

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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PRESS PREVIEW

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TWELVE AMERICAN ARTISTS FEATURED AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

TWELVE AMERICANS, the major summer exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, will be on view on the third floor from May 30 through September 9. Directed by Dorothy C. Miller, Curator of the Museum Collections, the exhibition is the latest in a series of contemporary American painting and sculpture shows organized periodically by the Museum. It contains the work of eight painters, Ernest Briggs, James Brooks, Sam Francis, Fritz Glarner, Philip Guston, Grace Hartigan, Franz Kline, and Larry Rivers, and four sculptors, Raoul Hague, Ibram Lassaw, Seymour Lipton, and José de Rivera. Approximately 90 works in all are shown.

As Miss Miller points out in the catalog* accompanying the exhibition, this series was designed by the Museum to contrast with the usual large American group show in which a hundred or more artists are represented by one work each. Instead, the Museum exhibitions consist of a sequence of one-man shows with a separate gallery for each artist so that the character and quality of his individual achievement can better be estimated.

To illustrate trends or to discover new talent was not the purpose of this particular exhibition, Miss Miller says. These artists, except for Raoul Hague, exhibit regularly in New York galleries and are familiar to those who follow the gallery shows. However, this exhibition has been planned for the Museum's larger public, especially the thousands of summer visitors, to whom the work of these artists is not yet well-known and who may not have had an opportunity to see a carefully selected group of recent works by each.

Many of the artists are showing very recent works never before exhibited. Raoul Hague has never had a one-man show before. Brooks is showing five new paintings, and Glarner two. There are four sculptures just completed by Lipton, two by Lassaw, and one by de Rivera. The younger artists, Briggs, Francis, Hartigan, and Rivers, are each showing major new paintings.

*TWELVE AMERICANS, edited by Dorothy C. Miller, with statements by the artists. 95 pages; 95 plates, 8 in color. Published by the Museum of Modern Art. Distributed by Simon & Schuster. Price, \$3.50.

There is much contrast and variety in the exhibition, which ranges from work inspired by the objects and forms of daily life, by history or by the human figure, to metaphysical thought, abstract expressionism and pure geometric abstraction. The TWELVE AMERICANS differ widely in approach and technique as well as in age and geographical origin. Four are in their early thirties, three in their forties, five in their fifties.* They were born in California, Louisiana, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania; and in Canada, Egypt, Switzerland and Turkey. Only two are native New Yorkers, but it was in New York that all, except one, found maturity in their development as artists. And in spite of the difference in their ages, most of them held crucial one-man shows within a few years of one another, in the late nineteen-forties or early 'fifties--for the younger, these were their first shows, for many of the older ones, the first to define a mature idiom.

Considerable variety is to be expected and found, in the early experience that led to each artist's development. Eight of the twelve were working in New York in the 'thirties. Brooks, Guston, Hague, Lassaw and de Rivera worked on the Government's art projects and participated in that extraordinary public enterprise. As very young men, Brooks and Guston successfully carried out for the Government a number of large mural paintings in the vigorous realistic style of the time. Hague and Lassaw, sculptors with a heritage from Mediterranean and Near Eastern sources, followed radically different paths. Hague, always somewhat isolated, derived his forms from the human figure, absorbed in the tradition of direct carving in stone and wood. Lassaw developed, very early, a purely abstract "space" sculpture in plastics, wood and metal, later in welded metals. De Rivera's years of training and practice in industrial techniques laid the foundation for his mastery of metal-working and a highly perfected abstract expression. Lipton developed his art slowly, first carving expressionist figures in wood, then experimenting with sheet metal. The final forms of his brazed sheet steel sculptures draw inspiration largely from plant and animal life. Kline's early work, chiefly figure painting, has remained obscure; he was forty when he first exhibited the big black and white abstract paintings that brought him recognition. Glarner, associated with the Abstraction-Création group in Paris in the early 'thirties, developed in New York his personal version of a geometric abstract painting related to de Stijl.

*This sentence and all those following, except for the last paragraph, are taken directly from Miss Miller's foreword to the catalog of TWELVE AMERICANS

Of the younger generation in the exhibition, two began to paint in San Francisco, two in New York. Briggs and Francis, both native Californians, left San Francisco for New York and Paris, respectively. Hartigan and Rivers grew up in the so-called New York School of abstract painting, but both have taken other paths, Hartigan toward an art which, she says, is neither abstract nor realistic, Rivers toward figure painting, much of which is frankly "reactionary" in its concern with surface realism and the play of light.

Twenty-five private collectors, seven museums and ten galleries have generously lent to the exhibition, and a number of works of art come from the Museum's collection.

Photographs, catalogs, or any additional information may be obtained from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. Circle 5-8900, Ext. 203.