

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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MUSEUM'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION TO SHOW EFFECT OF MODERN ART ON THE SHAPE OF THINGS IN OUR EVERYDAY WORLD

On October 5, "Modern Art in Your Life," second of the Museum of Modern Art's 20th Anniversary exhibitions, will open to the public in the Museum's third floor galleries. Assembled by Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum's Curatorial Departments, and Robert Goldwater, Associate Professor of Art History at Queens College and Editor of the Magazine of Art, this show will remain on view through December 4. The installation was designed by Mr. d'Harnoncourt. The illustrated catalog accompanying the exhibition was written by Mr. Goldwater.

A long low tunnel enclosed by a dropped ceiling and semi-transparent curtains brings the visitor into the exhibition with a first vista of only the large midnight-blue wall at the far end of a large central gallery. The visitor emerges from the tunnel into a bright, high-ceilinged open space which contains only painting and sculpture. These works have been selected to represent five major trends in modern art that have shaped countless familiar things we see and use and that have thus become an intrinsic part of the world we live in.

In adjacent galleries, grouped in the order of these five major trends, is a selection of architecture, industrial design, advertising art and window display. The objects shown in each of these galleries are tied together by a common esthetic. Though they may vary in approach from inventive creation to a competent application of style, all testify that modern art has largely helped to shape the appearance of our cities, our streets and the homes we live in. To what extent modern art has permeated daily life is pointed up by a striking example from Montgomery Ward catalogs. Two pages, one from a 1920, the other from a 1944 catalog, both advertise linoleums; the later one compared with the earlier shows a revolutionary change from florid confusion to clear, clean design, not only in the linoleum patterns, but also in the layout of the page.

Opposite the midnight-blue wall in the painting and sculpture gallery is a pure white wall on which is hung art that is pure geometric and pure organic form. The abstract geometric forms are

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illustrated by paintings and sculpture without subject matter, ranging from the strictest use of the straight line and right angle to the inclusion of diagonals and the concept of depth. Among these are the works of Mondrian, van Doesburg, Malevich, Pereira, Nicholson and Gabo. A door leads from these works to an area displaying the uses of these forms ranging from the severely formal Rietveld house built in Holland in 1924 to the familiar New York Daily News building designed by Hood and Howells in 1930. A storage wall unit, a square table with a lazy susan, a rug, a chair and many other objects show how industrial design has adopted geometric abstraction. Its use in typography and advertising design is illustrated by magazine covers, newspaper ads, subway and other posters and cover designs for music albums and books. A pile of packages surmounted by the Kleenex box further indicates how many familiar items are related to these art forms.

Returning to the painting and sculpture gallery the visitor travels the length of a cool gray wall hung with art that combines representation with geometric order; illustrated by the work of Archipenko, Le Corbusier, Léger and Ozenfant. The doorway through this wall looks on a long partition covered with the simulated tile paper used in subway stations. As in the subway stations, many posters line this wall, all examples of illustrative material geometrically simplified. To the left, pots and pans, and to the right, show window mannequins further indicate how much the art forms have influenced the appearance of the world we live in.

Back in the main gallery, the visitor's attention will now turn to the art on the midnight-blue wall. To the extreme left is a painting and a peephole. Fool-the-eye painting, the use of very detailed realistic technique to depict the imaginary, is shown here in relation to magazine covers using the same technique seen through the peephole in a shadow box. The remainder of the wall represents the art of surrealism and the fantastic through the works of such artists as Tchelitchev, Seligmann, Ernst, Dali and Tanguy, progressively illustrating the increased use of deep space to portray the haunting and mysterious. This brings the visitor to The False Mirror, a painting by Magritte of an eye with a summer sky visible through the iris. Adjacent to this is another peephole around which has been painted another eye, and through this can be seen many eyes as used in a Bonwit Teller show window.

The next room is almost completely dark, black on all four walls and ceiling, the entrance draped with a rich curtain slightly drawn to admit the visitor. Pin point spotlights reveal a gallery of show window displays and individual mannequins, drawn together from the many shops on Fifth Avenue where their relation to surrealist art has from time to time been revealed on the street. Duplicates of actual store window displays are reconstructed here, including a Lord and Taylor window created to show neckties designed by Dali and a Marcel Vertès window done for Saks. The walls are spotlighted at intervals to display posters, book jackets, magazine covers and advertisements all related to the art of the fantastic.

Emerging again into the painting and sculpture gallery, the visitor finds art work exemplifying stylized representation but this time using organic forms. In this category simplified fluid forms often suggest cellular organism. Beyond this wall are examples of familiar items using the bulbous shapes of Miro, sometimes pierced by holes irregular in contour as in the sculpture of Henry Moore; all known to the magazine and book buyer, the record collector and the subway rider through their frequent use in typography and advertising design. Further on are shown examples of the "wandering line" frequently used by Klee and occasionally by Picasso. A group of fabrics shows the adaptation of this sinuous linear style to uses in home furnishings.

Nearing the end of the exhibition the visitor returns to the pure white wall and to abstract art, but again, as in the preceding section, using organic instead of geometric form. These forms are represented by the work of Arp, Calder, Miro and Noguchi. Their counterparts in design and architecture are illustrated in the room beyond. The far wall is a light blue suggestive of space, and suspended before it is a large chart of silhouetted furniture forms designed by George Nelson for the magazine Interiors. Below are examples of furniture from which these forms were taken and which are closely related to the art in the main gallery. The molded plywood chair designed by Eames; the "hammock" chair by Bonet, Kurchan and Hardoy are among the pieces shown. Pottery, textiles, advertising and package design emphasize once again how much a part of our lives these shapes have become.

We readily and daily accept the forms presented in this exhibi-

tion when seen in package design, window displays and furniture, but we often remain self-conscious when viewing the same shapes as used in modern art. The unity of style in other periods of art history is taken for granted. The relation of a Greek useful object such as a vase to the Greek temples, a Gothic fabric or chest to Gothic cathedrals, is apparent. The "style" of our own time is still difficult for many of us to identify. The exhibited instances of parallels and affinities in today's art and design demonstrate to what extent contemporary designers and artists sensitively distil and synthesize the spirit of the world of today.

The catalog to the exhibition states in its foreword:

"'Modern Art in Your Life' ... is the second [exhibition] presented by the Museum of Modern Art to celebrate its 20th Anniversary. The first, 'Timeless Aspects of Modern Art,' dealt with the relationship between modern art and the art of past periods, and was designed to show that modern art is not an isolated phenomenon in history but an integral part of the art of all ages.

"'Modern Art in Your Life' is designed to show that the appearance and shape of countless objects of our everyday environment are related to, or derived from, modern painting and sculpture, and that modern art is an intrinsic part of modern living.

"These exhibitions are not presented as a justification of the artistic merit of modern art. Works of art need no justification beyond their own appeal. The aim of this special series is to demonstrate, persistent doubters to the contrary, that modern art, like the art of any period, is both rooted in tradition and truly pertinent to its own time."