

# Making choices : third floor

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MAKING|CHOICES

Third Floor

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## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

For information about *Brown Bag Lunch Lectures*, *Conversations with Contemporary Artists*, Adult Courses, and other special programs being held in conjunction with the exhibition *Making Choices*, please refer to the Museum Web site at [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org) or you may visit The Edward John Noble Education Center. For further information about Public Programs, please call the Department of Education at 212-708-9781.

## 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.

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*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: Henri Cartier-Bresson, *An Eye at The Museum of Modern Art*, 1947. Gelatin silver print, 13 1/8 x 9 1/8" (34.9 x 23.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Monroe Wheeler. © 2000 Henri Cartier-Bresson

## Anatomically Incorrect

DEFORMED IMAGES of the body pervade twentieth-century art. Those created in and around Parisian Surrealism of the late 1920s through early 1940s are distinctive, however, in their violent dismantling and erotically charged distortion of the human form. This exhibition presents a complex range of bodily deformations found in the work of artists historically associated with Surrealism, punctuated by contemporary artworks that reimagine and update the theme. Through the use of devices such as fragmentation, elongation, substitution, and exaggeration, the works included here redefine the laws of nature. Isolating the body, either whole or in part, they transform ordinary human features into bizarre mutations at once strangely familiar and impossibly strange.

An interest in dreams and the involuntary play of the imagination greatly influenced the Surrealists' approach to art and representations of the figure. Their work is often marked by striking visual and psychological juxtapositions, familiar to most audiences through the work of artists such as Salvador Dalí. The practice of combining dissimilar elements in one composition is cap-

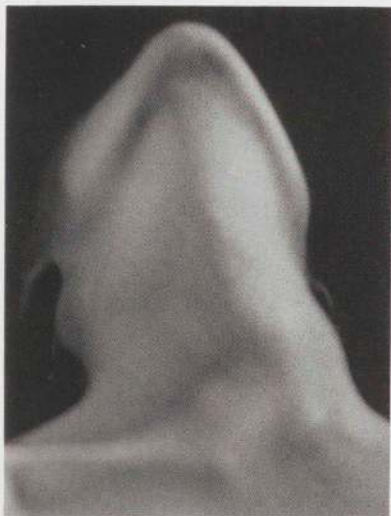
tured in the form of the *cadavre exquis* (exquisite corpse), in which individual artists add separate parts to a single figure drawn on folded paper. Each person works autonomously, not seeing the contributions of other participants until the work is complete. The results can be both humorous and disconcerting, producing fantastical figures of oddly disjointed anatomies in which the human and the nonhuman, the banal and the exotic merge.

Hans Bellmer's work from the 1930s epitomizes the viscerally disturbing effects a severely fragmented body can induce. Bellmer, a German who joined the Surrealists in 1936, made "dolls" out of fabricated and dismembered mannequins. In the aluminum sculpture *Doll* (1936), Bellmer attached two pink pelvises with exaggerated female genitalia to a central torso, transforming the figure into a conglomeration of strangely fetishized sexual organs. Interlocked parts of bodily flesh become the machine components of a headless automaton. By contrast, Joan Miró's treatment of human anatomy is centered on the fluid and biomorphic. His *Opera Singer* (1934), with its misshapen feet and sloping shoulders,

seems to be melting, lacking any hard lines that might suggest a skeletal frame. The wild distortion of the creature's face posits a dissolution of the head as the locus of reason.

Photography's capacity to both transcribe and distort appearances has engendered a wide variety of images that transform the figure. Simple techniques such as double exposure, selective focus, and photographing the subject at very close range allow photographers to turn the familiar into images of bizarre and ambivalent reference. Man Ray photographed a woman's neck in *Anatomies* (1929) to resemble a male phallus, seen against a dark background. The isolation of the slightly blurred neck, the close cropping of the image, and the low vantage point combine to effect a dramatic and erotic composition.

Artists today continue many of the methods of bodily deformation employed by the Surrealists, but the framework of these practices has changed considerably. Women are more often the makers of art now than in the past, and their presence has contributed to an extended understanding of the complex issues



Man Ray, *Anatomies*. 1929. Gelatin silver print, 8 1/4 x 6 1/2" (22.6 x 17.2 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



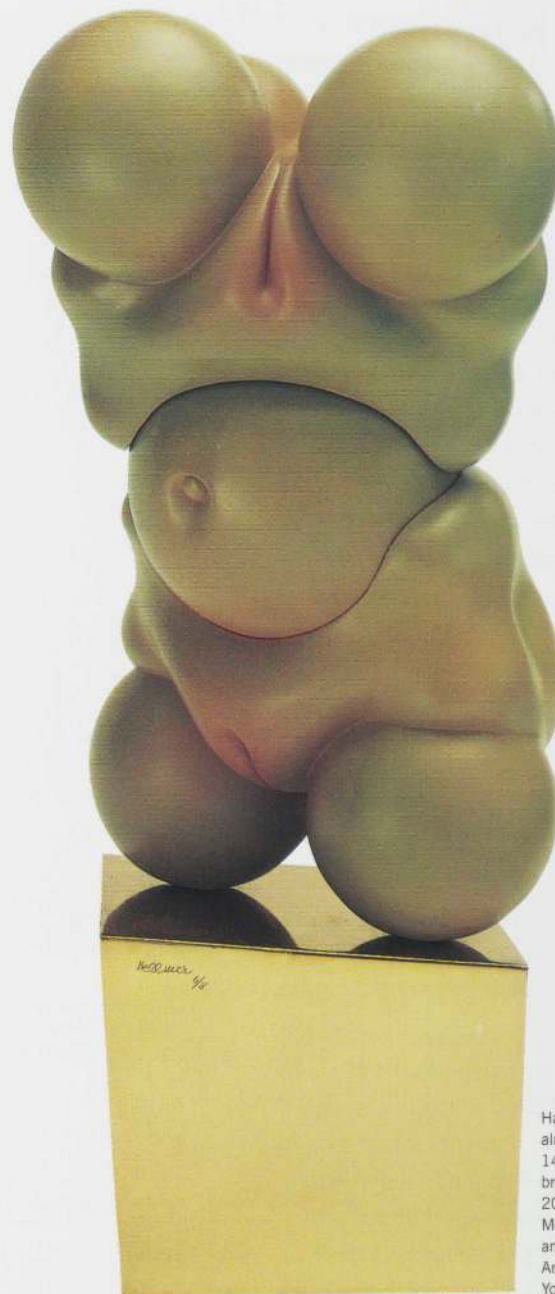
involved with representing (and distorting) the body. Inspired in part by the Surrealist practice of combining opposites, many artists have explored gender themes by blending male and female fragments within a single composition. Louise Bourgeois's *Torso: Self-Portrait* (c. 1963–64) is a bulbous plaster relief that evokes both a vagina and a phallus. At either end of the "torso" are two softly rounded, morphologically ambivalent forms that alternately suggest breasts, buttocks, or testicles.

