

# The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

NO. 46

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

APRIL 21, 1971

## MOBIL FOUNDATION GRANT ENABLES MODERN MUSEUM TO OPEN GARDEN FREE WEEKENDS THIS SUMMER

A favorite summer oasis in midtown Manhattan, The Museum of Modern Art's Sculpture Garden, will become a free public park every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening from May 14 through October 10. SUMMERGARDEN, as the gift to New Yorkers is called, was made possible by a grant from Mobil Foundation, Inc.

From six pm until 11 on these summer weekends everyone is invited to sit or wander through the great walled marble courtyard, famous for its sculpture and for its reflecting pools, splashing fountains, beds of ivy and stands of trees -- Lombardy poplars, weeping beeches. Visitors will enter SUMMERGARDEN through gates in the high brick walls on 54th Street, just west of Fifth Avenue.

On some evenings occasional soft music will be played. On all evenings light refreshments will be available. The Garden will be lit so that visitors will have dramatic views of famous 20th-century sculpture by Rodin, Renoir, Maillol and Lachaise, as well as recent experimental work, such as the great white mound by Robert Breer that moves slowly around the Garden's paved terrace and Claes Oldenburg's giant revolving Icebag. A special summer attraction this year is an outdoor tent designed by Frei Otto, a well-known young German architect, which will be open during these hours.

In thanking Mobil Foundation for SUMMERGARDEN, John B. Hightower, Director of the Museum, pointed out that in view of the Museum's large deficit and general financial plight, it would have been impossible to make the Garden available to the general public without charge.

"Mobil Foundation has demonstrated how much enlightened corporate support of the arts can mean to the people of our city. The grant for SUMMERGARDEN has made it possible for us to make one of New York's most beautiful urban spaces available to the public at a time when many private institutions, including our own, are faced with difficult choices in maintaining services."

(more)

Originally designed by Philip C. Johnson in 1953, the Garden is named in honor of one of the Museum's founders, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. In 1964, Mr. Johnson enlarged the Garden to its present size of 35,000 square feet by the addition of an upper terrace. Zion and Breen were the landscape architects. The Museum galleries and offices now form three sides of the Garden court, while an 18-foot wall of grey glazed brick separates it from the noise of 54th Street.

When the re-designed Garden and Museum buildings opened in 1964, Ada Louise Huxtable, Pulitzer prize-winning architectural critic, said it was successful not only as architecture but as cityscape. The new upper terrace, a large, paved plaza reached by shallow, ceremonial marble stairs, suggests "an austere yet luxurious contemporary version of baroque Rome," she wrote. "The enlarged Garden, with a series of stepped levels, pools, fountains and some pretty magnificent, large-scale sculpture is fine esthetically and equally fine as an example of the way expensive midtown land can be 'wasted' by leaving it open for the pleasure of people."

Two years later the Garden was awarded the Bard First Honor Award by the City Club of New York as "a distinguished oasis for pedestrians offering a variety of spaces for the enjoyment of sculpture and just plain walking."

The Museum of Modern Art is open daily. Hours during the summer are from noon to 7 on Mondays, from 11 am until six on Saturdays and other weekdays, except Thursdays, when it is open until 10 pm. Sundays, the galleries are open from-noon to six. Admission, except Mondays, which are "pay-what-you-wish," is \$1.75.

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Additional information and photographs available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501, -7504.

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NO. 46 ALERT

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

MEMO TO: Assignment Editors

FROM: Elizabeth Shaw, Director  
Department of Public Information

DATE SENT: May 7, 1971

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DATE OF EVENT: May 10, 1971

PLACE: The Museum of Modern Art

## DISTINGUISHED GUESTS AT SUMMERGARDEN

A preview, with music, acrobats, balloons, jugglers and May Wine of SUMMERGARDEN - the transformation of The Museum of Modern Art's famous Sculpture Garden into a free public park during the evenings on summer weekends - will be held Monday, May 10 at 6 p.m., 8 West 54 Street.

William S. Paley, President of the Museum, will welcome the guests who will include public officials August Heckscher, Commissioner of Parks (representing Mayor Lindsay), Manhattan Borough President, Percy Sutton, artists, Museum neighbors and friends and the general public. Mobil Foundation, Inc., whose grant has made this public service possible, will be represented by Rawleigh Warner, Jr., Chairman of the Board.

The gates will swing open on 54th street at six. SUMMERGARDEN will begin officially Friday, May 14 and continue every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. through Oct. 10.