

Making choices : ground floor and second floor.

Date

2000

Publisher

The Museum of Modern Art

Exhibition URL

[www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/178?
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MAKING | **CHOICES**

Ground Floor and Second Floor

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PUBLICATIONS

Making Choices: 1929, 1939, 1948, 1955. By Peter Galassi, Robert Storr, and Anne Umland. 348 pages. 9½ x 12". 306 illustrations, including 162 in color and 144 in duotone. \$55.00 cloth; \$35.00 paper.

Walker Evans & Company. By Peter Galassi. 272 pages. 9¾ x 11¼". 399 illustrations, including 67 in color and 332 in duotone. \$55.00 cloth; \$35.00 paper.

Modern Art despite Modernism. By Robert Storr. 248 pages. 9 x 12". 198 illustrations, including 172 in color and 26 in black and white. \$55.00 cloth; \$35.00 paper.

Making Choices is part of *MoMA2000*, which is made possible by The Starr Foundation.

Generous support is provided by Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro in memory of Louise Reinhardt Smith.

The Museum gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with gifts from Lily Auchincloss, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, and Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder.

Additional funding is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley, and by The Contemporary Arts Council and The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art.

Education programs accompanying *MoMA2000* are made possible by Paribas.

The publication *Making Choices: 1929, 1939, 1948, 1955* is made possible by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

The interactive environment of *Making Choices* is supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Web/kiosk content management software is provided by SohoNet.

Making Choices is a cycle of exhibitions that focuses on the years between 1920 and 1960, a period of great social and political turmoil and spirited artistic debate. As the original visions of modern art matured, they simultaneously provoked dissenting reactions and spawned parallel experiments in a wide range of mediums. No general survey could encompass the art of this period without diminishing its essential variety. *Making Choices* instead presents twenty-four distinct exhibitions, all of them drawn entirely from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. Some concentrate on one artist's achievement or a single aspect of it; others explore broad artistic movements, themes, or traditions. Some are devoted to a particular moment or medium; others span the entire century and incorporate works in a wide range of mediums.

At any given moment artists confront divergent opportunities and challenges defined by the art that has come before and by the changing world around them. Each artist responds differently; competing programs and imperatives sharpen those differences; and independent traditions in particular mediums further nourish variety. Even the art that in retrospect seems the most innovative is deeply rooted in the constellation of uncertain choices from which it arose. Modern art is justly celebrated for its spirit of ceaseless invention; these exhibitions aim as well to stress its vital multiplicity.

Making Choices



COVER AND ABOVE: René Magritte. *The False Mirror*. 1928. Oil on canvas, 21¼ x 31½" (54 x 80.9 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. © 2000 Charly Herscovici/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

Art Is Arp

"FOR ARP, art is Arp," wrote Marcel Duchamp of his friend, Jean Arp (French, born Alsace, 1886–1966). By inserting the proper name Arp where an adjective might normally be expected, Duchamp disrupts the logic of ordinary associations, conferring new meanings upon "art" and "Arp" alike. At the same time, pairing "Arp" with its cognate "art" produces a game of sliding identities that slyly mimics Arp's own artistic strategies. Incongruous juxtapositions, wacky alliances, and comic collisions are all key features of Arp's work, especially during the period 1919–31 when his verbal and visual forms of expression had a particular affinity. The focus of this exhibition is on Arp's work of the late teens through the early thirties, crucial years that marked the first appearance of methods and motifs reiterated throughout his entire career.

Poet, painter, sculptor, and printmaker, Arp was a founding member of the Dada movement, frequently exhibited with the Surrealists, and maintained close ties to several Constructivist groups. Moving between seemingly opposed artistic camps, he combined elements of punning absurdity, irrational poetry, and purist abstraction with a wide-ranging,

experimental approach to media. Beginning in the 1920s, Arp described his works as "Object Language," a term that, like the descriptive titles he assigned to individual pieces, intimates a poetic conflation between the materiality of things and the abstraction of language. The result was a personal vocabulary of biomorphic forms and symbols realized in wood reliefs, string drawings, cardboard cutouts, collages, illustrated books, and prints.

Two early Dada works, *Automatic Drawing* (1917–18) and *Collage Arranged According to the Laws of*



Chance (1916–17), characterize Arp's varied interests in organic shapes, simple geometries, and the potential of antirational procedures to spark unconventional new works of art. The seven lithographic *Arpaden* (a nonsense word meaning Arps, or Arp things), first published in Kurt Schwitters's periodical *Merz* in 1923, provide a primer or lexicon for his "Object Language," setting forth a number of its basic elements in iconic isolation: mustache hat, sea, navel, navel bottle, mustache watch, eggbeater. In these prints, as in Arp's reliefs and related works, anatomical fragments, commonplace objects, and organic shapes commingle. Typical is the suggestively titled *Navel Bottle*, in which a bottle becomes anthropomorphic through the addition of a navel, then animated by the composition's asymmetry, diagonal thrust, and curving contours. Like letters of the alphabet, individual motifs such as the "navel" appear and reappear. Inserted into different contexts, transfigured in different media, reshaped, reconfigured, and subjected to multiple interpretations and readings, Arp's symbols promiscuously conspire to subvert their viewers' notions of categorical distinctions.