Bourgeois's relatively gentle confusion of male/female anatomies is antithetical to Cindy Sherman's racy, humorous two-sided mannequin in *Untitled #263* (1992). Provocatively recalling Bellmer's (female) "dolls," Sherman's work shows a legless automaton tied at the waist with a ridiculous bow separating male and female genitalia. The exaggerated scale, saturated color, and photographic detail of Sherman's image push Surrealist grotesqueries to unimagined extremes. A disembodied head looks out, grimacing, perhaps reflecting the reaction of some viewers to an image that actively works to deny the visual and fetishistic pleasures it simultaneously seeks to evoke.

Within this exhibition, Bellmer's and Sherman's works function as extremes. Their presence, however, highlights the way every drawing, painting, photograph, print, or sculpture here persistently questions, in voices ranging from subtle to violent, expectations and assumptions concerning what is normal and abnormal, what is anatomically correct and incorrect. The invisible "other" that haunts these images is the classically "perfect," unified body, rendered palpably present every time the deformed, malformed, or distorted is invoked. These attacks on the architecture of the human body participate in a broader assault on political, social, and cultural norms. In departing from conventional standards of physical perfection, the Surrealists and their contemporary counterparts problematize basic personal and societal assumptions about the nature of the ideal and our notions of the correct and its opposite.

Anne Umland  
Associate Curator, Department  
of Painting and Sculpture

M. Darsie Alexander  
Assistant Curator, Department of Photography



Hans Bellmer. *Doll*. 1936. Painted aluminum (cast 1965), 19 1/8 x 10 3/8 x 14 1/8" (48 x 26.9 x 27.6 cm), on bronze base, 7 1/2 x 8 x 8" (18.8 x 20.3 x 20.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection. © 2000 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

## Shigeru Ban: A Paper Arch

THE PAPER ARCH designed by Japanese architect Shigeru Ban is a thirty-foot-high structure made entirely out of recycled paper. It defies any notion about the fragility and ephemeral qualities of paper, as this medium becomes the primary structural material for the arch that spans eighty-seven feet over the central part of The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. Technically Ban's structure is a series of eight trusses braced by grid-shell tubes, but physically he has transformed the Garden into an outdoor room with a monumental trellis or roof proportional to the size of the trees and buildings that surround it.

Ban has described paper as "evolved wood," which sounds more acceptable when referring to it as a primary structural material. He began experimenting

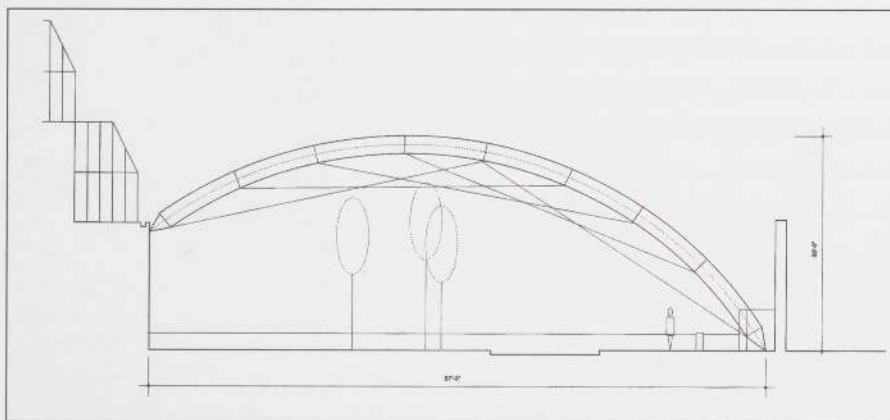
with paper in the form of tubes during the mid-1980s and chose this medium because it was inexpensive, recyclable, and posed the challenge of paper's perceived weakness. Although paper has long been admired and used for centuries in Japan in textiles and interiors, it has only been since the twentieth century that paper, in the form of tubes, has been used in the construction industry. Usually the hollow tube acts as a form for concrete columns, but Ban uses only the paper cylinder itself. In the spirit of Japanese craftsmanship he transforms the simplest of materials into something quite beautiful and functional.

Ban's most important projects made out of paper tubes resulted from the tragedy of the Kobe earthquake in 1995. As a humanitarian and an architect, Ban felt

indirectly responsible for the deaths caused by collapsing buildings. He offered to rebuild a church that had burned down after the earthquake and also to construct temporary housing. In both instances the design criteria called for an inexpensive structure that could be built by volunteers, had reasonable insulation properties, and had an acceptable appearance. For the church and temporary housing he used walls of paper tubes that were waterproof and fire retardant and constructed roofs out of canvas. In the housing, foundations were made from sand-filled beer crates, which also allowed for adequate air circulation and protection in the event of flooding.

His largest paper tube structure to date is the Japanese Pavilion for the *Hannover Expo 2000*. In accordance with the main theme of the exposition—environmental conservation, Ban designed a sinuous domed pavilion made out of paper tubes and covered with a paper membrane. Except for the exhibitions inside the pavilion, the entire structure, like the Paper Arch, will be recycled.

The idea for the Paper Arch derived from the Museum's own history of building both houses and other structures in the



Section



Garden, beginning with the first *House in the Garden* series in 1949 and ending with *Three Structures by Buckminster Fuller* in 1959. Each installation had a purpose directly pertaining to the current activities in the building industry, whether it was to show the affordability of an architect-designed house, such as the one showcased by Marcel Breuer in 1949, cutting-edge engineering ideas, as demonstrated by Fuller in 1959, or the influential beauty and modernity of traditional Japanese design, such as the Japanese House of 1954–55.

