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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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NEW YORK HIGH SCHOOL CHILDREN EXHIBIT THEIR OWN PAINTINGS
OF FAVORITE WORKS IN MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

High School children of New York City have recorded in paint the impressions made on them by their favorite works in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Two dozen of these impression-paintings will be exhibited in the Young People's Gallery of the Museum under the title Favorites in Modern Art opening May 12 and continuing through June 20.

The exhibition shows the results of one of the Educational Program's many experiments to discover the best ways of developing young people's understanding of the arts of our time. The experiment had the very important object not only of finding out what paintings and other works of art the students preferred, but also of discovering what each carried away for himself.

The paintings were made in the Saturday classes which the Educational Program holds at the Museum weekly for New York City High School students. The students were asked to select a work from the Museum's Collection which impressed them most either from the standpoint of appeal or challenge. After studying the work for several minutes, they returned to the class and painted their impressions of it. While the majority of students chose paintings, three chose sculptures and one a construction. Van Gogh's Starry Night was the most popular; others were Rousseau's Sleeping Gypsy, Lehmbruck's Standing Youth, Benton's Homestead, Gauguin's The Moon and the Earth, Rouault's Christ Mocked By Soldiers.

Victor D'Amico, Director of the Museum's Educational Program, commented on the exhibition and the experiment which produced it, as follows:

"In this way the Educational Program of the Museum is a sort of laboratory for the schools exploring new ideas and new processes and turning the results over to art education in general. The object of the experiment was not to reproduce the painting or other work of art, although many seemed to have such vivid memories that their impressions were quite accurate, but to put down in paint the emotional impact they retained. This device enables a student to report his reaction in the same terms in which the artist's work is done. The ordinary method is to have children talk about their impressions. Art teachers are well aware of the tyranny of words, and therefore prefer a means that is closer to the art experience.

"As an example it is interesting to compare the reactions

of different students to the same works. For instance, two students painted van Gogh's Cafe at Night; one shows his intense reaction to the glow of the lamps by exaggerating their size and subordinating other elements, while the other emphasizes the spaciousness and depth of the room. In another instance three students chose Picasso's Woman in White; two were intrigued by the linear pattern and rhythm, the other by its sculptural quality."

The high schools represented are: Brooklyn High School for Specialty Trades, Bryant, DeWitt Clinton, Evander Childs, Food Trades High School, Fort Hamilton, Franklin K. Lane, George Washington, Girls Commercial, Jamaica, Julia Richman, Lafayette, Morris, Music and Art High School, Stuyvesant, Textile, and Wadleigh High School.

In captions beside the children's paintings are their comments on why they chose the particular work and what it means to them. Here are a few excerpts from the comments:

Van Gogh's Night Cafe

Joseph (17): "Night Cafe appealed to me, to be frank, because it reflected my feelings toward the people who inhabit night clubs and inns solely for the purpose of passing the time away. The fact that I too play billiards and pool, might have influenced my selection... I tried, but without success I feel, to achieve van Gogh's wild and carefree stroke of the brush."

Charles (15); "Revoltng greens contrasted by the lone area of cool blue in the table remain in my vision of van Gogh's Night Cafe. Also, the illusion of a stuffy, smoky atmosphere, suggested by the light halos, revolving and scintillating about the lamps present in the picture, creating a revolting mood, remained.... In painting this picture of the same subject as van Gogh did, I really begin to appreciate his mastery of his medium."

Picasso's Woman in White

Lady Bird (16): "I like very much the way he treated his paints in such a way it would appear as a blinding shade of white. She looks as if she were behind a thin veil."

Lehmbruck's Standing Youth

William (17): "I chose the serene, sombre sculpture titled Standing Youth. In my attempt to depict a sculpture in tempera, I tried to capture all of the lax pensiveness that seems to predominate in the room where this sculpture is.

"On first seeing the Standing Youth one would be sure to mention, or think, about its regretful, mournful expression. One with a little imagination might even go as far as to attempt to perceive the thoughts behind it.

"My attempt to portray this is mainly the use of the saddest, and yet not brutal colors that I could find in my palette. You will notice a face blended in the background, which is used to accentuate the expression on the youth's face much as soft music is used to express silence and stealthiness in a play. By means of the soft color of his body, I attempted to express the elongation and springing flexibility of the sculpture."

Van Gogh's The Starry Night

Boby: "To me, The Starry Night represents the highest ideal of art. Van Gogh put heartfelt emotion into his picture, without much concern for realism. As I look at it, I feel something of what van Gogh must have experienced to compel him to put the thing down in such a surging, powerful manner. I tried to express the power and rhythm in my interpretation. I had been impressed in my radio class with what I learned about huge, powerful radio waves flowing across the country, and for weeks I had been looking for a means to express this on paper. When I saw The Starry Night I was immediately struck with the way van Gogh got the movement and power he wanted."