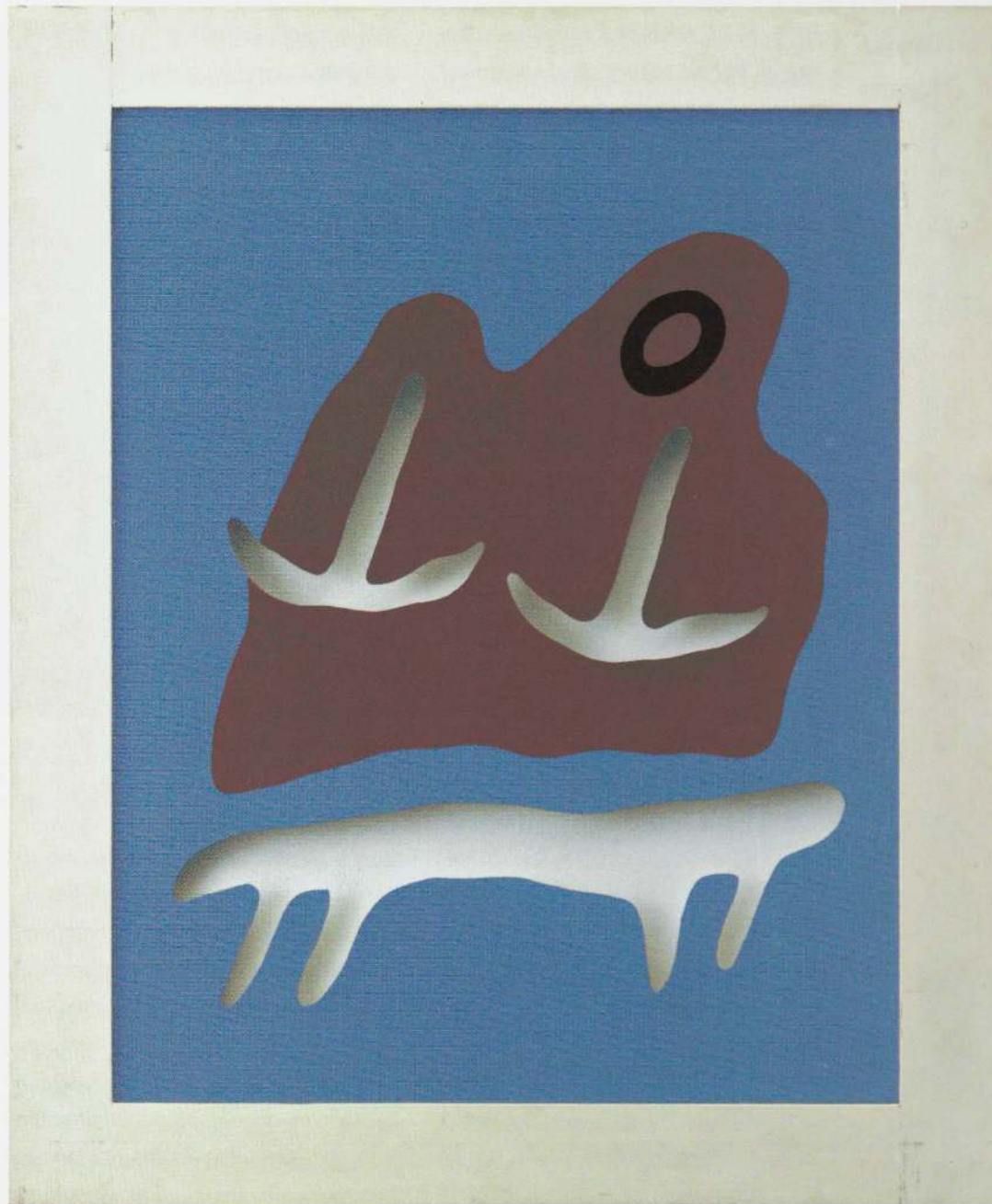
Jean (originally, Hans) Arp. *Die Nabelflasche* (The Navel Bottle) from the portfolio *7 Arpaden*. 1923. Lithograph, 17 1/4 x 13 1/2" (45.1 x 34.8 cm). Publisher: Merzverlag, Hannover, Germany. Edition: 50. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of J. B. Neumann. © 2000 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Arp's identity as an artist has its own ambivalence. First coming to prominence in a Europe wracked by World War I's devastation, he shared the Dadaists' anarchic attitude toward conventional society, the Surrealists' interest in poetry and dreams, and the Constructivists' aspirations toward a universal, classless art. Arp created a body of work that transforms humdrum materials into elegant abstractions, and that everywhere evokes the human figure but rarely betrays the artist's touch. Invoking "chance" as his point of departure, Arp nonetheless carefully calculated and calibrated its effect. In these ways and many others, Arp's art systematically overturned illusory classifications using a poetic process that substituted suggestion for definition.

Anne Umland

*Associate Curator, Department
of Painting and Sculpture*

Jean (originally, Hans) Arp. *Mountain, Table, Anchors, Navel*. 1925. Oil on cardboard with cutouts, 29 1/4 x 23 1/2" (75.2 x 59.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. ©2000 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



The Dream of Utopia/ Utopia of the Dream

THE MODERN ERA has been the age of artistic manifestos, and never more so than in the early part of the twentieth century. Dreams of a more perfect world are the perennial human resource from which the utopian impulse draws its strength. The devastation of World War I created a cultural *tabula rasa* upon which artists began to build their models for a better society, and the Russian Revolution and the widespread belief in the promise of international socialism provided a context in which or against which to test their ideals.

On one side of the utopian coin were the rationalists. Their faith in the logic of form and the systematic restructuring of reality assumed various dimensions and aspects—many of them verging on a kind of mysticism despite their emphasis on pure reason. In the Netherlands, the de Stijl group organized around a magazine of that name and included artists and designers such as Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg, Vilmos Huszar, Bart van der Leek, Gerrit Rietveld, and Georges Vantongerloo. Working with geometric elements and primary hues, these artists conceived of an integrated for-

mal language in which a dynamic equilibrium of shapes and colors would be achieved.

The German Bauhaus also foresaw a fundamental transformation of consciousness through a total reconfiguration of the visual environment and a corresponding breakdown of the separation of the fine and the applied arts. Although some Bauhaus artists, like László Moholy-Nagy and Vasily Kandinsky, were not German-born, they rallied in Weimar beginning in 1919—

and later around subsequent incarnations of their avant-garde academy in Dessau and Berlin. Together they developed a theoretical, pedagogical, and practical program of painting, photography, craft, architecture, and design of unparalleled experimental breadth and depth. Before it finally closed in 1933 under pressure from the Nazis, the Bauhaus attracted enormous attention, and provided aes-



Ivan Puni. *Suprematist Relief-Sculpture*. 1920s reconstruction of 1915 original. Painted wood, metal, and cardboard, mounted on wood panel, 20 x 15 1/2 x 3" (50.8 x 39.3 x 7.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Riklis Collection of McCrory Corporation

thetic paradigms that would be used for years by artists and designers around the world.

In Russia meanwhile, Constructivist and Suprematist artists such as El Lissitzky, Kazimir Malevich, Liubov Sergeevna Popova, and Aleksandr Rodchenko, proposed a comparable coordination and rationalization of artistic

practice and an even more aggressive realignment of the means of artistic production under the aegis of the Communist State. Between the triumph of Lenin's Bolshevik revolution in 1918 and the onset of Stalin's repression in 1932, Russian art underwent a renaissance, affecting everything from books and posters to film, photomontage, typography, and painting. Eventual victims of the social upheaval they championed in their work, these Soviet artists were in many respects tragic figures. Nonetheless their accomplishments transcended their failure to realize the perfect synergy of art and politics.

On the other side of the utopian coin were the irrationalists. While World War I was still in progress Dada mounted the first assault on the conventional idealism which they believed had helped bring about the war. Dada's prime movers, including Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia, challenged such bourgeois "common sense" with ingenious non-sense—scrambling language and images in combinations that were both disruptive and revelatory but never aimed at a thorough-going, much less coherent reorientation of culture and

society. Under the leadership of the poet and critic André Breton, the Surrealists took that next step. Starting in 1924 with the publication of the *Manifesto of Surrealism*, Breton and his cohort of artists—including Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti, André Masson, René Magritte, Joan Miró, Man Ray, Yves Tanguy, and, at times, Pablo Picasso—pursued poetic reverie to the edge of open revolt.

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories were essential to Surrealist thinking, as was Karl Marx's analysis of social alienation. By the early 1930s this political bias became explicit as the group's official journal changed its name from *The Surrealist Revolution* to *Surrealism at the Service of the Revolution*, and Breton formed a brief alliance with Leon Trotsky, Stalin's most important adversary on the Communist Left. But as profound as its impact on the visual art and on literature was, Breton's utopia of the dream was powerless to effect larger political realities, thought it did affect popular culture. Many of its exponents—Breton, Ernst, Masson, and Tanguy among them—took refuge in the United States during

World War II where their contacts with New York artists such as Arshile Gorky and Joseph Cornell extended Surrealism's reach and contributed enormously to American art's coming into its own from the mid-1940s through the 1950s.