Ban's Paper Arch continues in this tradition, exploring paper tubes as construction material, pushing the fundamental character of paper to its limits without sacrificing structural integrity. In fact, Ban applies the most highly technical and sophisticated structural analysis to paper, enhancing its fundamental properties in unexpected ways. Ban's arch embodies the most expressive architectural element in Japanese architecture, as expressed by Arthur Drexler in his book *Architecture of Japan*: "A Japanese building is a roof, and when the Japanese speak of the beauty of a building they think at once of the proportions, the curvature, the sculptural



modeling, and the texture of its roof because here the architect reveals his particular sensitivity, especially in buildings of monumental size, through adjustments of extraordinary delicacy."

Matilda McQuaid  
Associate Curator, Department  
of Architecture and Design

View of model from southwest corner  
of The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller  
Sculpture Garden

## PAPER ARCH SPECIFICATIONS

HEIGHT: 30 FEET

WIDTH: 64 FEET

SPAN: 87 FEET

WEIGHT: 18,000 LBS

LINEAR FEET OF TUBES: 6,400

LINEAR FEET OF CABLES: 3,500

EXTERIOR DIAMETER OF TRUSS-CHORD TUBES: 4 3/4 INCHES

EXTERIOR DIAMETER OF GRID-SHELL TUBES: 4 INCHES

THICKNESS OF TRUSS-CHORD TUBE WALL: 3/8 INCH

THICKNESS OF GRID-SHELL TUBE WALL: 1/2 INCH

**WATERPROOFING/FIRE RESISTANCE:** The paper tube elements are painted with two layers of a waterproof coating and contain two layers of a water-resistant film located just beneath the inner and outer layers of the tubes. This film repels water away from the exterior and releases moisture from the tube-wall interior so that moisture does not become trapped there. The tubes are fire resistant because of the thickness and density of the material.

**FABRICATION/DISMANTLING:** The tubes were manufactured in Düren, Germany, and shipped via sea freight to a large warehouse in Maspeth, New York, where they were fully assembled into the Paper Arch. The structure was then cut into eight segments, which were transported by truck to the Museum, lifted by crane into place, and then spliced together. The natural bending of the tubes is caused by the weight of the tubes and the structure's geometry. The truss curvature is a segment of a 59-foot radius. The grid elements create a complex elliptical curve because of the geometrical constraints of the trusses. After the exhibition closes the tubes will be recycled.

**ARCHITECT:** Shigeru Ban

**ASSOCIATE ARCHITECT:** Dean Maltz Architect

**MANUFACTURER OF TUBES:** Sonoco Products Company

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER (USA):** Buro Happold Consulting Engineers PC

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER (Japan):** Takenaka Company

**CONTRACTOR:** Atlantic-Heydt Corporation

**CONSTRUCTION MANAGER:** F. J. Sciam Construction Co., Inc.



## Home Movies

THE HOME MOVIE and its projection in this most intimate setting are emblematic of 1950s domesticity and affluence. Integrated in the exhibition *Modern Living 2*, a Swiss-manufactured 8mm Bolex projector (c. 1958) projects a film loop every hour on the hour for a five-minute run. These loops were commissioned from several artists represented in the archival holdings of the Department of Film and Video, and the loop will change monthly during the installation. The first loop, *Baby Advances*, is a fragment of a home movie excerpted and chosen by Ken Jacobs from a found film in his possession. It depicts the quintessential home movie image—a child taking its first steps, walking toward the camera. Jacobs is one of the pioneering filmmakers who collect and utilize home movie footage.

In addition to the screening in the exhibition space, there will be a collection show in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2 twice a week for the duration of the exhibition *Making Choices*. These films explore the home movie as an artistic genre and as a vehicle for documentation, as well as its permutations including animation and feature films

that take as their subject the ideological premises and gendered codes of the domestic sphere.

Whether in the hands of amateurs or professionals, whether designed for private or public consumption, home movies are defined by words pertaining to the intimate sphere: immediacy, familiarity, authenticity, and accessibility. This presentation demonstrates the various ways these qualities have been developed and used, and how the points of focus have shifted throughout the century. It examines as well how these seemingly inherent qualities are being challenged, as an often static image of domestic tranquility and happiness is deconstructed. By using the thematic focus of family which includes the “roles” of father, mother, and child, the project examines how the evolving role of the home movie echoes the altered definitions within the family structure throughout the century.

Traditional products of the home movie genre focused on family, home, recreation, and socio-economic achievements (i.e. consumer possessions), and contemporary home movie output inhabits much of the same territory. The earliest

examples of the genre featured in this exhibition, Louis Lumière’s *Repas de Bébé* (1895) and the Biograph Company’s *Mr. Kenneth Marvin’s Wedding* (1914), are now viewed as historical documents. Formally, the newer films often reexamine, dissect, and frequently conflate several genres and then create anew a style of happenstance, a naively self-conscious manner of jittery, disjointed, grainy images. Andy Warhol’s *Screen Tests* (1963–67) employ all of these stylistic quirks, but beneath their visual immediacy they are professional and strategically planned exercises. Yet for all their premeditated style and public intent the *Screen Tests*, as well as *Afternoon* (1966), exhibit many of the qualities of the home movie, emphasized by their setting within the extended family circle of Warhol’s famous Factory.

The introduction of 16mm film stock and camera in 1923 provided the amateur filmmaker with the technology to document various domestic events. Nevertheless, economic forces prohibited the wide consumption of this gauge and its use was generally confined to a more affluent class. Typically these home movies are not the filmic records of the average family, but rather they illustrate



Cover from a Bolex projector instruction manual, c. 1958



the theoretical private lives of very public people or the celebrated friends of the moviemaker. In the 1920s and 30s the proliferation of home movie documents of socialites and celebrities was staggering, permitting the intended audience a glimpse into a very private, privileged, and sometimes eccentric world.

