

# "PRIMITIVISM" IN 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ART

## Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
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### MAJOR PUBLICATION ACCOMPANIES "PRIMITIVISM" EXHIBITION

"PRIMITIVISM" IN 20TH CENTURY ART: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern, a beautifully illustrated, intellectually provocative volume examining the crucial influence of the tribal arts of Africa, Oceania and North America on modern painters and sculptors, has been published by The Museum of Modern Art in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name. Edited by William Rubin, Director of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture and principal organizer of the exhibition, the almost 700-page book contains 1,087 illustrations, including 378 in color, as well as 19 essays by eminent scholars in the fields of modern and tribal arts. It is also the first book ever to illustrate and discuss tribal works collected by seminal modernists such as Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Nolde, and Ernst. The publication has been made possible by grants from Philip Morris Incorporated, chief sponsor of the exhibition, and from The Eugene McDermott Foundation.

The roots of modernist "primitivism" can be followed back to the "discovery" of tribal sculptures and masks by vanguard artists in the first decades of this century. Heretofore viewed merely as curiosities, the objects had suddenly become aesthetically relevant due to changes in the nature of modern art itself, and it wasn't long before references to tribal objects became

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evident in the work of modern painters and sculptors. Many of the key works associated with pioneering modernists--Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon and Guitar, Brancusi's Madame L.R., Klee's Mask of Fear, Nolde's Masks, Ernst's Bird-Head, among others--contain such references.

The book, the first comprehensive, scholarly treatment of its subject in half a century, begins with an introductory essay by Mr. Rubin defining the parameters of modernist "primitivism." Succeeding chapters explore the arrival and dissemination in the West of tribal art from Africa, Oceania and North America and its effect on individual artists and artistic movements. The volume concludes with a discussion of "primitivism" in contemporary art, including earthworks, pieces influenced by shamanism, and ritual-inspired performance. All of the essays are heavily illustrated, often in a format juxtaposing tribal and modern work that enhances the exploration of underlying affinities and the illumination of the problems of influence and rapport. The tribal works depicted include a variety of masterpieces pertinent to modernist interests as well as numerous other objects vital to the history of "primitivism."

"PRIMITIVISM" IN 20TH CENTURY ART: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern has been published in a two-volume, 690-page, clothbound set. Measuring 9" x 12" and containing 709 black and white and 378 color illustrations, the set sells for \$80. A two-volume softcover version has also been published. It sells for \$30 until January 30, 1985; \$40 thereafter. Both the clothbound and softcover versions are distributed by The Museum of Modern Art.

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