Robert Storr
Senior Curator, Department
of Painting and Sculpture



Salvador Dali. *Retrospective Bust of a Woman*. 1933; some elements reconstructed 1970. Painted porcelain, bread, corn, feathers, paint on paper, beads, ink stand, sand, and two pens, 29 x 27 1/4 x 12 1/4" (73.9 x 69.2 x 32 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest and gift of Philip Johnson (both by exchange). © 2000 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/Demart Pro Arte, Paris

Walker Evans & Company

POETS USE the same language that journalists and lawyers and curators use. Just so, the unvarnished realism of photography—the medium of mug shots and real estate ads—can be the stuff of visual poetry. Walker Evans was among the first to recognize and exploit this potential.

Evans (1903–1975) did most of his best work in the 1930s—a good deal of it for a government agency now best known as the Farm Security Administration—and his pictures have been celebrated as documents of the Great Depression. But his restless interrogation of American society ranged far beyond the concerns of the 1930s, and his highly original approach to descriptive photography laid the foundations of a robust creative tradition.

In this exhibition, Evans's photographs are arranged in eight groups, each of which concentrates on a single dimension of his art. Each group is presented together with works by other artists that contributed to, drew upon, or otherwise resonate with Evans's work. In a sense, then, Evans is treated here not as one artist but as eight, and the same period—roughly from the 1920s and



Walker Evans. *Joe's Auto Graveyard, Pennsylvania*. 1936. Gelatin silver print (printed c. 1970), 4 1/4 x 6 1/4" (11.7 x 17.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. John Parkinson III Fund

1930s to the 1970s or later—is traced eight times, each time along a different path. The dual aim is to employ tradition as a sounding board to amplify salient aspects of Evans's art, and to adopt his work as a lens through which to study the unfolding of tradition. In other words, the exhibition approaches tradition as a two-way street, through which the new can teach us about the old and vice versa.

Evans began to make photographs in 1928, the year in which the Ford Motor Company discontinued the

Model T after producing more than fifteen million cars over a period of twenty years. Standardization and mass production had brought a new chance of mobility and adventure into individual lives, and the paradox of modern America was born. The fledgling movement of American art photography, devoted to timeless beauty, generally pretended that the automobile did not exist, while advertising celebrated it as a shining icon of progress. To Evans, cars were neither bad nor good; they belonged to the everyday scene to which he opened his eyes. Because

his vernacular material was so ordinary, and because his straightforward style was seemingly so impersonal, he risked that viewers would misconstrue his art as a form of sociological observation, and many still make this mistake. But the risk paid off: Evans's attentiveness to the automobile was only one of the ways in which he opened ambitious photography to contingencies of contemporary experience and helped to broaden modern art's engagement with the world outside the studio.

In American art since Evans, the automobile has enjoyed a lively career as a symbol of both personal freedom and assembly-line anonymity, of high spirits and lonely pathos. The work of Robert Frank, Robert Rauschenberg, Lee Friedlander, and many others underscores Evans's prescience in recognizing car culture as essential to the fabric of modern American life. At the same time, by extending the artistic opportunity that Evans first explored, their work heightens our alertness to the sharpness of his perceptions.

These brief remarks concern only one of the eight threads of tradition that are

traced in the exhibition, but the historical emphasis is in the right place. America's postwar prosperity was a long way from the Depression, but Evans's skeptical probing of American identity has enjoyed its liveliest influence since the mid-1950s. Then and later, as artists explored popular images (including photographs) as potent cultural symbols, it turned out that Evans had been there, too.

Some art seeks beauty or the expression of deep emotion. Evans's art might be described as a form of inspired curiosity. His subject was large—American civilization, present and past—but he aimed at precisely framed questions rather than definitive answers, declining to instruct his audience what to think or feel. His work showed that symbol resides in fact, that significance lies in the ordinary, and that articulate description can be a vehicle of wit, irony, humor, and intelligence. And he proved that if the artist looks outward rather than inward, beauty and emotion will take care of themselves.

Peter Galassi

Chief Curator, Department of Photography



Robert Rauschenberg. *First Landing Jump*. 1961. Combine painting: cloth, metal, leather, electric fixture, cable, oil paint on composition board, automobile tire, and wooden plank on floor, 7' 5 1/4" x 6' x 8 1/8" (226.3 x 182.8 x 22.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Philip Johnson. © Untitled Press, Inc./Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Graphic- Photographic

IN THE DECADE following World War I, a wave of technological optimism propelled artistic experiment in the studios of the Bauhaus in Germany, of de Stijl in the Netherlands, and of the Constructivist movement in the newly formed Soviet Union. This broad vein of creativity drew upon an eager confidence that technology was inherently progressive—that in itself the pursuit of machine-like rationality, clarity, and efficiency had the power to transform society. We can now see that this confidence was misplaced, but we can also see that the artistic inventions it fostered were both lively and lasting.

Technology has continued its headlong pace, so perhaps it is worth noting that in 1920 many of the machines we now take for granted—the automobile and the airplane, for example—were not yet ubiquitous in Europe. One important dimension of the still-unfolding triumph of technology was the merger of printing and photography, which had coalesced shortly before the war. This development radically expanded the means of graphic communication by introducing photographs into the printed press, but that was only part of the new opportunity.

Thanks to photography's ready ability to copy, enlarge, reduce, and combine other design elements, the graphic arts enjoyed an unprecedented fluidity, whether or not a photograph appeared in the end product.

Determined to break decisively with decorative conventions so as to project their work into a better future, the new designers laid down the law: To express precision and simplicity, letterforms were to be stripped of the graceful branches and feet called serifs, and words were to be rendered entirely in either lower-case or capital letters. Symmetry—the standard since Gutenberg—was to give way to asymmetrical composition, freely deployed to reinforce the message. Black, white, and a restricted palette of colors would combine ease of production and clarity of effect. The dynamic new layouts, based on the unseen grid that designers still use today, would treat the entire sheet, including large blank areas, as a unified graphic field.

In photography, a parallel set of imperatives distinguished the new photography from the pictorial habits of the past. Angled perspectives—especially



Max Burchartz. *Schubertfeier* (Schubert Festival). 1928. Offset lithograph, 23 1/4 x 33" (59.1 x 83.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Philip Johnson

plunging views up or down—made the familiar seem unfamiliar and gave the impression of energy and mobility. Abrupt croppings at once intensified the image and created bold graphic forms. Superimpositions, negative images, and cameraless photograms played havoc with the look of the real—all in the name of photography's mechanical objectivity. At the Bauhaus, László Moholy-Nagy proclaimed, "We may say that we see the world with entirely different eyes."

Jan Tschichold (part of whose extensive collection of graphic design was acquired by the Museum in 1950 and figures prominently in this exhibition), Moholy-Nagy, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Herbert Bayer, and other protagonists of the movement regarded the new typography and the new photography as symbiotic aspects of a single aesthetic, and many of them worked in both mediums. They believed that "typophoto," as they called the combination of the two, would help to build a better world by bringing the cleansing rationalism and vitality of modernism to a broad public through mass reproduction. The technique of collage, which juxtaposed crisp elements of typography and photography in

a lively synthesis, was in itself an expression of forward-looking modernity—closer in spirit to the impersonal operations of the engineer than to the outmoded cuisine of the painter.

The movement embraced journalism, advertising, political propaganda, and avant-garde experiment as interdependent aspects of a comprehensive revolution in visual communication. In the 1930s, as forces of ideology and commerce shattered this vision, appropriating the new forms and techniques to radically divergent ends, the artists who had created those forms found themselves powerless to object.

