

# The Museum of Modern Art

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The Art in Embassies program of The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art will receive special attention at the Fort Worth April meeting, as the Chairman of the Committee, Mrs. John Farr Simmons of Washington, D.C., whose husband was Chief of Protocol for Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, and two of the earliest recipients of art under the program, Walter Dowling, former United States Ambassador to Bonn, and Mrs. John M. Cabot, wife of the former United States Ambassador to Poland, will be present.

The Art in Embassies program was initiated by the Council in 1960. The impetus originally came from Mrs. L. Corrin Strong who, as wife of the United States Ambassador to Norway in the fifties, had borrowed paintings from The Museum of Modern Art for their residence in Oslo. Her first-hand observation of the effectiveness of an art collection in making embassy residences a cultural center led her to suggest to the International Council the possibility of a continuing program. She is now Honorary Chairman of the Council's Art in Embassies Committee.

In the past six years the Council program has been responsible for assembling and shipping collections of art to more than 30 embassies. The Dowlings were among the first to receive a collection. In May, 1960, Mrs. Dowling wrote from Bonn:

"If the Art in Embassies project is as successful everywhere as in Bonn, we shall be very fortunate. The paintings arrived on Sunday in perfect condition, and we hung most of them in time for a dinner we were giving on Tuesday. A great many Germans were present, and they were most enthusiastic. Hanging them was no problem at all; there seemed to be a perfect spot for almost every one. The Sterne looks as if it had been painted expressly for our hall -- and the Beckmann in the dining room looks wonderful. The strong colors are just right. The Müller was an unusually fortunate choice, and so was the Nolde. I have never lived with such vigorous pictures before and find them very stimulating. They have really made this house come alive."

And two years later, Mrs. Cabot wrote from Warsaw:

"I rejoice to see the quality of the artists you have procured and I am most grateful for the generosity of all kinds of people--with effort and money and artistic appreciation that makes such a loan as this possible."

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"The pictures make a brave show and enhance enormously the elegance and attractiveness of the Residence.

"We are grateful in every way not only for the choice of pictures you sent us but also for the beautiful library of art books which will carry on in the Embassy for years."

Since 1960, the Museum's program has been augmented by another private endeavor, the Woodward Foundation, which has supplied works of art for more than 20 embassies. Last year the State Department also began a program under the aegis of Mrs. Nancy Kefauver and has supplied art for 25 embassies. As there are 115 embassies, and as the collections change as ambassadors change, all three agencies are fully occupied.

At this time, the Art in Embassies Committee of The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art is responsible for 12 embassy collections currently installed and for four more which will be shipped by June of this year. The most recently completed projects were for United Nations Ambassador and Mrs. Goldberg in the Waldorf Towers residence and the United States Mission building in New York City, and for Ambassador Morgan, 4,800 miles away in Abidjan, the Ivory Coast, Africa.

At the Fort Worth meeting, plans will be announced for sending collections to Lagos, Nigeria; Damascus, Syria; Bucharest, Rumania; and Budapest, Hungary. Next fall the Committee will also send a collection to Montreal.

Reporting on the arrival of paintings at the Ivory Coast in time for the embassy's celebration of George Washington's birthday, Ambassador Morgan's wife wrote:

"First, let me tell you what a continuing success the Collection you sent us is proving to be. On March 28 we had a formal opening and reception for the art world of Abidjan. People came early and stayed long, obviously enjoying the experience and commenting with great enthusiasm on the Museum's vision and imagination in sending such an interesting group of works to the Ivory Coast...but even more exciting is that our Residence has become a regular museum. Every day there are people who come to the door to see the paintings; I have become a regular museum guide, showing them about and talking about American art and culture. Guests who come for receptions and dinners ask if they can bring friends and relatives to see the collection, so we are

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finding much continuing interest...Next week we are having university students in to see the collection; then a group of high school students, and of course, we host a continuing round of receptions, lunches and dinners, so the collection is getting high, and appreciated, visibility.... Ambassador Morgan joins me in sending you and your committee our warm appreciation for your vision and imagination, in revealing an exciting new dimension to our very appreciative African friends."

And in almost the same mail, a letter came from the other side of the world - Helsinki - from Ambassador Tyler Thompson's wife, who wrote:

"My husband and I would like to request an extension of the loan of the works of art which were sent to us by The Museum of Modern Art for as long a period as is convenient for you.

"They are more than a continuing success. They are a growing success. Again, let me express our gratitude to you."

The works of art lent to the various embassies reflect the variety in style and medium of modern American art. The works are borrowed from public collections, including The Museum of Modern Art Collection, from private collectors and from artists and galleries.

The selection is made in close consultation with the ambassador and/or his wife and whenever possible, reflects their personal tastes and interests as well as the space available in the residence. At the same time, the Museum stresses that each collection should have something of the character of a small traveling exhibition. Its standards should be those which prevail in Museum exhibitions and the works of art should demonstrate a variety of important aspects of American art.

Collections are lent for a period of one year to 18 months, with the possibility of loan extension for an additional year. Loans are accompanied by a presentation album giving background information on each of the artists and photographs of each work. A set of books giving additional background material is sent as a gift from The International Council to remain permanently in the embassy.

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