

The Museum of Modern Art

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

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Last year, people living in cities as far apart as New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, Rome, and Rio de Janeiro bought a Museum of Modern Art book. In New York, it might have been Walker Evans: American Photographs, or Rodin by Albert Elsen; in Rome, Architettura Americana d'Oggi by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler; in Rio, ¿Que Es La Pintura Moderna? by Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

In each of the fields in which the Museum is active - painting, sculpture, drawings and prints, architecture and design, photography, films, and art education - it has published outstanding books that make a lasting contribution to that field. So widespread has been the interest in this unique publishing program that special exhibitions of Museum of Modern Art publications have been held in 23 countries around the world. From the Auckland, New Zealand Star comes this comment on the publishing program:

"... the Museum has come to be regarded as the world centre for the field it deals in. Largely this is because of the publishing policy. For each of the special exhibitions that it mounts in a constant stream throughout the year, it produces a book (not merely a catalogue) to preserve what was of permanent value in the show. Often the book becomes the best thing available on its subject."

The Museum of Modern Art publications range from introductory paperback books that sell for \$1.25, such as What Is Modern Painting? by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., to extensive and definitive monographs, illustrated with scores of color and black and white plates, such as Matisse: His Art and His Public, also by Barr, or History of Impressionism by John Rewald. Although its books deal only with the modern field or with related areas regarded as particularly important for the understanding of art today, the Museum nevertheless conducts the most active publication program of any art museum in the world.

The publications are a particularly important Museum activity, as they provide a permanent record of exhibitions which frequently involve years of research and intensive travel on the part of the curators. An exhibition on view at the Museum for two months is seen by more than 80,000 people; a book on the same sub-

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ject in university libraries will be read by thousands of students long after the exhibition is dismantled and the paintings and sculpture returned to their owners in many different parts of the world.

John McAndrews, Professor of Art at Wellseley College, writing in the Saturday Review, said, "As memorabilia which survive the exhibitions that brought them into being, we have come to expect Museum of Modern Art monographs to be exemplary, with an abundance of information and illustrations and the best bibliographies available."

Beginning with a catalog of its first loan exhibition in 1929, the year the Museum was founded, the Museum has published more than 300 books. In 1939, Monroe Wheeler, formerly president of the publishing firm, Harrison of Paris, became the Museum's Director of Publications, and the Museum began to expand its publishing activities. Speaking of the Museum's creative publishing program, Mr. Wheeler says: "Enlightened museum publishing calls for far-sighted planning. We still underrate the curiosity, the open-mindedness, the native aesthetic sensibility, and the educability of our people. The challenge to produce significant art books grows ever more formidable and challenging."

Today, between 10 and 15 new books are added to the list each year. As a selected number of these are automatically sent to Museum members, who now number about 30,000, the Museum operates what is, in effect, a book club. This in turn means that the initial printing for some books is in the tens of thousands, thus lowering the unit cost.

In some instances, Museum books on individual artists go far beyond the scope of any possible exhibition, as, for example, Alfred H. Barr, Jr.'s Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art. This book was hailed by the critics as a "scholarly, but readable monograph," "the most comprehensive and dispassionate account of the life and work of Picasso yet published." The Museum's collection of more than 4,000 prints has been the source for several books of reproductions with accompanying
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text by William S. Lieberman, Curator of Drawings and Prints. Many Museum exhibitions survey a particular style or historical movement in modern art, and some of the Museum's most valuable reference books have been published as a result of these shows. Included among these are Cubism and Abstract Art, Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism, Art Nouveau: Art and Design at the Turn of the Century. Others, not published for a particular exhibition, such as John Rewald's books, The History of Impressionism, revised in 1961, and Post-Impressionism from van Gogh to Gauguin, revised in 1963, have become standard references. "Sumptuous," "invaluable," "a definitive book," and "not to be missed" were some of the phrases applied by the critics in unanimous praise for these two books.

The Museum's series of exhibitions of primitive art, important for an understanding of art today, has also been recorded in its publications. Ancient Art of the Andes by the late Wendell Bennet, and René d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum, is one. Arts of the South Seas by Ralph Linton and Paul Wingert in collaboration with René d'Harnoncourt, was the first comprehensive survey in English of the arts of the South Pacific. Indian Art of the United States by Frederick H. Douglas and René d'Harnoncourt, was the most complete work on the little-known art of the American Indian to be published.

An important Museum exhibition series of recent painting and sculpture provides a continuing survey of American art. The accompanying catalogs provide biographical information and text written by the artists themselves, explaining their attitudes towards their work. Americans 1963, the latest of this series, is edited by Dorothy C. Miller, Curator of Museum Collections, and contains photographs of the works exhibited and statements by the participating artists.