Peter Galassi

Chief Curator, Department of Photography

Christopher Mount

*Assistant Curator, Department of
Architecture and Design*



Aleksandr Rodchenko. *Balconies*. 1925. Gelatin silver print, $11\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{8}$ " (29.3 x 22.4 cm).
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the Rodchenko family

Kahn's Modern Monuments

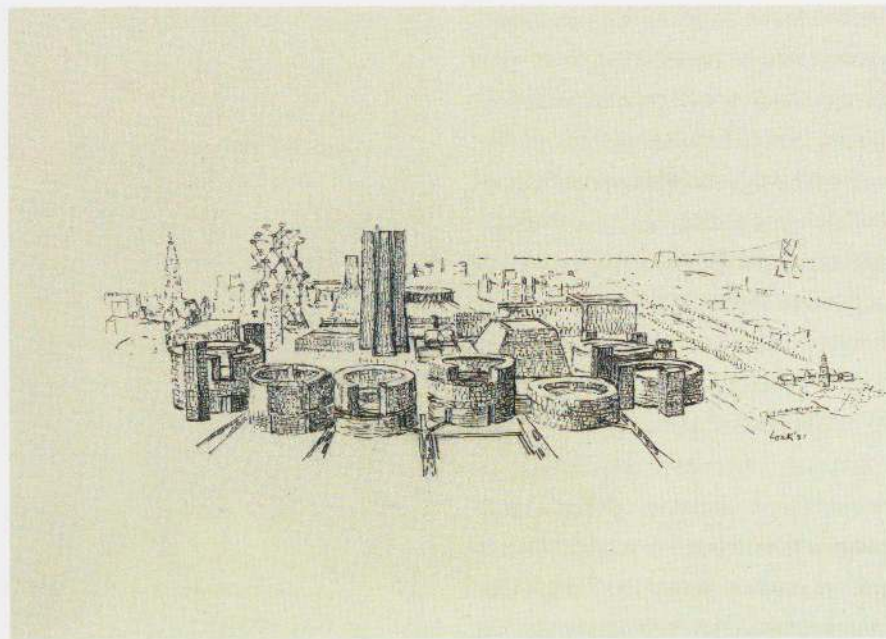
"WHAT SPACES, what activities, what buildings form the creative center of human communication?"

This probing question, posed in 1955 by American architect Louis I. Kahn (1901–1974), underlies the extraordinarily powerful buildings and projects he designed shortly thereafter. Kahn's sober exploration of the meaning, symbolism, and form of civic, religious, and cultural institutions are seen in his drawings and models in this exhibition. In his search for a formal vocabulary symbolic of human institutions, Kahn consistently based his compositions on a centralized enclosed space surrounded by secondary spaces. He created a cloistered, contemplative atmosphere within the walls. Kahn's preference for the enclosed core is pervasive in his work, appearing at various scales—for rooms, buildings, and cities.

A sketch from 1957 showing the small bird's-eye panorama of Philadelphia is a visionary drawing full of ideas and forms only realized in his later works. Kahn's depiction of the modern city center—which he symbolically called the "forum" (and alternatively "the cathedral of the city")—makes a metaphorical allusion to

a medieval walled settlement. Here massive cylindrical parking towers form a protective wall around the city center—the locus of meaningful civic life—defending it from the onslaught of automobiles and the forces of decentralization that threatened human interaction. In fact Kahn once compared this drawing to Carcassonne. Just as Carcassonne was a city built for defense, Kahn envisioned the modern city having to defend itself against the automobile. These monumental towers form new gateways to the city as they receive traffic from the expressways leading into the city. A pro-

nounced historicism that would later emerge fully in his work is evinced by the towers, which explicitly recall ancient monuments, such as the Roman Colosseum, in various states of decay. The cylindrical towers are themselves based on a concentric design serving several functions: an inner core containing a parking garage and storage spaces, and an outer ring of living and commercial spaces surrounding an open-air pedestrian plaza—a microcosm of the city itself. Kahn believed that only by a centralization of buildings and activities could the life of the city be preserved.



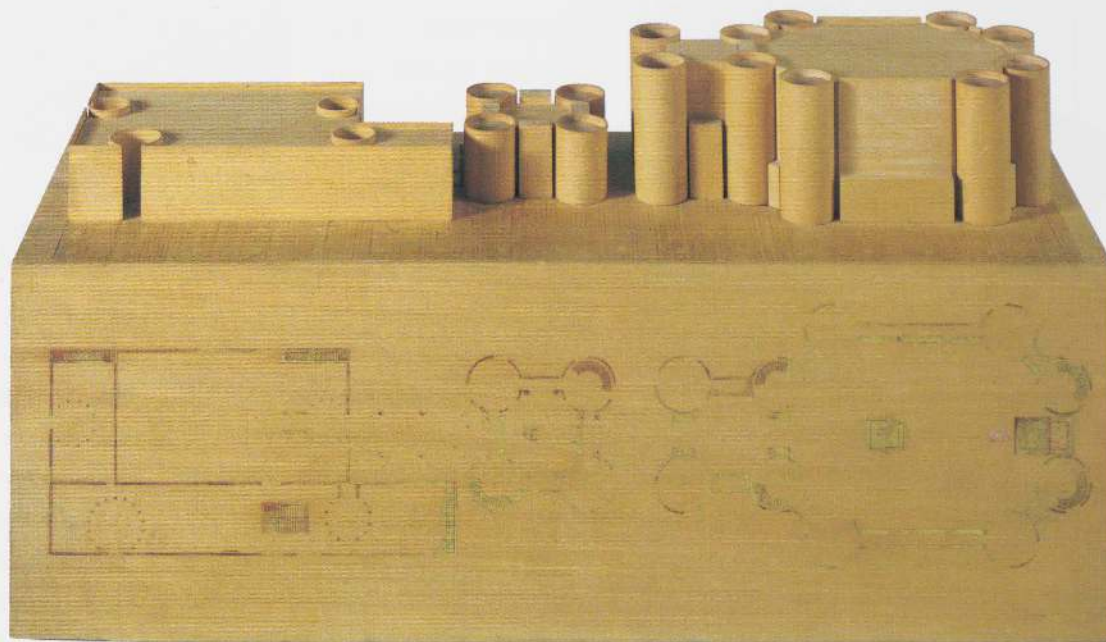
Kahn's design for the Mikveh Israel Synagogue shares certain formal sensibilities with the design of the city center. The model shows the overall massing of the building. Again he invokes the archetype of a medieval castle in the sanctuary which is surrounded by cylindrical towers. Kahn called the towers "window rooms." As windows, they are perforated with large arched openings that allow natural light to enter the sanctuary

through the cylindrical light well. As rooms, the towers provided spaces for worshippers to observe the sanctuary.

Both projects, as well as others in the exhibition, share a sense of monumentality consistently expressed in centralized plans and layered enclosures of massive walls. Using universal abstract geometry, Kahn evoked an archaic, awe-inspiring past to symbolize the unity inherent in his understanding of

the institution of assembly. For Kahn programmatic distinctions were secondary. Kahn was an idealist whose works expressed his fundamental belief that architecture is an art whose ultimate purpose is to provide meaningful spaces for human inspiration—to learn, to meet, to express.

