

The Museum of Modern Art

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MAX BECKMANN by Peter Selz, with contributions by Perry T. Rathbone and Harold Joachim, is the first major monograph on the German-born (1884-1950) artist to be written in English. The 160-page book, illustrated with reproductions of 121 paintings, drawings and prints, 13 of them in color, discusses in detail Beckmann's career as artist and teacher in this country and abroad, and offers a penetrating analysis of his paintings and their iconography. Published by The Museum of Modern Art and printed in Germany, the handsome format of the book--which includes three large foldout illustrations of Beckmann's famous triptychs: Departure, Blindman's Buff and The Argonauts--was designed by Werner Brudi, a young German-born designer now working in New York.

Now recognized as one of the leading European painters of the twentieth century, Beckmann's modernity lies in his attitude toward experience rather than in formal experiments. Dr. Selz, Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, writes, "Beckmann, by endowing the dream with precise structure and meticulous detail, belongs to that mainstream of modernism which has its parallels in the writings of Kafka and Joyce, the paintings of de Chirico and Bacon, and the films of Antonioni and Bergman. In all their work the feeling of human estrangement is enhanced by the use of hard physical reality."

MAX BECKMANN, which is one of The Museum of Modern Art's major Fall books, is published on the occasion of a large retrospective of the artist's work which will travel to Boston, New York and Chicago in this country, and then be shown at Hamburg and Frankfurt in Germany, and finally at London's Tate Gallery.

Beckmann emphasized the importance of the visible object, in contrast to the more subjective emotionalism of the German Expressionists. This concern brought him into association with George Grosz and Otto Dix, and in 1925, he joined them in the "Neue Sachlichkeit" exhibition in Mannheim which inaugurated the "new realism" movement that was to dominate German art and literature during the period between the wars.

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With the accession of the Nazis to power in 1933, Beckmann was dismissed from his teaching post at the Frankfurt Städlesche Kunstinstitut and moved to Berlin. Just before leaving Frankfurt, he began work on his great triptych, Departure, which was completed in Berlin in 1933. When the painting was shipped from Germany in 1937, it was labeled Scenes from Shakespeare's "Tempest" in order to mislead Hitler's inspection. Now owned by The Museum of Modern Art, the triptych will be sent back to Germany as one of 100 American loans.

Following the opening of the infamous "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich in 1937, which included ten of his important paintings, Beckmann left Germany, never to return. He spent the war years in Amsterdam and, in 1947, came to the United States in response to an invitation to teach at Washington University in St. Louis. There, and at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, he attracted an enthusiastic body of students, won recognition from a growing number of American museums and private collectors, and pursued his career as a painter until his death in 1950. Dr. Selz' text covers Beckmann's life from his birth in Leipzig in 1884 through these last days in New York in 1950.

Born in Munich in 1919, the author came to the United States in 1936 and became an American citizen in 1943 while serving in the U.S. Army. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in art history from the University of Chicago and studied as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Paris and École de Louvre. Before coming to The Museum of Modern Art, he was Chairman of the Art Department of Pomona College and Director of the Pomona College Gallery in Claremont, California. Dr. Selz is the author of German Expressionist Painting, published by the University of California Press in 1957, Emil Nolde, The Work of Jean Dubuffet, Fifteen Polish Painters, Mark Rothko, New Images of Man, and editor of Art Nouveau, all published by The Museum of Modern Art.

In addition to Dr. Selz' text, the book includes a perceptive essay on Beckmann's prints by Dr. Harold Joachim, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago. Illustrated by 18 reproductions of Beckmann's graphic works, the section

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provides a further elaboration of Beckmann's development as an artist.

Perry T. Rathbone, now Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was responsible for the invitation to teach in St. Louis which brought Beckmann to the United States. He has contributed a personal reminiscence, based on his close association with the artist and his wife, which casts further light on Beckmann's personality. Called "Max Beckmann in America," the reminiscence includes a number of photographs of the artist. It is followed by an appendix, "Letters to a Woman Painter," translated by the artist's widow, Quappi, and Mr. Rathbone. The letters, Beckmann's artistic credo, were composed in 1948 in response to an invitation to speak at Stephens College in Missouri.

The book also contains a complete biographical chronology and bibliography, including the writings, statements and speeches by Beckmann, as well as articles and selected catalogues, portfolios and illustrated books, which deal with his work. Also included is a list of the works to be included in the retrospective exhibition of Beckmann's work, which will open at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, on October 1, and will be shown at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, from December 16 through January 31, 1965.

Directed by Dr. Selz, the exhibition includes 78 paintings, 41 drawings and approximately 100 prints. After being shown at the Art Institute of Chicago in the spring, the exhibition will travel to Hamburg, Frankfurt and the Tate Gallery in London.

MAX BECKMANN by Peter Selz, with contributions by Perry T. Rathbone and Harold Joachim; published by The Museum of Modern Art; hardbound edition distributed to the trade by Doubleday and Company, Inc.; 160 pages, 121 illustrations (13 in color); \$10 hardbound, \$3.95 paperbound.

Review copies and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, or Lynn Traiger, Assistant Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CIRCLE 5-8900.