Recent painting U.S.A.: the figure
Sponsored by the Junior Council of the Museum of Modern Art

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RECENT PAINTING
USA: THE FIGURE
This exhibition will be circulated by the Museum of Modern Art with the aid of a grant from the CBS Foundation Inc.

The Museum of Modern Art

Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts
November 1, 1962—November 29, 1962

Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center
January 30, 1963—February 27, 1963

Baltimore Museum of Art
March 15, 1963—April 26, 1963

City Art Museum of St. Louis
May 13, 1963—June 10, 1963

San Francisco Museum of Art
August 18, 1963—September 15, 1963

Walker Art Center
October 1, 1963—November 12, 1963
RECENT PAINTING USA: THE FIGURE sponsored by the Junior Council of the Museum of Modern Art, New York
Foreword

The Junior Council of the Museum of Modern Art is composed of a group of men and women whose interest in the arts is allied with the aims and purposes of the Museum. Its numerous activities are designed to supplement the regular Museum program. RECENT PAINTING USA: THE FIGURE is the fourth in a series of open exhibitions organized by the Junior Council and devoted to one aspect of contemporary American art. It was preceded by YOUNG AMERICAN PRINTMAKERS, 1953, RECENT DRAWINGS USA, 1956 and, in 1959, RECENT SCULPTURE USA. With the exception of RECENT DRAWINGS USA, all these exhibitions were circulated following the New York showing. The schedule for the current exhibition appears in the front of this catalogue. The purpose of RECENT PAINTING USA: THE FIGURE is to explore recent directions in the painting of the figure by American artists. The selection was determined by the entries received. Therefore, the exhibition was not designed to survey all contemporary figurative painting. The plan for this exhibition was initiated at a Museum meeting on May 5, 1960. Only work executed after January 1, 1958 was eligible for selection and entries had to be for sale. All artists first submitted photographs of their work; 9,495 photographs and slides were received from artists in forty-eight states. These were studied by Dorothy C. Miller, William S. Lieberman and Frank O’Hara of the Museum staff. The Council is deeply indebted to these curators for the many hours they devoted to this preliminary phase of the operation. One hundred and fifty of the 1,841 artists who submitted photographs were asked to send paintings for further consideration. The 335 works were assembled at a New York warehouse last fall and the present exhibition of seventy-four paintings by as many artists was selected by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum Collections. The Council is grateful to Mr. Barr, not only for his invaluable work in the final stage of selection, but also for contributing a provocative statement for this catalogue. The Council also thanks Miss Miller for her design of the installation of the exhibition. In all its projects the Council is dependent upon the cooperation of the members of the Museum staff and in the organization of this exhibition we have, as always, benefited by their generous assistance. We wish to express our appreciation to Mrs. David S. Christy, Junior Council Chairman of the Exhibition, and to the members of her committee. Finally, special thanks are due to Dolores B. Lamanna, Executive Secretary of the Exhibition, for her devotion to the many details inherent in this enterprise.

Walter Bareiss, Anne K. Jones; Co-Chairmen, Junior Council
Introduction

Here are paintings of the forms of men and women and children—figures: figures in deep perspective, in flat silhouette; painted in patient detail or headlong bravura, with calculation or spontaneity, in monochrome or party-colored; figures candid as day; figures shredded, veiled, swathed, fragmented, emerging reluctantly from interpenetrating planes or tentacles of pigment; figures alone, in pairs, in groups, in crowds; figures naked, clothed, bizarrely accoutered; figures in landscapes, bedscapes, townscapes; figures staring at the painter, bathing in the benign sun, calling upon death in vain, hanged by the neck or heels; voluptuous figures, caressed or mocked; a nervous business man, a complacent woman, disquieting youths; figures frightened, haunted, ecstatic, lost in sleep; figures posed to make a composition; everyday figures, historical figures, legendary figures, Biblical figures; figures rapt in a witches’ sabbath, bewildered by survival, photographed in someone else’s dream, climbing toward a flowering tree. All these figures have several things in common: first of all they exist in paintings; the paintings were done between 1958 and 1961 and were selected (not infallibly!) from some 9,500 submitted by living American artists. Men have been painting their own image for many thousands of years but it is probable that never before, within one time and one country, has the human figure been painted with the prodigious variety of forms even this small exhibition suggests. What is the meaning of this variety? The question is confounding. Compare figure painting in Egypt in the period between 1961 B.C. and 1958 B.C. with American figure painting now. The contrast approaches a polarity between uniformity and multiformity but it does not answer the question. Perhaps it leads to another: how rugged is the individualism? There is not much reassurance to the unadventurous in the fact that almost all of the paintings in the exhibition are traditional or at least preceded in their overt subject matter, that is, the situations and the states-of-mind explicitly suggested by the painted figures. The latent content is another problem, deeply involving not only personal symbolism but personal form or style. Form or style can disparage the importance of subject matter or confirm it. These human figures were painted in a period (a glorious period in American art) when the painted surface often functioned in virtual and even dogmatic independence of any represented image. Some of these pictures suggest uncertainty as to whether a painting in the 1960s can or cannot, should or should not, live by paint alone. Others seem more confident. Ambiguous or decisive, more strength to them!

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
Sidney GOODMAN: Find a Way
Ben KAMIHIRA: Wedding Dress
George COHEN: Oval Nude
Nathan OLIVEIRA: Seated Figure with Pink Background
Richard LINDNER: Musical Visit
Manfred SCHWARTZ: The Ring
John BUTTON: Fire Escape
Paul WONNER: Bather
William CLUTZ: Woman Pulling Down a Window
Salvatore GRIPPI: Figures
René BOUCHÉ: Elsa Maxwell
Richard HORNADAY: Bound Figure
Jacob LANDAU: Cinna the Poet
Dorothy KOPPELMAN: The Grip
Cornelis RUHTENBERG: Potiphar's Wife
Gene B. BEERY: Strange Device, Still Untested
Elinore SCHNURR COLFLESH: The Four Women
AIKEN, William. Born Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1934; lives in San Francisco, California. Spring Figure. 1960. Oil on canvas, 42 1/4 x 28 1/4".