Peter Reed
Curator, Department of
Architecture and Design



LEFT: Louis I. Kahn. Civic Center, Project, Philadelphia. 1957. Aerial perspective, ink on tracing paper, 11 x 14" (27.9 x 35.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the architect

RIGHT: Louis I. Kahn. Mikveh Israel Synagogue, Project, Philadelphia. 1961–72. Model, 1964. Bass wood, 12½ x 26¼ x 9" (31.8 x 68 x 22.9 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the architect

Man Ray, Photographer

THE CEASELESSLY inventive spirit of Man Ray (born Emmanuel Rudnitzky in Philadelphia in 1890, died 1976 in Paris) could be contained neither by the city of New York, where he formulated his desire to become an artist, nor by the medium of painting, in which he initially set out to make his career. In New York his viewing of the Armory Show of 1913 and frequent visits to Alfred Stieglitz's gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue contributed to his formulation of a progressive attitude toward art. Together with Katherine S. Dreier and Marcel Duchamp, he founded the Société Anonyme, an organization committed to the advancement of avant-garde art. Man Ray's friendship with Duchamp, whom he first met in 1915, played an important role in convincing him that the rejection of convention and delight in experimentation that had come to characterize his art would be most fully appreciated in Paris.

When Man Ray moved to Paris in July 1921, he was introduced by Duchamp to the Dadaists, who immediately embraced his radical paintings, assemblages, and objects. It was with his photographs, however, that Man Ray quickly

made a name for himself. Initially making his living with the technical skills he had acquired to document his own work and that of others, he also made penetrating portraits of fellow artists and expatriates. In the process, he created a veritable photographic gallery that captured the intersection between the Parisian avant-garde, intelligentsia, and society.

Experimentation in the darkroom led Man Ray to explore the potential of the photogram, a picture created by placing objects on photo-sensitized paper and then exposing it to light. By dubbing the resulting works "Rayographs," Man Ray claimed invention of the process for himself. The Rayographs appealed immensely to the Dadaists, both because the act of making photographs without a camera was perceived as nonsensical and because of the playful spirit in which the images were created. By the mid-



Man Ray. *Man Ray*. 1931. Gelatin silver print (solarized), 6 1/4 x 5" (17.1 x 12.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of James Thrall Soby. © 2000 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

to late 1920s, as Man Ray's own interests and those of the artists around him aligned themselves with Surrealism, the incongruity of the objects selected and the otherworldliness created by the shadowy traces of the Rayographs gained increasing recognition as visual manifestations of the predominately literary concerns of this movement.

Also enlisted in the Surrealist project was the partial reversal of tonal values brought about by the Sabattier effect, more popularly known as solarization. Man Ray used the halolike line of this highly unpredictable technique to caress his subject, more often than not the female nude, and to heighten the intensity of objects to the point of fetishization. His introduction of an almost tactile sensuality and pleasure to photography completely overthrew all expectations for a medium shaped by assumptions about its mechanical nature and capacity for objective recording.

An American in Paris, a multi-talented artist who painted with light, and a photographer who made unique images without a camera, Man Ray was inspired by a spirit of contradiction and innovation that was inseparable from the goals of both Dada and Surrealism. This same spirit continues to infuse his photographs with spontaneity and freshness three-quarters of a century after they were created.

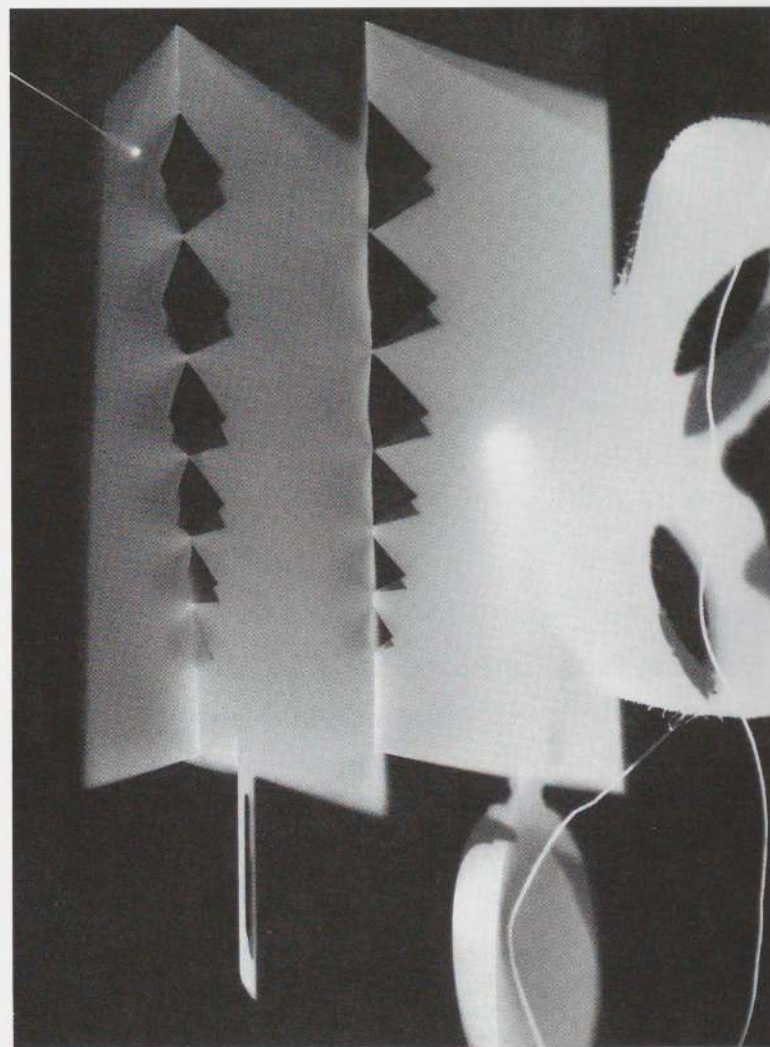
In 1934 the American art patron, collector, and author James Thrall Soby personally published a book of 105

photographic works by Man Ray,¹ the great majority of which he gave to the Museum in 1941. This exhibition presents a selection from this collection.

Virginia Heckert
Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial
Fellow, Department of Photography

¹ *Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934*, with texts by Man Ray, André Breton, Paul Éluard, Rose Sélavy, and Tristan Tzara (Hartford, Conn.: James Thrall Soby, 1934).

Man Ray, *Rayograph*. 1922. Gelatin silver print, 9 1/8 x 7" (23.7 x 17.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of James Thrall Soby. © 2000 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris



Modern Art despite Modernism

MODERNISM and modern art are not synonymous. Modern art, the broader category, consists of everything made within the modern era. Depending on your historical outlook, that era began at different points during the early, middle, or late nineteenth century and continues up until the present, or, if you are convinced that we have entered the postmodern age, stopped just short of it. Modernism, by contrast, refers to the subset of modern art that concentrates on the analysis of form and the dismantling and examination of aesthetic systems over and above art's traditional goals of depicting the world, expressing a particular feeling, communicating a specific message, or symbolizing a given idea.



Pablo Picasso. *The Rape*. 1920. Tempera on wood, 9 7/8 x 12 1/2" (23.8 x 32.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Philip L. Goodwin Collection. © 2000 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Modernists have prided themselves on breaking with the past and inventing new artistic languages, while antimodernists have attempted to mend the break and restore art's earlier ideals. In the twentieth century, the tug-of-war between these two tendencies was one of modern art's essential dynamics. In some periods, especially the first decade of the last century, modernists of different persuasions had the upper hand; in others, the period between the two world wars, for example, the influence of various antimodernist styles was in the ascendancy.

