

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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THE "NEW" MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director

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November 16, 1959

Ladies and Gentlemen:

There is not much difference between the birthdays of people and institutions. Some are slow and nostalgic days dedicated to the memory of the past, others lively and busy ones, with no time to look backward or forward.

But once in a while a birthday comes at a time when past and future need to be linked by thought and action. Today is such an anniversary, and it is well for us to ask ourselves three pertinent questions:

Where do we come from?

Where are we now? and

Where are we going?

Where do we come from?

Thirty years ago, a small group of farsighted and generous art patrons wanted to share their enjoyment of the arts of our time with the people of this city. They founded the Museum and found Alfred Barr. Under his brilliant and scholarly leadership, the young Museum grew prodigiously.

The time and the place were right.

The work of the great pioneers of modern art had already been done. An entire new world had been opened up by the new masters from Van Gogh and Cézanne to Picasso and Kandinsky. Abroad, modern art was flowing richly in many channels.

But America had seen only glimpses of this new world. In New York the work of the new masters hung in only a few private collections. Some of our artists had returned from abroad and were spreading the new message through their work. But nowhere in the city could modern art be seen continuously in a public institution.

Yet the people were ready for it.

They received the Museum's exhibitions and publications with excitement. Like any pioneer venture, the Museum's program drew denunciations as well as cheers. But through all the din, the demands on the Museum's services grew constantly.

The Museum brought to modern art the standards of scholarship and taste formerly associated with the study of the art of the past. It also sought to find new ways to convey new content. In these 30 years, we have organised 600 exhibitions in our galleries, sent 200 on tour throughout the country and 60 to

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more than fifty countries abroad. Many of them have become milestones in the appreciation of modern art. We have published over 200 books of which 14 were translated into foreign languages. Our annual attendance rose from 150,000 to 700,000 and our membership from 450 to 25,000 members.

In the course of this extraordinary performance, we have accumulated vast new resources: a great collection, experience, knowledge, and, above all, a dedicated public, which responds to our program with urgent demands for more services.

Where are we now?

During this period of growth and activity, only two basic elements in the Museum's set-up have lagged far behind. A strangling lack of space and endowment funds have gradually become a real threat to our future and even to the continuation of our work on its present level.

Today most of our collection lies fallow, unseen by public and students alike and our program is unable to serve the very demand it created.

This then is the time to ask

Where are we going?

We are here today to mark the beginning of a campaign to free the Museum's resources, energies and talents. When we succeed, we will indeed have a "new" Museum of Modern Art.

This "new" Museum will have a new wing for its collection. It will give its staff the tools and the time to prepare a program that meets the demands of today. It will be the only museum in the world to give a representative picture of the development and the vast variety of modern art in all its branches from painting to film and photography, from sculpture to architecture and industrial design. In its galleries the visitor will find enjoyment of the masterworks of our time and understanding of the major art movements that have done so much to shape the world we live in.

Against the background of this great collection, all the Museum's activities will take on a deeper meaning and have greater freedom to meet today's challenges and opportunities. At a time, when fabulous advances in technology are giving new emphasis to massed power and mass orientation, the Museum will provide a forum for one of the most precious holdings of free society -- the creative imagination of the individual.

November 17, 1959

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