ALTMAN, Harold. Born New York, New York, 1924; lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Figure and Foliage II. 1959. Oil on canvas, 30 x 36".


BLAUSTEIN, Al. Born New York, New York, 1924; lives in New York, New York. Dark Recess. (1960-61). Oil on canvas, 34 1/4 x 40 1/4".

BORGE, Ralph W. Born Oakland, California, 1922; lives in Berkeley, California. Untitled #1. 1960. Tempera on composition board, 31 1/4 x 37 3/4".


BOYNTON, James. Born Fort Worth, Texas, 1928; lives in San Francisco, California. Scarecrow. 1959. Oil on canvas, 60 x 58 1/4".


BRODY, Lilly. Born Budapest, Hungary, 1905; lives in New York, New York. Sitting Figure. 1961. Watercolor, 13 1/2 x 11 1/2".

BUSHNELL, Kenneth. Born Los Angeles, California, 1933; lives in Honolulu, Hawaii. Saturn. (1960). Oil on canvas, 22 x 22".


COVINGTON, Harrison. Born Plant City, Florida, 1924; lives in Tampa, Florida. Man in Landscape. 1960. Acrylic and collage on canvas, 47 1/4 x 56 1/4".


Survivor. 1961. Oil on canvas, 38 x 50".

August. 1960. Oil on canvas, 22¾ x 21¾".

Bier of the Hunter Gracchus. 1960. Oil on canvas, 60 x 60¾".

Seated Boxer I. 1960. Lacquer on canvas, 81⅜ x 47¾".

Nocturnal Figures. (1960). Oil on composition board, 16½ x 47½".

Find a Way. (1961). Oil on canvas, 37⅞ x 61¼".

GOODWIN, Charles Bennett. Born Plainfield, New Jersey, 1921; lived in Columbus, Ohio until his death in 1961.
Manscape. 1960. Oil on canvas, 50 x 56".

Figures. 1960. Oil on canvas, 50½ x 60¾".

GUNTER, George W. Born Mason City, Iowa, 1920; lives in Altoona, Pennsylvania.
Dancer. (1959). Oil on canvas, 44 x 38".

*HANSEN, Robert. Born Osceola, Nebraska, 1924; lives in Los Angeles, California.
Man-Men: Mirror. 1959. Lacquer on Masonite, 46 x 72".

Lady and Cat. (1960). Oil on canvas, 53 x 47½".

Coronation. (1959-60). Oil on canvas, 74 x 57¾".

*HORNADAY, Richard. Born Joplin, Missouri, 1927; lives in Redding, California.
Bound Figure. 1959. Oil on Masonite, 21¼ x 9¾".

JERGENS, Robert. Born Cleveland, Ohio, 1938; lives in Cleveland, Ohio.
Opera Boxes. 1960. Oil on canvas, 45½ x 50¼".

*JOHNSON, Lester. Born Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1919; lives in Columbus, Ohio.
Four Men. (1961). Oil on canvas, 55⅞ x 68½".

Wedding Dress. (1960). Oil on canvas, 72⅞ x 74½".

Abandoned Forms. 1960. Oil and epoxy resins on Masonite, 48 x 56".

Sleeping Figures. 1959. Tempera on Masonite, 56⅛ x 36½".

Lost in White. (1961). Watercolor, 15½ x 21¼" (sight).

The Grip. (1959). Oil on canvas, 42½ x 32⅝".

Cinna the Poet. (1959). Watercolor, 27¼ x 40¼".

Odalisk I. (1961). Oil and collage on canvas, 50 x 36¾".

LEAKE, Eugene. Born Jersey City, New Jersey, 1911; lives in Baltimore, Maryland.
Buoy No. 4. (1960). Oil on canvas, 65⅞ x 48½".

The Net That Secretes Mathematics. (1959). Oil on Masonite, 46⅞ x 35⅞".

Holofernes' Dream. (1960). Oil on canvas, 40 x 30½".

Musical Visit. (1961). Oil on canvas, 50 x 40½".

Two Figures (The Cots). (1959-60). Oil on canvas, 51⅞ x 58½".

McGARRELL, James. Born Indianapolis, Indiana, 1930; lives in Bloomington, Indiana. Auslesen. 1959. Oil on canvas, 69¾ x 79¾".


NELSON, Robert A. Born Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1925; lives in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Soldiers. (1961). Oil on canvas, 58¼ x 48¾".

*OLIVEIRA, Nathan. Born Oakland, California, 1928; lives in Piedmont, California. Seated Figure with Pink Background. 1960. Oil on canvas, 82 x 62".*


PINKERTON, Clayton. Born San Francisco, California, 1931; lives in Richmond, California. Man Running from Death. (1959). Oil on canvas, 73½ x 69¾".


STUSSY, Jan. Born Benton County, Missouri, 1921; lives in Los Angeles, California. Black Figure. (1960). Casein on composition board, 39¼ x 29¼".


VAN DYK, James. Born Los Angeles, California, 1930; lives in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania. Red Wall. 1961. Lacquer and collage on Masonite, 72 x 47¾".


YEKTAL, Manoucher. Born Tehran, Iran, 1922; lives in Paris, France. Concierge. 1960. Oil on canvas, 74½ x 70¾".

ZAJAC, Jack. Born Youngstown, Ohio, 1929; lives in Claremont, California. Pilgrimage to a Blooming Tree I. (1961). Oil on canvas, 37½ x 46".
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