Central to the conflict between the modernists and the antimodernists

was the status of figuration. From the early 1910s onward the consensus among disparate avant-gardes was that art had a one-way ticket to abstraction and beyond. This conviction was born out of the discoveries of Cubism and Expressionism just prior to

World War I and of the fragmentation of conventional form that resulted. By the war's end, however, an anti-avant-garde "return to order" was sounded, and more or less conservative representational styles of painting, drawing, and sculpture proliferated.

The irony of the situation was that the leaders of this reaction against modern art's push toward abstraction were in many cases former members of the avant-garde. Thus, in Paris, Pablo Picasso the Cubist became Picasso the Neoclassicist even as Max Beckmann and Otto Dix, Germany's premier Expressionists, became exponents of a harsh new realism known as the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, or New Objectivity. Almost simultaneously with this abrupt turnaround, younger artists such as Salvador Dalí and René Magritte revived the tricks of studio illusionism and applied their mastery of these to the subversive aims of Surrealism, while Balthus made himself a reputation as the bad-boy-wonder of an ingeniously perverse strain of academic painting. And from the former Fauves Henri Matisse, Georges Braque, and André Derain to Giorgio de Chirico and Fernand Léger, artists responded with aesthetic nostalgia or a longing for formal consolidation after a period of radical innovation.

In the Americas, meanwhile, naturalist, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Baroque, and Neo-Romantic movements took root in the United States, Mexico, and elsewhere. Among the leading lights of these dissimilarly backward-looking styles were Charles Sheeler and Andrew Wyeth, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, Ivan Albright and Peter Blume. Some sought to describe the world around them; some wanted to tell stories about that world; some were inspired by private fantasy; and some responded to political imperatives. All of them made *pictures*. And throughout the socially and aesthetically turbulent 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and after, there were artists such as Edward Hopper in the United States and Giorgio Morandi in Italy, who simply pursued their own, solitary path, indifferent to competing ideologies and fast-changing styles.

Following World War II, when the gestural abstraction gave modernism renewed momentum, European mavericks such as Alberto Giacometti, Lucian Freud, and Francis Bacon persisted in the belief that the figure was the focus of image-making and narrative one of modern art's essential functions. For their part, New York School realists from

Fairfield Porter, Larry Rivers, Alex Katz to Philip Pearlstein demonstrated that big, "American-type" painting didn't have to be expressionist or abstract to be thoroughly contemporary. With the advent of Pop art on both sides of the Atlantic, David Hockney, Andy Warhol, and others showed that classical contour drawing wasn't necessarily old-fashioned; it could also be "cool."

These developments of the mid-1940s to the early 1960s represent the second coming of the anti-avant-garde. The third resurgence of this protean force occurred around 1980, when former members of the avant-garde such as Philip Guston joined cutting-edge artists such as Gerhard Richter in standing mid-century formalist orthodoxy on its head. They challenged the experimental practices of the mid-1960s and late 1970s, including minimalism, conceptualism, installation, and new media art forms, with ambiguous, ironic, and sometimes deliberately counterfeit modes. Initially dubbed "postmodern" by critics, in retrospect the work of these artists seems less like the aftermath of modernism than another jolt from the strong, sometimes disorienting aesthetic current with which modernism has always alternated.

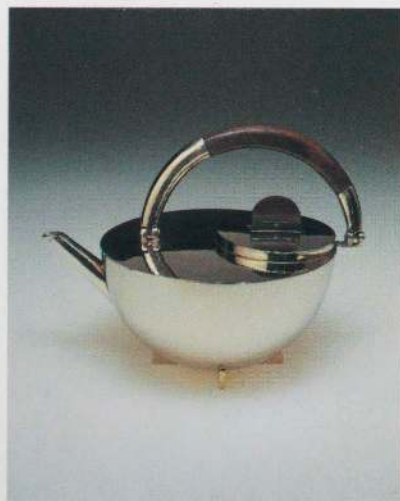


Philip Guston. *East Coker-TSE*. 1979. Oil on canvas, 42 x 48" (106.7 x 122 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Musa Guston

From Picasso and Balthus in the 1910s through the 1930s to Guston and Richter in the 1970s through the 1990s, by way of true reactionaries and sheer eccentrics, modern art despite modernism has been heterogeneous and contrarian—not a consistent style or school, but an unpredictable impulse and a challenge to received opinion and consensus taste.

Robert Storr
Senior Curator, Department of
Painting and Sculpture

Modern Living 1



Marianne Brandt. Teapot. 1924. Nickel silver and ebony, 7 x 9 x 3 1/2" (17.8 x 22.8 x 8.3 cm). Mfr.: Bauhaus Metal Workshop, Weimar, Germany. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Phyllis B. Lambert Fund

THE YEARS BETWEEN 1920 and 1960 span economic, social, and political extremes that deeply and directly influenced the architecture and design output of these decades. Everything from materials and manufacturing processes to living and working environments and geographic focus changed as attention shifted from pre-war Europe during the 1920s and 1930s to postwar America and Scandinavia in the 1940s and 1950s. *Modern Living* is a two-part exhibition that juxtaposes the *ideal* of modern living as it was manifested by the Dutch de Stijl, the Bauhaus in Germany, and Russian Constructivism in the earlier decades (*Modern Living 1*) with the *reality* of modern living as it was developed and guided later by American and Scandinavian designers (*Modern Living 2*, opening April 30).

During the twenties and thirties, many European architects and designers presented utopian visions of the future, which for members of de Stijl and the Bauhaus grew primarily out of a reaction to the devastation of the World War I. These architects and designers stressed the essential connection between a home's architecture, the furnishings that

filled it, and its household utensils. According to de Stijl architects and designers, such as Gerrit Rietveld, this new order or style could be expressed in the use of primary colors (devoid of any relation to nature) and intersecting planes and right angles that imposed reason on an otherwise chaotic world. Rietveld's house designed for Truus Schröder-Schröder in 1924, promotes a more rational way to live, a lifestyle and an aesthetic devoid of decoration and emphasizing a symbiotic relation with nature. The planar geometry and primary colors of the interior is a backdrop for the outdoor garden seen through the large windows on the ground floor. The living space is extended as the windows open outward, creating a sensation of being suspended between nature and human habitation. In the upper living area permanent walls are completely omitted and replaced by sliding partitions that can easily transform an open plan into private spaces. The house represents the client's and architect's clear vision of how living in the twentieth century might be different from a nineteenth-century lifestyle. Soon after the house was completed, de Stijl artist Theo van Doesburg published a manifesto in *De Stijl* titled "The End of Art"

which elevated functional aspects of life over the creation of "art." The Schröder House and the life that the client and architect had envisaged being lived in it might be seen as the embodiment of this ideal.

Much of the ideology of the Bauhaus had been set before the school's actual formation in 1919 in Weimar, Germany, most notably with the Arts and Crafts movement led by William Morris in the late nineteenth century and with the founding of the Deutsche Werkbund in 1907. Walter Gropius, the first director of the Bauhaus, outlined his aims in 1919: "to reunify all the disciplines of practical art—sculpture, painting, handicrafts, and the crafts—as inseparable components of a new architecture. The ultimate, if distant, aim of the Bauhaus is the unified work of art—the great structure—in which there is no distinction between monumental and decorative art."

