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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

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The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, announces an Exhibition of African Negro Art to open to the public Tuesday, March 19, and to remain on view through Sunday, May 19. Mr. James Johnson Sweeney, art critic and author of a book and articles on modern art published in this country and in Europe, has selected the 603 objects which will be shown from private and museum collections in England, Germany, Belgium, France and the United States. The principal emphasis will be on sculpture in wood, which has had so much interest for modern artists. Sculpture in bronze and ivory will also be shown as well as textiles, implements and weapons.

Objects in the Exhibition have been drawn principally from west central Africa, an area nearly twice the size of the United States. It includes the following regions: French Sudan, French Guinea, Upper Volta, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Dahomey, British Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabun, French Congo, Belgian Congo, Angola, and British East Africa. It is impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy the age of the objects. Those in wood, due to the perishable nature of the material and the omniverous white ants of Africa, may not be more than two or three hundred years old. Objects in metal and ivory may precede the sixteenth century.

In commenting on the relation between African art and modern art, Mr. Sweeney has said: "The art of the primitive negro in its mastery of aesthetic forms, sensitiveness to materials, freedom from naturalistic imitation and boldness of imagination parallels many of the ideals of modern art. We find many characteristics of Epstein's work and that of several other modern sculptors and painters such as Picasso, Modigliani and Brancusi, that point to their respect for African art.

"Religion has been the chief stimulus of African art. In the parklands and forest fringes of the continent ancestor worship was practiced. In the denser jungles animistic beliefs predominated; trees, streams, rocks and animals were worshipped as supernatural forces in rituals which involved sculptured masks and fetishes. There are fetish-men's masks, hunting masks, circumcision ritual masks, and masks worn at funeral and memorial ceremonies-- different variations of type in every tribe for every purpose, in wood, ivory, gold,

wicker, cloth, straw, parchment, and endless combinations of materials. There are fertility idols and fetishes for conjuration to heal the sick or effect the death of an enemy. There are figures that represent the dead and figures to insure successful childbirth.

"African Negro art, however, is not confined to religious expression. It is shown in household utensils, weapons, implements, and many other objects such as bobbins for weaving cloth, spoons, headrests, musical instruments, and tiny weights used by natives in weighing gold dust."

A volume on African Negro art will be published by the Museum in conjunction with the Exhibition. It will include more than 100 half-tone illustrations and three maps. The introduction is by Mr. Sweeney, who draws this conclusion: "In the end, however, it is not the tribal characteristics of Negro art nor its strangeness that are interesting. It is its plastic qualities. Picturesque or exotic features as well as historical and ethnographic considerations have a tendency to blind as to its true worth. This was realized at once by its earliest amateurs. Today with the advances we have made during the last thirty years in our knowledge of Africa it has become an even graver danger. Our approach must be held conscientiously in quite another direction. It is the vitality of the forms of Negro art that should speak to us, the simplification without impoverishment, the unerring emphasis on the essential, the consistent, three-dimensional organization of structural planes in architectonic sequences, the uncompromising truth to material with a seemingly intuitive adaptation of it, and the tension achieved between the idea or emotion to be expressed through representation and the abstract principles of sculpture.

"The art of negro Africa is a sculptor's art. As a sculptural tradition in the last century it has had no rival. It is as sculpture we should approach it."

The Exhibition has been selected from the following collections:

- Mr. Albert G. Adams, Presbyterian Mission, Cameroon
- Mr. Walter Arensberg, Hollywood
- Dr. Avrom Barnett, Brooklyn
- Mr. Richard Bedford, London
- M. Etienne Bignou, Paris
- Mr. Patrick Henry Bruce, Versailles
- Mr. Sydney Burney, London
- The Louis Carré Gallery, Paris
- Dr. Paul Chadourne, Paris

Mme. Paul Chadourne, Paris
Dr. Stephen Chauvet, Paris
Mrs. W. Murray Crane, New York
Mr. Frank Crowninshield, New York
M. André Derain, Paris
M. Félix Fénéon, Paris
Captain A.W.F. Fuller, London
Mr. A. Conger Goodyear, New York
M. Léonce Guerre, Marseilles
The Paul Guillaume Collection, Paris
Miss Laura Harden, New York
Mme. Bela Hein, Paris
Baron Eduard von der Heydt, Zandvoort
Dr. Hans Himmelheber, Karlsruhe
Mr. Earl Horter, Philadelphia
Mrs. Edith J.R. Isaacs, New York
M. Georges Keller, Paris
M.D.H. Kahnweiller, Paris
M. André Level, Paris
M. André Lhote, Paris
M. Jacques Lipchitz, Paris
M. Pierre Loeb, Paris
M. Louis Marcoussis, Paris
M. Henri Matisse, Nice
M. Antony Moris, Paris
Mr. J.B. Neumann, New York
Galerie Percier, Paris
M. Charles Ratton, Paris
Mme. Charles Ratton, Paris
Mr. Albert Rothbart, New York
Mme. Helena Rubenstein, New York
Sir Michael Sadler, Oxford
M. Georges Salles, Paris
Professor C.G. Seligman, Oxford
Mr. Arthur B. Spingarn, New York
M. Alphonse Stoclet, Brussels
M. Raphael Stora, Paris
Mr. Carroll S. Tyson, Jr., Philadelphia
M. Tristan Tzara, Paris
M. Christian Zervos, Paris
Museum für Volkerkunde, Berlin
Kunstgewerbe Museum, Cologne
Landesmuseum, Darmstadt
Staatliche Museen für Tierkunde und Völkerkunde,
Dresden
Forschungsinstitut, Frankfort-on-Main
Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg
Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg University, Hamburg
Museum für Völkerkunde, Leipzig
The Courtauld Institute of Fine Arts, London
Museum für Völkerkunde, Lübeck
Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich
New York Public Library, 135th Street Branch, N.Y.
Musée d'Ethnographie, Palais du Trocadéro, Paris
University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Phila.
Kunstgewerbe Museum, Zürich