The Museum of Modern Art was the first in America to exhibit modern architecture, machine art and a complete range of well-designed home furnishings. The most recent publications in this field are Introduction to Twentieth Century Design by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department, and the late Greta Daniel;
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and The Drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright by Mr. Drexler. In 1964, three new books will originate from this department: Modern Landscape and Landscape Design by Elizabeth Mock Kassler; Lettering by Modern Artists by Mildred Constantine, Associate Curator (Graphic Design) of the Museum's Department; and What is Modern Architecture? by Arthur Drexler.

One of the unique aspects of the Museum of Modern Art has been its concern with the newer visual arts - photography, films, and television. More than 70 photography exhibitions have been presented since the Department of Photography was founded in 1940 and during that period several important books on photography have been published. The History of Photography by Beaumont Newhall, former Curator of the Museum's Department, and now Director of the George Eastman House in Rochester, will be reissued in a revised and enlarged version in the fall of 1964. The Family of Man, based on the famous exhibition created by Edward Steichen in 1955, is still a best seller. Walker Evans: American Photographs, originally published in 1938, reissued in 1962, has been called by the critics "a classic," "a fresh reminder of photography's uses as a powerful means of social revelation and comment." The department also plans to publish a series of inexpensive monographs on major photographers for students.

The Museum's Film Library, the greatest collection of American and European films of esthetic and historical importance assembled anywhere, is the basis of Film Notes, a lively and comprehensive account of the history of the motion picture from its beginning to the coming of sound, by Iris Barry, former Director of the department. Richard Griffith, Curator of the Film Library, is the author of several monographs published by the Museum in connection with its special film cycles, including Marlene Dietrich - Image and Legend and Fred Zinneman.

Another important Museum of Modern Art activity is carried out by the Department of Education, headed by Victor D'Amico, under whose direction a school for children and adult amateurs in the arts has been operated for many years. From

these classes has come material for several books, including How To Make Modern Jewelry, How To Make Objects of Wood and How To Make Pottery and Ceramic Sculpture. Art of the Young Child - Three to Five Years by Jane Cooper Bland, an instructor at the Museum's school, is devoted to the understanding of the creative growth of the child during one of the most vital periods of his development. Art For The Family is based on a television series presented by the Museum in New York several years ago. The critics found this book "filled with simple but provocative suggestions for self-expression," "the only book of its kind designed to further the creative interests of the family as a group." In Experiments in Creative Art Teaching, which was published in 1960, D'Amico explains the ideas and methods which have guided the department in its search for solutions to problems of art education.

Each year, since 1957, the Junior Council of the Museum, a group of dedicated volunteers, has published an Engagement Calendar, featuring various aspects of the Museum's Collections. They also draw on private collections for their sources. The 1965 Calendar will feature movie stills from the Museum Collection.

The Junior Council has also published in collaboration with Pan American Airways The Guide to Modern Art in Europe. This handy, pocket-size book contains the hours, the fees and the permanent exhibitions of nearly 400 small museums, including a restaurant in Zürich and a vintner's museum in Pauillac. Critics hailed it as an invaluable companion for European-bound travelers. In all, 27 countries of Europe are represented. The book sells for \$1.50.

Museum books are printed all over the world. Sometimes a printing firm in America prints the text while color plates are made elsewhere; frequently, the entire book is printed in Germany, Holland, England, or Italy. Wherever the book is manufactured, however, it is supervised by the Museum staff in New York which prepares the layout, selects the paper and type face, designs the cover and supervises the reproductions. Among the well-known designers who have been commissioned to design Museum books are Herbert Matter, Leo Lionni and Alvin Lustig. Color plates are

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checked carefully against the original works of art to meet the Museum's exacting standards. This careful attention to the esthetic value of the book itself, in addition to its content, has undoubtedly influenced book publishing in this country. Many Museum publications have received special prizes for layout and design. Voyages, printed by the Gehenna Press for The Museum of Modern Art was one of the Fifty Best Books of 1957. The Museum has been awarded this honor many times, including the past three years: 1961, Four Walking Tours; 1962, the reprint of Walker Evans: American Photographs; and in 1963, Eight Poems. A Museum of Modern Art book is now expected to be particularly handsome.

Museum books are distributed to bookstores throughout the country by Doubleday and Company, Inc., and are sold at the Museum itself in New York; they may be ordered by mail from the Museum as well. The books are currently distributed in 70 countries around the world. Review copies are available from the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Public Information upon request.

Additional Information is available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director of Public Information, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York, 10019 CI 5-8900