Ultimately, the machine and its implications of standardization and mechanization became the rational paradigm for all architecture and industrial design at the Bauhaus. Figures associated with the Bauhaus, like Ludwig Mies van der

Rohe, Josef and Anni Albers, Marcel Breuer, and Marianne Brandt experimented with materials and form and articulated the ideal domestic context in which their new designs would be presented. Building expositions such as *Die Weissenhofsiedlung* (1927) in Stuttgart and *The Dwelling in Our Time* (1931) in Berlin afforded the public an opportunity to see firsthand a modern domestic environment as well as the latest advances in construction materials. Mies's house for the 1931 exposition owes much to his Barcelona Pavilion and Tugendhat House completed several years before. He created an unbroken spatial flow with precise furniture placement to distinguish spaces. Solid interior walls were used sparingly and acted simultaneously as the exterior perimeter of the building and its two courtyards.

The Russian Constructivists produced little architecture and few household goods because of the scarcity of raw materials and a severe economic depression after the 1917 Communist revolution. The Constructivists' utopian aspirations were based on an optimism resulting from the revolution and on the need to promote it. The beautiful and fantastical architecture of Iakov

Chernikov appears only as drawings expressing a longing for the future. The few household goods actually produced are represented in the exhibition by the porcelain works of Nikolai Suetin, who simply applied Constructivist decorations to existing shapes, thus ensuring that they expressed the new revolutionary mind-set and its visual vocabulary.

Despite the ideological populism of these movements, few, if any, of these objects were manufactured on a large scale. As will be seen in *Modern Living 2*, it was only after the World War II in America and Scandinavia that increased production was accomplished.

Matilda McQuaid, Associate Curator
Department of Architecture and Design
Christopher Mount, Assistant Curator
Department of Architecture and Design

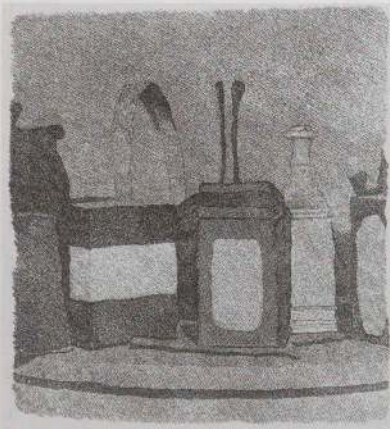
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. "MR" Chaise Longue (model 104). 1931. Chrome-plated tubular steel, canvas, and rubber straps, 37 1/2 x 23 1/2 x 47 1/2" (95.3 x 59.8 x 119.9 cm). Mfr.: Bamberg Metallwerkstätten, Berlin. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Philip Johnson



Giorgio Morandi Etchings

RIGHT: Giorgio Morandi. *Large Still Life with Coffeepot*. 1933. Etching, 11 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (29.7 x 39 cm). Edition: 40. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Bertram Smith Fund. © 2000 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome

BELOW: Giorgio Morandi. *Still Life*. 1933. Etching, 9 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{16}$ " (23.6 x 23 cm). Edition: 21. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. © 2000 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome

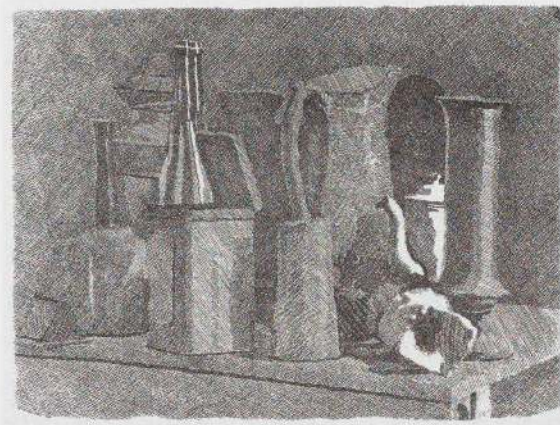


GIORGIO MORANDI (Italian, 1890–1964) is remembered as a solitary figure. Despite early flirtations with Cubism, Futurism, and metaphysical art in the 1910s and early 1920s, he refused to align himself with any of the vanguard movements of his time and remained rigorously faithful to his own personal vision. In his quiet, modestly scaled artworks, Morandi limited his subject matter to still life (and, less frequently, landscape). A genre in which the human figure is deliberately avoided, still life was traditionally ranked at the bottom of the artistic hierarchy. But Morandi had a never-ending fascination with the different formal and emotive effects he could achieve through subtle adjustments in his tabletop views. He endlessly composed the same objects—bottles, tins, and boxes from shops near his home in Bologna—in search of new combinations and problems.

In *Large Still Life with Coffeepot* (1933) various objects have been amassed on a table, their forms defined by layers of meticulously hatched lines. Yet the differentiation of individual objects is ultimately less important than the architectonic structure of the composition and the formal relationships between the objects. This emphasis on compositional form

over naturalistic object is even more pronounced in *Still Life*, also from 1933. In this close-up view, the edges of the objects at the left and the right are cropped, and the sense of perspective that helps to locate the objects spatially in the other work is lost. At times it is hard to distinguish solid from void, such that several of the objects are less discernible as tins or boxes than as flat geometric shapes floating on the surface of the picture plane.

Morandi's prints rely for their effects on the rich, nuanced tonalities that he was able to produce with etching, a technique whose intimacy and craftsmanship particularly suited him. He used the etching needle to create a fine network of black and white lines that can either bring each object into dramatic relief or suggest an ambiguous flatness, depending on how the hatching is modulated. This subdued tonal approach to printmaking corresponds to Morandi's painting style, in which images are composed of closely valued shades of ochre, pink, and warm brown (colors characteristic of the buildings and scenery in and around Bologna).



Traditional still lifes are often interpreted symbolically, and one may be tempted to find metaphors in Morandi's empty, lifeless tins, jars, and bottles. Morandi himself maintained that the true subject of his art was the recording of his perceptions of form, color, light, and space. But there is an undeniable sense of emotional quiet and restraint in all of Morandi's work, for his subtle tones and shadows create an atmosphere of pregnant, almost eerie, stillness. Through the repeated and exacting analysis of the most ordinary of objects, Morandi translated his visual sensations into sensitive and extraordinary works of art.

Starr Figura
Assistant Curator, Department of Prints
and Illustrated Books

Paris Salon

PARIS BEFORE and after World War II was a magnet for artists of many different nationalities, generations, and stylistic persuasions. The sheer variety of artworks to be seen at any given moment in the French capital—in semi-official annual exhibitions, commercial galleries, artists' studios, and private collectors' homes—testifies to the irrepressible creativity of the Parisian art scene. *Paris Salon* samples a range of painting and sculpture that appeared in Paris during the 1920s through the 1950s. Works completed prior to World War II and the German occupation are installed on the second floor; postwar paintings and sculptures are displayed on the third (opening April 30).

Including works as different in ambition and impact as Fernand Léger's monumental *Three Women (Le Grand déjeuner)* (1921) and Raoul Dufy's animated, calligraphic *Window at Nice* (c. 1929), this exhibition places emphasis on the diversity of styles and on the contrasts created by juxtapositions of new works that often had little in common with each other. Selected affinities between acknowledged masterpieces and lesser known works are also explored. Dufy's painting, for instance, shares wall space



Fernand Léger, *Three Women (Le Grand déjeuner)*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 6' 1/2" x 8' 3" (183.5 x 251.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. © 2000 Estate of Fernand Léger/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

with Matisse's more familiar view of Nice, *Interior with a Violin Case* (1918–19). Léger's *Three Women* could be seen next to the American expatriate painter Gerald Murphy's *Wasp and Pear* (1927), hinting at Murphy's close ties to Léger and to French Purism's elegant geometries and precisions of style.