In 1932, 8mm film and cameras were introduced into the nonprofessional filmmaking market. Affordable, lightweight cameras, reliable film stock, and workhorse projectors all permitted the amateur filmmaker of modest economic means to realize his or her auteurist potential. When the newly formulated small gauge became available to amateurs, the subject of the lens turned inward to focus on a more closed and private environment. Postwar American economic prosperity brought to the domestic sphere new tools and machines that simplified daily tasks, permitting more leisure and recreational time. In the 1950s Americans became a people devoted to their automobiles and their 8mm cameras, often crisscrossing the country on family vacations and documenting these travels, as well as other family gatherings at Christmas, Hanukkah, Thanksgiving, weddings,

and baptisms. The home movie in this way functions as an equalizing force, cutting across economic, social, and cultural boundaries, as family units declare their uniqueness and celebrate their achievements while the action of filming reinforces a common goal of personal documentation.

By the 1960s artists' integration of home movie material into their work began to increase. The very context of a home movie being screened by an artist in a public forum radically repositions the film and begs a more complex reading. This repositioning is further encouraged by the artists framing it, altering it in any manner imaginable, or simply using the material as a point of departure for their own artistic expression.

Whether artist or amateur material, the home movie exerts its influence on creator and audience alike with images both familiar and foreign. The fascination with making home movies as well as viewing them has remained constant throughout the century, yet the public/private positioning of these works has seen significant change in the past forty years. By creating a space in the installation *Modern Living 2 for Home Movies* this

dichotomy is explored in the general environment of a museum collection and the idea of the home movie is revisited, reformulated, and expanded, redefining the genre's place in film history.

*Jytte Jensen, Associate Curator,  
Department of Film and Video*

*Anne Morra, Assistant Curator,  
Department of Film and Video*



ABOVE: Louis Lumière. Still photo from *Feeding the Baby (Repas de bébé)*. 1895. In photo: Auguste Lumière, Mrs. Auguste Lumière, and their daughter. 35mm, black and white, silent, approx. 45 seconds. The Museum of Modern Art, New York



RIGHT: Martin Scorsese. Still photo from *ItalianAmerican*. 1974. In photo: Charles Scorsese and Catherine Scorsese. 16mm, color, sound, 49 minutes. The Museum of Modern Art, New York



## How Simple Can You Get?

THERE IS A STORY from the 1950s still in circulation about an art collector who showed up at a bar frequented by artists complaining about a show he had just seen of abstract paintings whose only compositional elements were a flat colored ground cross-cut by a single line. "How simple can an artist be and get away with it?" the collector protested to a painter/friend sitting at one of the tables "There's nothing absolutely, absolutely nothing there!"

Patiently the painter asked the collector if all the paintings were the same color. The answer was no. And did all the lines run the same way? Some it turned out were vertical, some horizontal. And were all the lines painted the same way? As it was, some lines had sharp edges, others were roughly drawn, while some were comparatively wide and others thin. And were all the canvases the same size? Once more, no. And were all the canvases the same proportion? No, yet again. Reflecting on all these details the painter finally looked up at the collector and said, "Well you know, it sounds damn complicated to me."

The painter who spoke was the Abstract Expressionist Franz Kline. The painter whose works had been described to him



Jasper Johns. *Green Target*. 1955. Encaustic on newspaper and cloth over canvas, 60 x 60" (152.4 x 152.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Richard S. Zeisler Fund. © Jasper Johns/Licensed by VAGA, New York, N.Y.

as empty and repetitive when, by the accuser's own testimony they were full of significant detail, was Barnett Newman. His narrow, barlike canvas *The Wild* (1950) is one of the most extreme examples of the kind of stripped-down abstraction that began to emerge in the late 1940s and early 1950s. By 1955 Jasper

Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, and Robert Rauschenberg had, unbeknownst to one another, arrived at still equally radical conclusions, and their separate investigations pointed the way for still others. Like Newman, Kelly bisected his painting *White Plaque: Bridge Arch and Reflection* (1952–55) with a "line," but the "line" traveling left to



right was made of wood, and the two wing-like panels, also wood, had been elegantly curved. This work marked the beginning of shaped canvas or panel abstraction. With its concentric design, richly textured surface, and enigmatic presence Johns's *Green Target* (1955) announced a new kind of formal detachment, which derived from Dada procedures and ideas and simultaneously heralded Pop art, neo-Dada, and conceptual or systematic art. Ryman's *Untitled (Orange Painting)*, which he initially worked on in 1955 and returned to in 1959, takes monochrome painting in still another direction, toward Minimalism. Meanwhile, *Astoria* (1958), painted by the precocious Frank Stella when he was only twenty-two, shows the brushy gesture of such Abstract Expressionists as Kline or Robert Motherwell harnessed to a programmatic will.

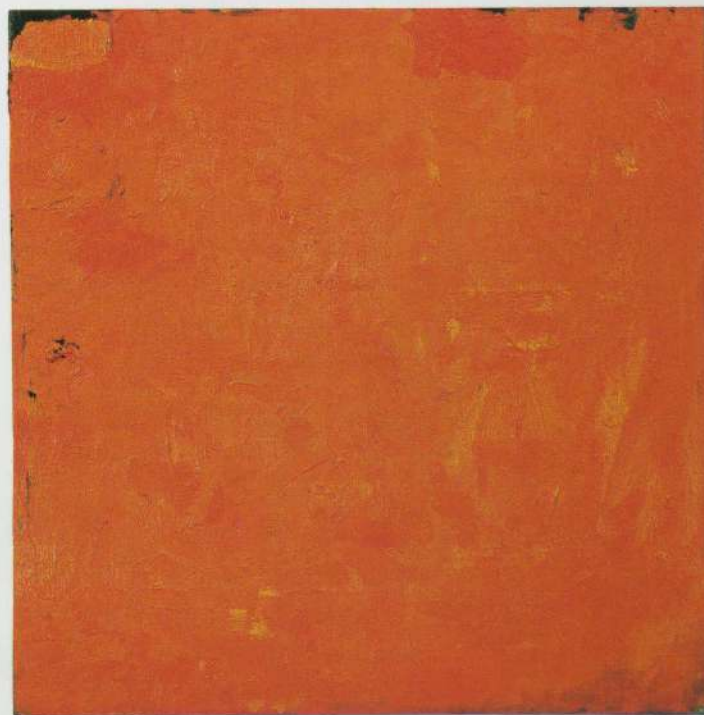
The dramatic simplification of painting in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s was not the product of any coordinated movement, as had been the case with the avant-gardes of the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. Nor were the crucial discoveries all made in one place. Parallel with the work done by the Americans mentioned above were the efforts of artists pursuing

their own intuitions in Europe and Asia. In France, Yves Klein originated his own neo-Dada approach, of which his mesmerizing, firmament-deep monochromes were the emblem. Declaring himself the categorical white to Klein's absolute blue, the Italian Piero Manzoni, like Kelly, transformed painting into relief and further objectified it by crimping and pleating the fabric he worked with and fossilizing these folds in chalky pigment. In Manzoni's *Achrome* (c. 1960) Newman's linear "zip" returns as a seam. Finally, the Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama—in whose work Donald Judd took an early interest—knitted together a mesh of white on white curls that she called "infinity nets." Delicate and composed of subtle brushstrokes, this web work is improvised rather than diagrammatic but possesses a vertiginous and tropic quality we associate with post-Minimalists such as Eva Hesse and Robert Smithson.

