

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, will re-open all galleries and service on Wednesday, October 8, after a four-month remodeling program aimed at providing better space and facilities for the public and staff. The changes will help accommodate visitors, which have increased by over 100 percent since the building opened in 1939, and will provide additional office space for the staff which has also doubled.

Most prominent addition is a six-story public stair tower projecting out into the Museum Garden at the east end of the building to help traffic between the gallery floors by supplementing the elevators and main open staircase at the west end of the building. The tower, which is windowless so that it also provides a third emergency exit, will be encased in gray glazed brick identical to that used on the garden wall and on the adjoining facade of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

"The changes made in the Museum during the summer months will help alleviate some of the crowded conditions that were interfering with the efficient and orderly workings of the institution," William A. M. Burden, President, said. "The enormous rise in yearly visitors and members, accompanied by an increase in staff and service have outgrown the building at 11 West 53 Street, erected in 1939, 10 years after the Museum was founded, as well as the annex at 21 West 53, which opened in 1951. While these improvements will not solve our major problems of providing adequate space for our own Collections, they will enable us to utilize the space we have to better advantage."

The Main Lobby of the Museum has been re-designed to accommodate the increasing number of members and visitors. As membership now totals about 25,000, eight times what it was in 1939, a separate desk for inquiries will be installed at the main entrance. Sales facilities for publications will also be enlarged and separated from a general information desk. Another major improvement in the lobby will be the provision of new and brighter lighting. When the glass walled lobby was originally constructed there were no buildings facing the Museum on 53rd Street.

New and more flexible lighting fixtures are also being installed in the galleries. Movable partitions, which can be changed to meet different needs of various exhibitions, are composed of metal studs with sheetrock sheathing.

Among new facilities built this summer is a Conservation Laboratory where paintings from the Museum Collection can be re-lined, stretched or cleaned. The number of paintings owned by the Museum and their value has increased many times in the past 15 years and a laboratory on the Museum premises eliminates the expense and hazard

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of moving works of art to other parts of the city when this kind of service is necessary.

Both the Library and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Print Room, which are open to the public, have been relocated and the space rearranged. The Library now contains 95,000 items, as compared to 10,000 in 1939. The number of prints has more than doubled since the Print Room opened in 1949.

The Art Lending Service on the 6th floor, where works of art can be rented or purchased, has also been enlarged to accommodate its steadily growing volume of business. This service was inaugurated in 1951.

Rearrangement of the Library and Print Room, creation of the restoration laboratory and removal of some offices to the adjoining building at 23-25 West 53, purchased in 1956, have necessitated many changes in the offices on the 5th and 6th floors of the building at 11 West 53 Street. Art classes for adult amateurs and children, which were resumed September 22, continue to occupy two floors of the "21" Building.

The floors below grade have also been redesigned and space reallocated including the receiving area where the several hundred works of art which come into the Museum each year for loan exhibitions are recorded and unpacked. Other facilities which will have more adequate space are the carpenters' workshop, paint shops, mail room, engineers' room and photography studio.

All three buildings, 11, 21 and 23-25, will be completely air conditioned and a new smoke detection system installed.

Estimated cost of these improvements is about \$850,000. This is over and above cost of repairs to the building following a fire on April 15. At that time building damage caused by the fire was estimated at about \$250,000. The Emergency Committee of Friends of the Museum formed after the fire contributed more than \$143,000 to the renovation program.

The fire was confined to the Museum's second floor galleries which had been closed to the public for the installation of air conditioning equipment. It caused a two-week halt in all services. On May 1 the Seurat loan exhibition, which had been on view, was re-installed in the ground floor galleries where temporary changes had been made. This was followed on May 12 by the Juan Gris exhibition, the other loan show on view at the time of the fire.

During May all repairs, including air conditioning changes, were halted while plans for future renovations were formulated. On June 1 the trustees announced a modernization program for the entire building. Philip C. Johnson is architect for the improvements. George Fuller Co., is the general contractor, which is finishing the job considerably ahead of the original time schedule.

For additional information please contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.