Postwar Paris witnessed the emergence and reemergence of figures as distinct as Jean Dubuffet, Alberto Giacometti, and a generation of younger abstract painters including Hans Hartung, Marie Hélène Vieira da Silva, Pierre Soulages, and Nicolas de Staël. During the late 1940s and 1950s, the works of these artists provided European parallels to the so-

called American Abstract Expressionists or "action painters." Displayed in proximity to Giacometti's frail, attenuated figurative sculptures, and Dubuffet's intentionally crude, caricatural paintings, among others, these works provide a chronological and conceptual counterpart to those included in *New York Salon* installed on the same floor. Each of these "salon" exhibitions underscores the heterogeneity of modern art and the competing definitions of modernity advanced by artists working and exhibiting in the same cultural milieu.

Peter Galassi, Chief Curator, Department of Photography; Robert Storr, Senior Curator, Anne Umland, Associate Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture

War

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY never knew peace. The new century has begun with far-flung conflict. Civil strife, civil war, revolution, regional “police actions,” wars of liberation, two global conflagrations, and, for the past fifty years, the possibility of nuclear annihilation have haunted modern life and the modern imagination.

In archetypal terms, of course, our epoch is no different from any other: Mars never dies in battle; Cain will always slay Abel. But the toll of death and devastation over the past hundred years has been unprecedented and the “quality” of violence has, in some ways, fundamentally changed. In part, this is because many expected that science, enlightened government, and rationally organized prosperity would eliminate the traditional causes of war. Such optimism was tragically off the mark. Even the negative statement of these hopes—that the sheer monstrosity of mechanized destruction would finally deter humankind from further bloodshed—proved false. Thus World War I—the so-called “war to end all wars”—turned out to be the preamble of World War II. And thus the millions slaughtered between 1914 and 1918 on the field and in the

trenches of the last true war of positions were exceeded by the tens of millions—soldiers and civilians—killed between 1939 and 1945 in the air and at sea, in deserts and in jungles, in cities and in concentration camps.

“To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,” wrote the German philosopher Theodor Adorno. Adorno’s conviction that art could not measure up to the horrors of the Holocaust and that aestheticizing butchery on that scale was a kind of desecration is understandable.

Yet historically speaking many artists have attempted to depict, commemorate, and comment upon what the Spanish artist Francisco Goya (1746–1848), in the title of his harrowing book of etchings on the theme, called the “disasters of war.” Furthermore, given the politics and psychology of war, others have actively exhorted the public to take up arms, created symbols of the national, ideological, or social causes for which wars have been fought, or celebrated their heroes and honored their martyrs.



George Grosz. *Explosion*. 1917. Oil on composition board, 18 7/8 x 26 1/4" (47.8 x 68.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Irving Moskowitz. ©2000 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

World War I thus produced passionate condemnations of militarism, such as Otto Dix's ghastly prints and drawings, Félix Vallotton's bitterly cartoonish woodcuts, or the gallows humor of George Grosz's caricatures, as well as vigorously bellicose images, such as Gino Severini's *Armored Train in Action* (1915). World War II and the events leading up to it resulted in a raft of work that can likewise be divided between premonitions of catastrophe (Richard Oelze's *Expectation* [1935–36], painted in the years immediately following Hitler's rise to power); protests against aggression (David Alfaro Siqueiros's *Echo of a Scream* [1937] or David Smith's *Death by Gas* [1939–40]); documentation of actual fighting (Robert Capa's photographs of the death of a soldier in the Spanish Civil War); and allegories (Pablo Picasso's *Dream and Lie of Franco* [1937] and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* [1973–91]).

Revolutions, insurrections, and social clashes have also been the subjects of much modern art. German Expressionist Lyonel Feininger's *Uprising* (1910) is an early example. Andy Warhol's *Birmingham Race Riot* (1964) is a reminder that the eruption of seething antagonisms into open

street-fighting has been a constant in the American experience, as well.

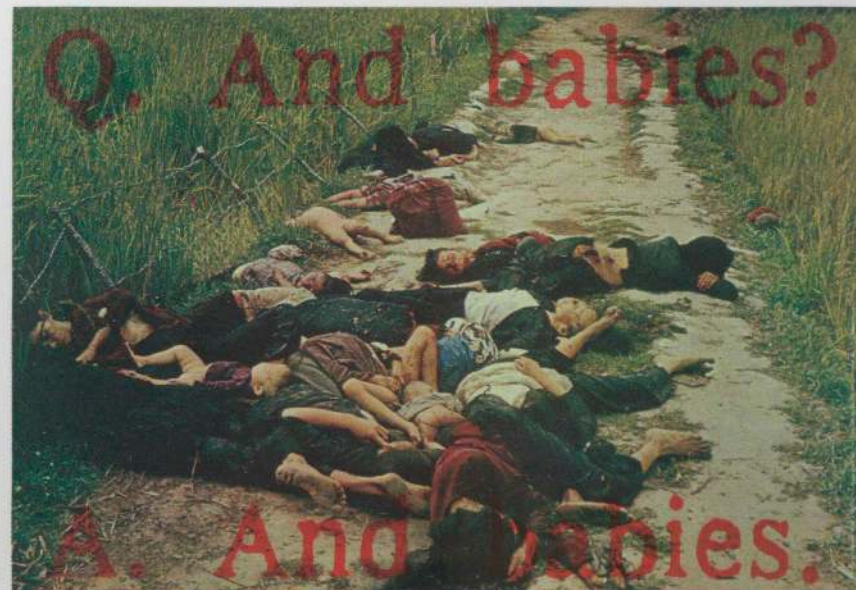
The Cold War of the 1950s through the 1980s and the various hot wars that erupted in the wake of decolonization produced different kinds of art. And, as always, Armageddon threatened. *Them and Us*, Neil Jenney's 1969 coloring-book-like confrontation between a Soviet MIG and an American fighter plane makes frightening fun of the polarization that repeatedly pushed the world to the brink of self-immolation. Shomei Tomatsu's photographs of a twisted bottle found in the ruins of Hiroshima and of the scarred face of a survivor bring the "abstraction" of the atomic bomb into painfully specific focus.

For many artists, though, the war in Vietnam was the defining event of the Cold War and postcolonial era. The Art Workers Coalition poster of the victims of the My Lai Massacre was one response to the agony of that period. But some of the most dramatic images of the war were made by photographers who did not think of themselves as artists. Perhaps the most searing of all are the identity snapshots taken of prisoners held by the Khmer Rouge at Tuol

Sleng—these are the faces of people lost in the bloodbath of Cambodia as seen by their executioners.

Whether artists can fully render the true reality of modern war and whether, in response to Adorno's challenge, poetry can survive the knowledge of mass murder are open issues. The fact remains that artists have shown us many of war's aspects in ways that are vivid, unforgettable, and sometimes disturbingly beautiful.

Robert Storr
Senior Curator, Department
of Painting and Sculpture



Art Workers Coalition. *Q. And Babies? A. And Babies.* 1970. Photolithograph, offset printed, 25 x 38" (63.5 x 96.5 cm). Publisher: Art Workers Coalition, New York. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the Benefit for Attica Defense Fund