And there is more.

How simple can you get? Well, the more you look, the more complicated it turns out to be—and the more beautiful.

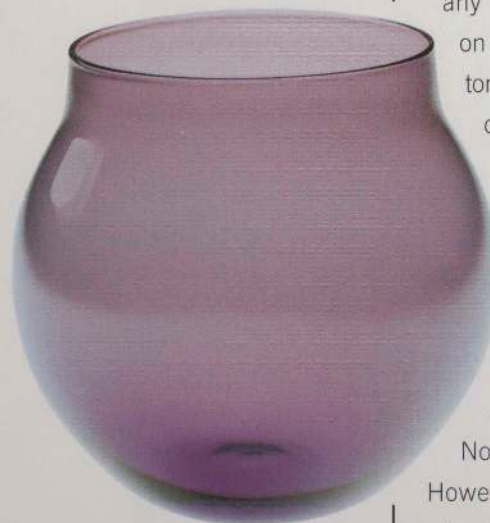
Robert Storr  
Senior Curator, Department  
of Painting and Sculpture



Robert Ryman, *Untitled (Orange Painting)*. 1955 and 1959. Oil on canvas, 28 1/4 x 28 1/4" (71.4 x 71.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fractional and promised gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder. Photo: Ellen Page Wilson. Courtesy PaceWildenstein



## Modern Living 2



Timo Sarpaneva, Ball Glass, 1955.  
Blown glass, 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " diam. (7.3 x 7 cm). Mfr.:  
Iittala, Finland. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.  
Mr. and Mrs. Walter H. Purchase Fund

COMMENCING WITH the Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century and continuing in the 1920s and 30s, the designers of the modern period have emphasized the importance of utility, simplicity, and the social role of design. A primary goal has been the democratic and utilitarian diffusion of good design to the largest possible segment of the populace. Ironically the de Stijl, Bauhaus, and Russian Constructivist movements of the early part of the twentieth century, whose designs were intended to reform society, failed in most respects to actually accomplish this. They produced few, if any works that were manufactured on a large scale. A number of factors account for this: the disruption of World War II, Stalin, practical issues of economics and production, and perhaps ultimately the objects themselves, which were too avant-garde and austere for cultures still accustomed to the highly decorative pieces of the Art Nouveau and Jugendstil periods. However, the idealism that they embraced established a progressive philosophy for the subsequent generations of postwar designers.

Postwar America, with its growing prosperity and suburban sprawl, welcomed architecture and design that was novel and to a large degree paid homage to its democratic principles. In the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Finland, and Denmark, a liberal political climate, a strong prewar crafts tradition, and a wealth of talented designers converged to create new objects that served the needs of urban dwellers. In both regions there was a new emphasis on what the individual consumer wanted, what their new needs were, and how the design and manufacturing techniques could best enhance the product. Although functionalism was still an admired concept, the austere rationalism of the machine paradigm of the 1920s and 30s was discarded in favor of the use of softer, more organic forms.

The American designers Charles and Ray Eames exploited new manufacturing techniques they had pioneered for the military for domestic products and architecture. The Eameses' passion for experimentation had resulted in commissions from the U.S. Navy to produce lightweight leg splints and glider shells during the 1940s. After the war the use of plywood was adapted by the

Eameses to make home furnishings. Much of this optimism and devotion to innovation was encouraged by exhibitions and competitions, including the *International Competition for Low Cost Furniture Design* held at The Museum of Modern Art in 1948. For this exhibition the Eameses produced an ingenious full-scale prototype of a chaise longue made from hardened foam rubber. Their own home, built as part of the Case Study project with a simple steel structure, represented an attempt to streamline the building process and produce an easily and inexpensively fabricated house that would address the needs of the growing middle class in America.

In Scandinavia the postwar period saw a continuation of much of what had already begun there in the 1930s. The small Swedish Functionalist movement and the work of Alvar Aalto in Finland advocated well made, handsome, and easy-to-use objects, with a stronger emphasis on a humanistic approach. In 1957 Aalto wrote, "We should work for simple, good, undecorated things, but things which are in harmony with the human being and organically suited to the little man in the street." Aalto's designs for the home frequently feature

wood, rattan, and cloth—materials he perceived to be more in keeping with human nature than those employed by the German Modernists. Likewise the Danish designers Hans Wegner and Finn Juhl emphasized fine wood crafting but at reasonable prices and often in scale with the new smaller modern homes and apartments. In Finland the production of glass and ceramic tabletop objects became one of the country's most successful exports. Utility and flexibility were crucial in the conception of these glasses, dishes, and pitchers whose forms borrowed heavily from scientific labware. Kaj Franck, one of the foremost Finnish designers of tableware, described his definition of beauty as "necessary, functional, justified, and right." These innovative and practical things for the home helped these small nations create a successful export economy and establish a strong international identity.

Designers in America and Scandinavia were keenly aware that the utopian ideals manifested before World War II in the twenties and thirties could only be successful (as with all forms of idealism) if they could be unanimously agreed upon—a near impossibility when allied

with an individual's domestic environment. Instead, the postwar period represents a transformation from the primarily theoretical and almost authoritarian nature of the earlier modernist movements toward a more practical and consumer-oriented solution.

