

The Museum of Modern Art

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The comment on "The New American Painting and Sculpture: The First Generation" by the Art Workers' Coalition, dated June 15 but mailed June 9, discusses an exhibition that has not yet taken place. On June 9 the exhibition was not installed, the checklist and preface not published, and no one could possibly know just what the exhibition would be like.

The introduction to the exhibition's checklist specifically refutes most of the resulting mistatements of fact, particularly in regard to the Museum's intent. Other refutations are as follows:

1. An important purpose of the exhibition is to make visible the depth of the Museum collection in this area. The number of works previously on view was extremely limited by lack of space. The projected building program will remedy this situation along with other problems. The intent of the exhibition was not "to build for The Museum of Modern Art the world's major collection of art of that period." The Museum has had for some time the world's major collection of painting and sculpture of this generation, though it is always concerned with further enriching its collection in this as in all other phases of modern art. It was the first museum to purchase works by any number of the artists in this show.
2. The Museum purchases widely in the area of contemporary art; 79 percent of the purchases made in the past two years have been works of living artists, 48 percent of them from artists under 45 years of age. The problem is not only finding purchase funds but also in finding space to exhibit works, particularly recent works, as many are exceedingly large in size.
3. The introduction to the Museum's checklist states specifically "The exhibition now on view is the latest in a series of recently inaugurated exhibitions which are made up solely of works of art in the collection of the Museum or promised to it.

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The 1960s (1967), Word and Image (1968), and Jean Dubuffet (1968), were such exhibitions. These exhibitions differ from major loan shows in that they in no way imply completeness in a historical sense (italics added). As far as the catalogue is concerned, the introduction to the checklist also specifically states that this catalogue, which will appear in the fall, will be illustrated with works of art in collections other than that of the Museum so as to serve as a general historical introduction to the period.

4. Many of the great artists of Europe have enriched the museums of their nations and of ours with marvelous gifts, often of major works which they had withheld from private sale because of their special quality and significance. American artists have also been generous. Those who have given to The Museum of Modern Art in the past--aside from artists in the present exhibition--begin with Aristide Maillol who gave the Museum two sculptures in the year following its founding in 1929. Others, both American and European, include Alexander Calder, Marcel Duchamp, Isamu Noguchi, Ben Shahn, Charles Sheeler, Mark Tobey, Jean Dubuffet, Max Ernst, Joan Miró, Naum Gabo, Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, Georges Rouault and Lyonel Feininger.

The project of realizing the fullest possible collection of post-World War II art is a collaborative endeavor, in which many collectors, friends and Trustees of the Museum participate, along with the artists, in making important gifts.

With severely limited funds for all services, and no endowment for the purchase of painting and sculpture, no subsidy from the city, state or federal government, The Museum of Modern Art has, since its founding in 1929, relied on that collaboration. In addition to gifts from collectors and artists, the Museum has received gifts from artists' widows. Aside from those related to this exhibition, the list includes Mme. Paul Klee, Mme. Kandinsky, Mrs. Lyonel Feininger, Mrs. Elie Nadelman, and Mme. Jean Arp; artists have also sometimes given work by other artists whom they admired.

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