. Sarnoff
Mrs. Robert E. Kintner	Mrs. David Sawin
Miss Sandra Krasne	Mrs. Alfred R. Stern
Mr. Harold E. Leeds	Mrs. Donald Straus
Mrs. John Lockwood	

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Note: Photographs and additional material on the Art Lending Service are available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 St. New York City 19. CIRCLE 5-8900.