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



Charles Eames. Chaise Longue. 1948.  
Prototype for a stressed-skin shell: hard rubber  
foam, plastic, wood, and metal, 32½ x 59 x  
34¼" (82.6 x 149.9 x 87 cm). The Museum  
of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the designer



## New York Salon

THE PAINTER Willem de Kooning called them "bookkeepers." What he meant was critics and historians. What he held against them, with characteristically sharp wit, was their need to keep their columns straight when accounting for the influences and associations that seem to explain a given artist's work and its development. Movements, tendencies, "isms" are the categories to which the bookkeepers assign artists to make sure things are orderly, but the reality in which creators generally pursue their ambitions is rarely so tidy. Chances are, in fact, that the painters and sculptors most alert to the aesthetic possibilities of any given situation or moment will befriend, learn from, and have an effect on others whose signature style resembles theirs only superficially and sometimes not at all. Pluralism and free exchange of this kind have defined the great catalytic contexts of modern art.

Never was this more true than in New York during the 1950s. Although the bookkeepers have long since sorted them out into clusters labeled Abstract Expressionism or Action Painting, Abstract Impressionism, Color Field,



David Smith, *History of LeRoy Borton*, 1956. Forged steel, 74¼" x 26½" x 24½" (224.1 x 67.9 x 62.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

Hard Edge, Painterly Realism, neo-Dada and Pop art, the actual community of artists was far more intimate and far more fluid than these categories suggest. The bonds that existed among painters and sculptors of very distinct sensibilities were unpredictable, substantial, and formative. For example, de Kooning became one of the early supporters of the painterly Realist Fairfield Porter, who applied lessons learned from de Kooning's open brushwork and modulated palette to his own still lifes. And, Porter, also an accomplished critic, was one of the first to write appreciatively about the paintings of Jasper Johns, at that time commonly thought of as the anti-Abstract Expressionist par excellence. Such seemingly paradoxical connections were grounded in the fact that the members of the still small New York School enclave were regularly in and out of each others' studios, frequently participated in panels and debates at the Artists Club (a collectively organized forum for discussion), or in after-hours arguments at their favorite watering holes, exhibited in the same few galleries dedicated to cutting-edge art, and were written up together in the magazines as representatives of the "new."



Revealing aesthetic affinities and contrasts also integrated what might otherwise have seemed like an inchoate scene: gesturalism inflected the paintings of both abstract and figurative artists, while others, reacting against such looseness, began to produce clear, silhouetted shapes—with some artists showing how this could be done in pictures and yet others applying the principle to purely non-representational forms. In the meantime, “totemic” imagery appeared in painting (Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner) as well as in sculpture (Louise Bourgeois and David Smith).

These sometimes oblique, sometimes direct correspondences were the lifeblood of the New York scene both for vanguard artists and imaginative traditionalists, leaders of movements and mavericks. This improvised “salon,” modeled on group shows of the period, is intended as a reminder of how heterogeneous, how open and how fertile that scene was in its mid-twentieth-century heyday.

*Robert Storr*  
Senior Curator, Department of  
Painting and Sculpture



Larry Rivers. *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. 1953. Oil, graphite, and charcoal on linen, 6'11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 9'3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (212.4 x 283.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Given anonymously



## Ideal Motif: Stieglitz, Weston, Adams, and Callahan



THE FINE ART TRADITION in American photography took shape around 1900 under the banner of Pictorialism—an aesthetic that renounced the messy realities of the modern world for ideals of beauty and refinement. By the 1920s the movement had acquired enough momentum to spawn a stylistic revolution—except that the reigning monarch, Alfred Stieglitz, retained his throne and in fact went on to do his own best work in the newly triumphant style. The lugubrious moods and fuzzy, flickering forms that had defined photographic high art at the turn of the century gave way to crisp description and delicate continuities of tone. Much survived—the obsession with perfection, the adherence to a demanding technical craft, and above all the posture of principled withdrawal from the turbulent social world—but the stylistic sea change reinvigorated the tradition by opening unexpected doors.

“Pictorialism” meant what it said: an art intended to invoke the realm of pictures—preferably drawings or etchings

LEFT: Alfred Stieglitz. *From the Shelton, West*. 1935. Gelatin silver prints, each 9 1/2 x 7 1/2" (24.3 x 19 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Alfred Stieglitz Collection. Gift of Georgja O'Keeffe

or even paintings in the overcooked style that was fashionable at the turn of the century. Thus it was essentially a closed system that recycled a limited sphere of imagery; any particular picture could only restate an existing prototype. The advent of what was called the “straight” aesthetic in the 1920s effectively reversed these terms. Now, however familiar or even obvious the chosen motif might be, the new vocabulary of precise description was so relentless in its specificity that each individual picture was stubbornly unique. Although the protagonists of the tradition that descended from Stieglitz remained under the spell of his ivory-tower idealism, they cultivated a nimble alertness to subtle variation, which saved their work from empty perfection.

This quality of acute observation within a restricted sphere of ideal motifs frequently expressed itself in series of very closely related photographs. In one sense, this development was a natural outgrowth of the essential role of editing in photography. While the painter can repeatedly revise a single picture, the easiest, most common, and most productive

way for a photographer to revise a picture is to make another one. As a consequence, editing—ascribing success or failure after the fact—is fundamental to the photographer's art, and it often entails making very fine distinctions. On occasion, however, two or more pictures, barely different from each other, may survive the test. Thereafter, it is only a short step to presenting the pictures together as a group, thus transforming the challenge of fine distinctions from an artistic process into an artistic theme.

The works in this exhibition were made from the 1930s to the 1970s, a period in which the art of photography was of virtually no interest to anyone but the photographers themselves and a handful of enthusiasts. There was little promise of acclaim and less promise of income. Yet the tradition not only persisted but thrived, in part through an informal and, to the public, virtually invisible network of relationships that linked the isolated participants across the vast distances of the United States.

*Peter Galassi*

*Chief Curator, Department of Photography*



## Paris Salon



Alberto Giacometti. *Standing Woman*. 1948. Painted bronze (cast 1949), 65 1/4 x 6 1/2 x 13 1/2" (166 x 16.5 x 34.2 cm). 3 of 6. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. James Thrall Soby Bequest. © 2000 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

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 (closing August 22); postwar paintings and sculptures are displayed on the third.

