

The Museum of Modern Art

West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Circle 5-8900 Cable: Modernart

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BIOGRAPHY OF RENÉ d'HARNONCOURT, DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

René d'Harnoncourt has been associated with The Museum of Modern Art for twenty years and has been Director of the Museum since 1949. As head of The Museum of Modern Art, he is responsible for more than twenty exhibitions presented annually in New York, about 60 that are sent to other museums in this country and Canada each year, and another 12 that are sent abroad. The extent of the Museum's program requires that the scope of the activities which he supervises is far wider than that of most museum directors. Thus, he is also responsible for the publication of approximately ten books each year, for the Film Library, for the educational projects offered by The Institute of Modern Art and its school, and for the lectures, symposia and concerts offered by the Museum. As Director, he co-ordinates the programs of the Museum's five curatorial departments: Painting and Sculpture, Drawings and Prints, Photography, Architecture and Design, and the Film Library.

Mr. d'Harnoncourt is widely known here and abroad as an expert on exhibition installation techniques and, in addition to the above responsibilities as Museum Director, he has supervised the installation of many Museum exhibitions, including: Gabo and Pevsner and Elie Nadelman (1948), Seurat and Jean Arp (1958), Recent Sculpture U.S.A. and New Images of Man (1959), Steichen the Photographer (1961) and Auguste Rodin (1963). His most recent installation is the exhibition in the new Edward Steichen Photography Center.

He has also been responsible for installing the U.S. representation at the Biennials in Brazil in 1951 and in Venice in 1962 as well as Museum exhibitions at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, in 1953 and 1955. A few of the exhibitions he has directed for the Museum are: Indian Art of the United States (1941), Arts of the South Seas (1946), Timeless Aspects of Modern Art (1948), Modern Art in Your Life (1949), Fifteen Paintings by French Masters of the 19th Century (1955), and Ancient Arts of the Andes (1954).

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Mr. d'Harnoncourt has also collaborated on several books published by the Museum including Indian Art of the United States (1941), Art of the South Seas (1946), Modern Art in Your Life (1949), and Ancient Arts of the Andes (1954).

Born in Vienna in 1901, Mr. d'Harnoncourt was educated in Austria, studied chemistry and philosophy at the State University in Graz from 1918 to 1922 and chemical engineering at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna from 1922 to 1924. He lived in Mexico from 1925 until he came to the United States in 1931 as the Director of the Mexican Art Exhibition for the American Federation of Art and the Carnegie Foundation which was shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and later circulated to fourteen cities in the United States.

From 1933 to 1934 he was director of a network radio program called "Art in America" and the following two years he taught art at Sarah Lawrence College. Mr. d'Harnoncourt was named General Manager of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the United States Department of Interior in 1937 and served in that position until 1944 when he became Chairman of the Board, a position he held until 1961. He is, at present, Commissioner of that Board. While he was associated with the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Mr. d'Harnoncourt also served as acting Director of the Arts Section of the Office of Inter-American Affairs and Chairman of the Committee on Manual Industries for that office.

In 1944, when he joined the staff of the Museum, he served as Vice-President in charge of Foreign Activities and Director of the Department of Manual Industries; in 1947 he became Director of Curatorial Departments. In addition to his duties at the Museum, Mr. d'Harnoncourt serves as Vice-President of the Museum of Primitive Art and has been associated with various activities of the United States Commission for UNESCO since 1946.

Mr. d'Harnoncourt became a citizen of the United States in 1939. He lives in New York City with his wife, the former Sarah Carr of Chicago and their daughter, Ann, a student at Radcliffe College.

In 1955, Mr. d'Harnoncourt was awarded an honorary degree from Dartmouth College and three years later he was honored with the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Columbia University. He has also been decorated by the French, German and Peruvian governments.

Biographical references:

Current Biography

Directory of American Scholars

Who's Who in America (1960-61)

"New Director," New Yorker, December 3, 1949

"Modern Museum Man," Harper's Bazaar, July 1951

"New York: The Taste Shaper," Look, February 18, 1958

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y.
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