

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

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296

MUSEUM GALLERIES OPEN DESPITE STRIKE

The Museum of Modern Art galleries, bookstore and offices are open despite a strike called by members of Local 1, Museum Division, Distributive Workers of America, representing part of the Museum's professional and administrative staff, on Friday, August 20 following the breakdown of collective bargaining negotiations. Essentially the union refused to accept program and staff reductions mandated by the gravity of the Museum's financial condition. Other unions with which the Museum has contracts are continuing to work, and the Museum intends to remain open and in full operation, notwithstanding the strike.

At a press conference held Friday afternoon, John B. Hightower, Director of the Museum, said that the Museum was willing to resume negotiations at any time and that until the strike was called negotiations, in process since June, had been very constructive. Considerable progress had been made in several specific areas, including research and sabbatical programs for the professional staff, tuition reimbursement for outside education and an internal educational orientation program for the entire staff. Fruitful discussions were also held in relation to a broad range of personnel policy issues including leaves of absence, vacation, health and insurance benefits and working conditions, he said. In addition, the Museum had proposed a comprehensive plan for the implementation of job evaluations and advancement and a basic salary increase for the entire staff, to which the union failed to respond.

"Eliminating positions is an extremely painful step," Mr. Hightower said, "but it is important to keep in mind the fact that the size of the Museum staff increased enormously in the past five years despite the fact that the program did not increase proportionately. For example, in June of 1966 we had a total staff of 295

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men and women. In June of 1970 it had grown to 539, an increase of almost 82 percent. In August of 1971 it was down to about 440. The anticipated elimination of approximately 50 positions will take place during the next 14 or 15 months and will be accomplished partly by not filling open positions and wherever possible by normal attrition."

The program and staff reductions, announced to the entire staff August 4, are part of a two-pronged effort to reduce expenses and increase income, without undermining essential services to the public. While active campaigns are now underway to increase substantially the endowment of the Museum and to raise the level of annual giving from corporations and private individuals and actively seek government funds, the reductions are necessary as the direct result of the Museum's financial situation, similar to that of many other non-profit institutions in this country. The Museum has been operating at a deficit since 1966-67, which now, even with program and staff reductions, is projected at \$1.3 million for the current fiscal year. "If we had done nothing now to reverse this trend," Mr. Hightower said, "we would have had to face the harsh prospect of closing galleries and eliminating vital services to the public, as other institutions have done recently."

The program reductions, arrived at after lengthy discussions with staff members and Trustees, will reduce costs by substituting exhibitions from the Museum's unparalleled collections in place of some of the expensive temporary loan shows that involve numerous extra expenses such as transportation, insurance, registration, and other necessary activities that go into the making of a loan exhibition. Beginning in the fall of 1972 the Museum is planning to mount four large loan shows each year instead of eight or nine. The smaller, less expensive and frequently experimental shows will be kept at about the same level as in the past. The character and balance of the Museum's exhibition program will remain unchanged.

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As large exhibitions have to be planned many months in advance, the results of re-focusing the program will not be fully effective for some time. Positions will be eliminated gradually as the program is reduced so that the work load on the staff will not be increased.

Other reductions in expenses and staff will result from the curtailment of certain services which are not vital to the essential functions of the Museum including: the Members Newsletter, which has been suspended since the fall of 1970, will not be re-instituted and the art advisory service to corporations which has been suspended for the time being. While lectures, conferences and other educational special events will continue, events not particularly and directly related to our program will be reduced to a minimum. Some program and service departments have been consolidated to eliminate overlapping duties. Further reductions in such service areas as finance and administration, registration and custodial will evolve from these various program cuts.

The Museum, a privately supported institution, receives no regular assistance or subsidy from public funds as do many museums around the country with the exception of occasional and specific grants from the New York State Council on the Arts. None of the proposed reductions will jeopardize or alter the essential character of the Museum. "Similar to other institutions throughout the country the Museum is forced to cut back. Unlike the Brooklyn Museum and the Metropolitan, which recently closed galleries to the public, we are making every effort to avoid this. The Museum, as always, will remain open to the public seven days a week and all galleries continue in active operation," Mr. Hightower emphasized.

"Careful consideration," he said, "has been given to maintaining those activities and services, such as archives, conservation, library and basic cataloging which are less visible to the public than exhibitions but which we recognize as essential to the Museum.

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"In several areas, notably publications and education, the latter under the guidance of the newly formed Trustee Education Committee, we hope that we will be able to increase our activity as the hectic pace of temporary loan shows lessens.

"We are convinced that these steps will not only stabilize our financial condition but allow the Museum to continue as the vital institution it has always been."

Additional information from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York 10019. Telephone: (212) 956-7501/7504.

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F O R Y O U R I N F O R M A T I O N

The strike at The Museum of Modern Art is the unfortunate result of a breakdown in collective bargaining negotiations which have been in process since June between the Museum and the union representing part of the Museum's professional and administrative staff. Essentially the union has refused to accept program and staff reductions mandated by the gravity of the Museum's financial condition which is largely a result of its growth in the five years prior to 1970.

Even with anticipated savings as a result of program changes, the Museum's projected deficit for 1971-72 is \$1,355,000. The growth in the deficit, approximately \$128,000 in 1966-67, has accelerated in recent years to a level which the Museum cannot sustain. Simultaneously, the staff increased from 295 in 1966 to 539 in 1970 with no appreciable increase in program. A privately supported institution, The Museum of Modern Art receives no subsidies from the City of New York, unlike many of the City's other major museums.

We greatly regret any inconvenience the strike may cause and hope it will not interfere with your enjoyment of the Museum and its exhibitions. At the present time, no services to the public will be cancelled, and it is our intention to keep the Museum's galleries and bookstore open to the public seven days a week despite the strike. The steps taken by the Museum to reassess the scope and priorities of its programs will hopefully strengthen the institution for the future and ensure its continued commitment to the arts of our time.