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

with Matisse's more familiar view of Nice, *Interior with a Violin Case* (1918–19). Similarly, the American expatriate painter Gerald Murphy's *Wasp and Pear* (1927), hints at his 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.



Nicolas de Staël. *Painting*. 1947. Oil on canvas, 6' 5" x 38 1/2" (195.6 x 97.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lee A. Ault. © 2000 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

Peter Galassi, Chief Curator,  
Department of Photography  
Robert Storr, Senior Curator,  
Department of Painting and Sculpture  
Anne Umland, Associate Curator,  
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## The Observer: Cartier-Bresson after the War

IN 1947 the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (born 1908) helped to found Magnum Photos, a photographers' cooperative created to distribute the work of its members to magazines and other clients around the world. Magnum differed from earlier photo agencies in that its fundamental aim was to allow photographers to

pursue their own curiosities, sometimes for extended periods of time, without regard to specific assignments.

Television as a mass medium was still in its infancy, and extensive world travel was not yet common. Photography, especially in magazines, was the primary means by which people saw the

world. Over the next two decades, Cartier-Bresson traveled widely—in China, Japan, Russia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, all over Europe and the United States—creating elegant pictures from his perceptive observations. Many of these pictures reached their audience when they appeared in *Life* and other illustrated magazines.



Henri Cartier-Bresson. *Russian Construction Workers*. 1954. Gelatin silver print, 23 1/4 x 35 1/2" (59 x 90 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the photographer. © 2000 Henri Cartier-Bresson



Cartier-Bresson's photographs of these far-off places only rarely document newsworthy events. Although he was in India when it gained independence (and he did photograph Gandhi's funeral) and in China at the time of the Communist Revolution, he had little interest in chronicling the grand or exceptional. Rather, his inclination and talent lay in capturing the character of a society through what was ordinary and typical, recognizing that "in photography, the smallest thing can be a great subject. The little, human detail can become a leitmotiv."

The breadth of Cartier-Bresson's work in the years after World War II was partly a consequence of his sense of commitment to engage the turbulent and changing world around him. It meant that he often found himself as a foreigner, a position that might have prevented a less sensitive observer from capturing such uninhibited moments of everyday life. In 1952, in the introduction to what would become his landmark book *The Decisive Moment*, he wrote:

*"In whatever picture-story we try to do, we are bound to arrive as intruders. It is essential, therefore, to approach the subject on tiptoe.... A velvet hand, a*



*hawk's eye—these we should all have. The profession depends so much upon the relations the photographer establishes with the people he's photographing, that a false relationship, a wrong word or attitude, can ruin everything."*

Frequently categorized as a photojournalist, Cartier-Bresson was every bit an artist, instinctively and by training. Many of his pictures appeared in magazines alongside

traditional reportage, and he accepted the label of photojournalist in exchange for the freedom it provided him to pursue his interests. His unique ability to grasp the rhythms of human life anywhere he found them broadened the sense of what photojournalism could be, and neither the journalist nor the artist could complain with the result.

Sarah Hermanson  
Assistant Curator, Department of Photography

Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Berlin*, 1963. Gelatin silver print, 23 1/4 x 35 1/4" (59 x 90 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the photographer. © 2000 Henri Cartier-Bresson



## The Rhetoric of Persuasion

IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT to imagine two more starkly contrasting figures than Joseph Stalin, dictator of the Soviet Union, and Henry R. Luce, dictator of Time, Inc. Yet in the 1930s the American photographer Margaret Bourke-White worked successfully for both of them. Although the two men personified the fierce opposition between communism and capitalism, they shared an enthrallment with the promise of heavy industry and a zeal for persuading a mass public. For both, Bourke-White's simple, dramatic pictures were the perfect embodiment of power.

The rise of Stalin, Hitler, Franco, and Mussolini, the immediate struggle of the Spanish Civil War and the impending conflict of World War II, and the worldwide devastation of the Great Depression conspired in the 1930s to raise the clash of ideologies to a pitch of urgent intensity. The pressure to choose—to join a collective campaign for or against—was keenly felt by individuals, groups, and governments. In the visual arts, the imperative to engage and convince the largest possible audience spawned a distinctive brand of pictorial rhetoric. This aesthetic of persuasion served the entire range of competing



Diego Rivera. *Agrarian Leader Zapata*. 1931. Fresco, 7'9½" x 6'2" (238.1 x 188 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

ideologies, in works created both as state-sponsored propaganda and as fervent expressions of personal conviction.

Although aspects of earlier modernist art—the dynamic diagonals of Russian Constructivism, for example—sometimes flavored the dominant aesthetic, its bread and butter was a pre-modern vocabulary

of clearly defined, graphically simple, sculpturally robust human figures—mythic personae to whom the viewer could instantly attach his or her emotions. The most typical subjects were unmistakable exemplars of one side of the struggle or the other—angelic heroes and evil villains, indomitable workers and helpless victims. Completing the roster of favored

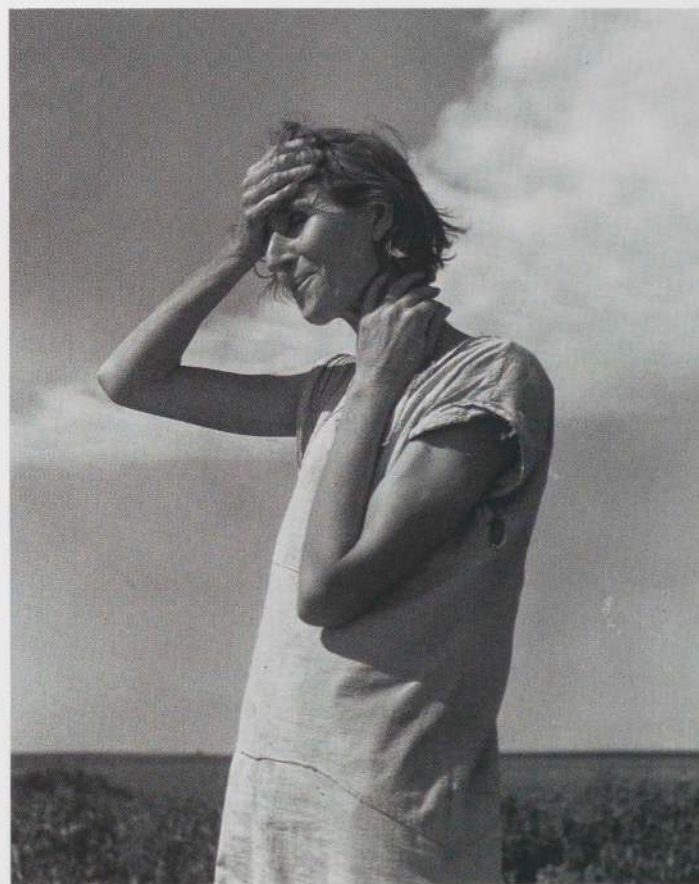
themes were icons of power or force, and inspiring images of the solidarity of the masses. The exhibition is loosely organized into groups of works representing these six fundamental themes.

