

The Museum of Modern Art

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Twentieth-Century Art from the Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller Collection will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from May 28 through September 1. The exhibition, which reveals the extraordinary quality of Governor Rockefeller's discernment as well as his particular interests, which range from works of the early years of our century to monumental sculptures and paintings finished only a few months ago, occupies the entire ground floor of the Museum and two adjoining terraces of the Sculpture Garden. More than 200 works are shown.

This is the first time so large a selection from the total collection -- numbering some 1,500 works -- has been shown, although the Governor has been a generous lender of individual works to museum exhibitions, and smaller selections from his collection have been shown throughout New York State in the past few years. But many other works -- especially the large sculptures -- have not previously been lent to public exhibitions.

The exhibition was directed by Dorothy C. Miller, Senior Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum. The catalogue* includes a preface by Governor Rockefeller, a foreword by Monroe Wheeler, Counselor to the Board of Trustees and former Director of Exhibitions and Publications at the Museum, and an essay on the collection by William S. Lieberman, Director of Drawings and Prints and Curator of Painting and Sculpture.

In addition to paintings, collages, drawings, sculptures and constructions, the exhibition includes a group of prints and illustrated books selected from the Governor's distinguished collection of graphic art by William S. Lieberman, and installed by Riva Castleman,

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*TWENTIETH-CENTURY ART FROM THE NELSON ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER COLLECTION. Preface by Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller, foreword by Monroe Wheeler, and an essay on the collection by William S. Lieberman. 136 pages; 137 illustrations (18 in color), 8 3/4 x 9 1/4". \$3.95 paper, \$7.50 cloth. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed in the United States and Canada by New York Graphic Society Ltd.; in the United Kingdom by Trans Atlantic Book Service, Ltd.; and internationally by Feffer and Simons, Inc.

Assistant Curator, Prints and Illustrated Books, Department of Drawings and Prints.

Picasso is represented by more works than any other artist in the show, including the great 1910 portrait of Fanny Tellier, Girl with a Mandolin, and the famous bronze Bathers of 1956. Among the works by Matisse are the austere Italian Woman, a painting of 1915, and the bronze Seated Nude of 1925. Boccioni, Gris, Braque, Kandinsky, Klee, Léger, Miró, Modigliani are among the other older masters represented by major works.

American abstract expressionist painting and sculpture is seen in well-chosen works by Baziotes, Ferber, Gottlieb, Guston, de Kooning, Kline, Lassaw, Lipton, Rothko, Tomlin and others. Superb paintings by Pollock, Gorky, Tomlin, Kline and others were lost in a fire in the Executive Mansion in 1961.

Sculpture has been a constant and absorbing interest for Governor Rockefeller and the collection is rich in works by artists such as Maillol, Arp, Giacometti, Lachaise, Nadelman, Picasso, Matisse, Calder, Moore, and Butler. Many of these are large and the lawns of his house at Pocantico Hills form a sculpture garden for them as well as for large works by David Smith, Louise Nevelson, Tony Smith, Arnaldo and Gio Pomodoro, Kenneth Snelson, Eduardo Paolozzi, Shinkichi Tajiri, Clement Meadmore, and many others. Some are now installed in the Museum's Main Hall and Sculpture Garden; others too large or difficult to move are shown in photographs. Frederick Kiesler's carved wood Galaxy, 1951, which anticipates current concerns with environmental sculpture, occupies an entire gallery.

The Governor has also acquired many other recent works by artists such as Larry Bell, Lee Bontecou, Helen Frankenthaler, Charles Hinman, Ellsworth Kelly, Jasper Johns, Michelangelo Pistoletto, and Frank Stella, who are all represented in this show.

For many years Nelson Rockefeller has been closely associated with The Museum of Modern Art, of which his mother was a founder in 1929. He was elected a Trustee in 1932, and has served as President and Chairman of the Board.

Analyzing the great importance of art in his life, which he attributes to his mother's encouragement and example, the Governor says:

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...Looking closely at art is a good game, sharpening one's wits and warming one's heart. It is the greatest recreation ever devised by the ingenious mind of man. It gives us relief from the pressures, frustrations, and compromises of everyday life. And without intellectual pretension or propaganda, I believe that it helps us to understand historic changes, fevers and ferments in the body politic, beneficial or otherwise--although spelling these things out in detail is apt to distort the artist's own purpose. In its nature, art is visionary; even if we fail to understand the artist's complex mentality, out of which so many disparate forms arise, the ambience of his free imagination stimulates in our minds dream-worlds and utopias of our own.

Mr. Wheeler, in his foreword to the catalogue, points out that the Governor's collection reflects his personal taste and that he has never been interested in forming a complete anthology of modern art:

His preference for simplicity may have turned him away somewhat from surrealism and the fantastic. Consciously or otherwise, he has maintained throughout his collection a predilection for sculpture; he himself might point out that this corresponds to the fact that modern America has been especially strong in three-dimensional art....What he represents and exercises is the modern mentality in art appreciation, very different from the old concern with antiquities, sequences of influences, attributions, and provenances....The key to his experience of art, in both solitude and public service, is not pride nor the cult of culture; it is enjoyment....All is empathy: the given work, a revelation of the true inner life of the man who produced it; the shared response to the given work (even a non-response, if it be respectful and frank), a form of humanism.

Describing the Governor's well-known delight in arranging and rearranging his collection, Mr. Wheeler says:

The first three hours of his term of governorship he spent climbing on ladders to hang pictures, lugging pieces of sculpture around, seeking a harmonious way of fitting his Calders, Mirós, Lassaws, and Klines into the gingerbread Victorian decor of the Executive Mansion.

In the catalogue the Governor comments on the relation between museums and collectors, with particular reference to Alfred H. Barr, Jr., first Director of The Museum of Modern Art, and to Dorothy Miller:

From the start, Alfred and Dorothy set standards, as those of us who share their interests felt our way in these innovations of expression. They not only helped us to understand, but they gave us courage to make our own decisions....This, I believe, exemplifies a particular condition of art: it is a fraternal interest, non-egocentric in the artist, no matter how solitary and ahead of his time he may be; non-authoritarian for the museum director or the scholarly interpreter. They know and intend that the large public will catch up with them. Furthermore, the spirit of modern collecting is not miserly. Without the gifts and loans of thousands of collectors, there could have been no Museum of Modern Art.

Additional information and photographs available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.