The imagery of persuasion took a wide range of concrete forms, from huge murals (whose imposing presence is suggested in the exhibition by Diego Rivera's fresco *Agrarian Leader Zapata* [1931]) to magazines and newspapers for which most of the photographs in the exhibition were intended, to the cheaply produced prints of Mexico's El Taller de Gráfica Popular (People's Printmaking Workshop), which were plastered on walls throughout Mexico City. The periodicals (such as Stalin's *USSR in Construction* and Luce's *Fortune*) and ephemeral prints made up in breadth of distribution what they lacked in monumental scale. The poster might be understood as a compromise between these extremes, which combined the pictorial ambition of the mural with the ubiquity of the print.

Each of the works presented here of course arose within a particular context, and many of them carried specific messages that now are lost to us. The

twists and turns of Stalin's Five Year Plans of forced industrialization; the conditions of the camp in which Dorothea Lange made her celebrated photograph *Migrant Mother*, *Nipomo, California* (1936); the progressive program of Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas, which inspired many of the prints and broadsides of El Taller; the fact that Joan Miró's poster of solidarity with Republican Spain was conceived as a French postage stamp to be sold in support of the anti-Fascist cause: many of these details, along with the identities of some of the heroes and villains, have faded in our collective memory. On the other hand, the passage of time has only clarified another historical truth: Despite the diversity—even, on occasion, the mutual antagonism—of the causes that many talented artists of the 1930s sought to serve, their works speak in a common tongue. Aiming to sway the public this way or that, in artistic terms they all reached in the same direction.

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Chief Curator, Department of Photography  
Wendy Weitman  
Associate Curator, Department  
of Prints and Illustrated Books



Dorothea Lange. *Woman of the High Plains, Texas Panhandle*, 1938, Gelatin silver print, 12 1/4 x 10 1/8" (32 x 25.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase



## Seeing Double

THE SUBLIME CREATIONS of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe depended upon an industry capable of manufacturing the large sheets of glass that form the weightless skin of his buildings and reveal the rational structure within. But (as Mies well knew) glass is reflective as well as transparent, and while he was creating a new architectural ideal in Germany in the 1920s, Eugène Atget was picturing the plate-glass windows of the chic new Parisian department stores in complex photographs that superimpose views of inside and outside.

It is unlikely that Atget ever heard of Mies or that he took much notice of Pablo Picasso, although the photographer and the painter shared Paris for a quarter of a century. But Atget's pictures are not unrelated to Cubist paintings by Picasso that simultaneously present more than one view of a given subject. The invention of Cubism just before World War I closed a 500-year chapter of Western painting, in which the picture had been a reliably transparent window offering an unobstructed view of tangible things. By introducing transparency into the fabric of the picture itself,

Cubism created an opportunity so rich that, nearly a century later, artists have not yet exhausted it.

In twentieth-century art, architecture, and design, the experience of seeing one thing through another is pervasive and highly diverse in the forms it has taken and the ideas it brings to mind; it is part of what draws the line between modern art and the art of the past. *Seeing Double* explores that proposition through a wide range of works in a variety of mediums (with the regretted omission of

film, which generally cannot be presented properly in a gallery exhibition).

One extreme of the aesthetic continuum is defined by the ideal of perfect clarity and rationality, embodied in Mies's glass architecture, the self-revealing order of Sol LeWitt's wall drawings, and the open structure of Anthony Caro's sculpture. The other extreme is defined by works that superimpose two or more distinct and often competing images, a strategy exemplified by the window reflections



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. "Tugendhat" coffee table. 1930. Stainless steel and plate glass, 17¼ x 40 x 40" (43.8 x 101.6 x 101.6). Manufactured by Knoll International, New York, 1948. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Phyllis B. Lambert Fund

of Atget and Lee Friedlander, and by the impacted overlays of Robert Rauschenberg and Sigmar Polke.

These opposing extremes are equally modern in spirit. One expresses a perennial longing to bring perfect order into our lives and environment. The other acknowledges the coexistence of multiple and often incompatible realities, many of them our own disorderly creations.

In the wide gap between these two poles lies a great diversity of formal invention and a correspondingly varied engagement with modern experience. This abundance of creative experiment is not so much unclassifiable as suggestive of many competing classifications. For example, Ray Metzker's *Trolley Stop* (1966), a shimmering tableau composed of countless tiny, overlapping photographic images, invites comparison to turn-of-the-century motion studies by Étienne-Jules Marey, the multiple exposures of Harry Callahan, Jackson Pollock's vibrant labyrinths of paint, and the cool, mathematical precision of LeWitt's drawings. Or consider Mona Hatoum's *Silence* (1994), a child's crib made of tubular glass, in which the signature material of modernist lucidity is abruptly

reimagined as a terrifying embodiment of fragility and sharp-edged threat.

The exploration of new materials and techniques, the invention of new forms, the probing of new experiences and ideas, and perhaps above all the imaginative pursuit of unpredictable correspondences between and among these varieties of newness are what has made modern art modern. In other words, the fine originality of the art of the twentieth century is inseparable from its fecund multiplicity. Our provisional, ceaselessly redrawn charts of this territory are of course inadequate—and are destined to remain so as long as artists continue to explore and expand it.

Peter Galassi  
Chief Curator, Department  
of Photography

Eugène Atget. *Department Store, avenue des Gobelins, Paris*. 1925. Gelatin silver printing-out-paper print, 8 1/2 x 6 1/2" (22.2 x 16.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of James Thrall Soby





# MAKING CHOICES

