

CONDITIONS OF USE FOR THIS PDF

The images contained within this PDF may be used for private study, scholarship, and research only. They may not be published in print, posted on the internet, or exhibited. They may not be donated, sold, or otherwise transferred to another individual or repository without the written permission of The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

When publication is intended, publication-quality images must be obtained from SCALA Group, the Museum's agent for licensing and distribution of images to outside publishers and researchers.

If you wish to quote any of this material in a publication, an application for permission to publish must be submitted to the MoMA Archives. This stipulation also applies to dissertations and theses. All references to materials should cite the archival collection and folder, and acknowledge "The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York."

Whether publishing an image or quoting text, you are responsible for obtaining any consents or permissions which may be necessary in connection with any use of the archival materials, including, without limitation, any necessary authorizations from the copyright holder thereof or from any individual depicted therein.

In requesting and accepting this reproduction, you are agreeing to indemnify and hold harmless The Museum of Modern Art, its agents and employees against all claims, demands, costs and expenses incurred by copyright infringement or any other legal or regulatory cause of action arising from the use of this material.

NOTICE: WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

New York Times
January 18, 1949

MEMBER'S CHARGES DENIED BY MUSEUM

Redmond, Head of Trustees,
Defends Metropolitan Policy
and Work of Director

ERA OF EXPANSION CITED

Rosenberg 'Dares' Taylor to
Say He Stands by Opinion
About American Art

In an unusually lively session, members of the corporation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art at their annual meeting yesterday heard Roland K. Redmond, president of the board of trustees, repudiate charges made against the institution's policies and its director by James M. Rosenberg.

A retired lawyer, a painter by avocation and a life member of the museum, Mr. Rosenberg is the author of nine open letters to Mr. Redmond. In these letters he criticized various phases of the Metropolitan's policy, particularly in regard to contemporary art. He also accused the director, Francis Henry Taylor, of an attitude of "contempt and despair" toward modern art.

As Mr. Rosenberg had promised, he followed up his series, ended last Wednesday, by attending the meeting in the hope he would be answered. His letters had been sent to each of the trustees to acquaint them with his views, and theirs in reply were ready for him as they filed into the corporation meeting after a meeting of the board.

After the reports of president, directors and the treasurer of the activities and finances of the museum in 1948, Mr. Rosenberg took the floor. He demanded clarification of the museum's agreement with the Museum of Modern Art, calling upon the trustees to "examine their conscience" as to the fitness of Mr. Taylor as director.

Pact Was Three-Way

Originally a three-way pact, the agreement signed last year by the Metropolitan, the Whitney Museum and the Museum of Modern Art now affects only the Metropolitan and the Modern Museum. Designed to coordinate the activities of the three, the agreement assigned the fields of arts of the past to the Metropolitan, modern art, American and foreign, to the Modern Museum, and American art to the Whitney.

With the Whitney's cancellation of amalgamation with the Metropolitan in October and the re-entry of the Metropolitan into the field of American art, an activity that had more or less been suspended in anticipation of the coalition, Mr. Rosenberg's criticisms of the Metropolitan's interest in the subject were called into question.

The results of the agreement so far with the Modern Museum, Mr. Redmond said, justified "our hope that cooperation between the two museums will benefit the public by better service and more comprehensive exhibitions."

He pointed out that the ten-year program by which the collection of the Modern Museum might be transferred to the Metropolitan as they achieve a "major status" had resulted in the collection of works of art of established importance and had provided the Modern Museum with resources for contemporary art.

Rigid Agreement Denied

Mr. Redmond denied that the agreement with the Modern Museum was hard and fast, and contended that although the Metropolitan was committed to consult with it on the acquisition of modern works, it was free to make final decisions. This was in answer to Mr. Rosenberg's charge that the Metropolitan had placed self-imposed limitations upon itself.

Quoting certain passages from an article by Mr. Taylor published in the December Atlantic Monthly, Mr. Rosenberg demanded to know whether a man who held the views expressed in it should be retained by the museum. He asked Mr. Redmond whether he would appoint a committee to investigate Mr. Taylor's opinions.

"Do you stand by the language you used about American art and artists?" asked Mr. Rosenberg, turning to Mr. Taylor. "I'll be glad to have your answer if you care."

Addressing the meeting at large, Mr. Taylor replied that the phrases quoted had been taken from their context and "twisted to a single point of view." Mr. Rosenberg did not take the courtesy of discussing this with him in advance, and he didn't see why he should have the courtesy of a better lawyer.

Museum 31388

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

New York Times
January 18, 1949

MEMBER'S CHARGES DENIED BY MUSEUM

Redmond, Head of Trustees,
Defends Metropolitan Policy
and Work of Director

ERA OF EXPANSION CITED

Rosenberg 'Dares' Taylor to
Say He Stands by Opinion
About American Art

In an unusually lively session, members of the corporation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art at their annual meeting yesterday heard Roland L. Redmond, president of the board of trustees, repudiate charges made against the institution's policies and its director by James N. Rosenberg.

A retired lawyer, a painter by avocation and a life member of the museum, Mr. Rosenberg is the author of nine open letters to Mr. Redmond. In these letters he criticized various phases of the Metropolitan's policy, particularly in regard to contemporary art. He also accused the director, Francis Henry Taylor, of an attitude of "contempt and despair" toward modern art.

As Mr. Rosenberg had promised, he followed up his series, ended last Wednesday, by attending the meeting in the hope he would be answered. His letters had been sent to each of the trustees to acquaint them with his views, and theirs in reply were ready for him as they filed into the corporation meeting after a meeting of the board.

After the reports of president, directors and the treasurer of the activities and finances of the museum in 1948, Mr. Rosenberg took the floor. He demanded clarification of the museum's agreement with the Museum of Modern Art, calling upon the trustees to "examine their conscience" as to the fitness of Mr. Taylor as director.

Pact Was Three-Way

Originally a three-way pact, the agreement signed last year by the Metropolitan, the Whitney Museum and the Museum of Modern Art now affects only the Metropolitan and the Modern Museum. Designed to coordinate the activities of the three, the agreement assigned the fields of arts of the past to the Metropolitan; modern art, American and foreign, to the Modern Museum, and American art to the Whitney.

With the Whitney's cancellation of amalgamation with the Metropolitan in October and the re-entry of the Metropolitan into the field of American art, an activity that had more or less been suspended in anticipation of the coalition, Mr. Rosenberg's criticisms of the Metropolitan's interest in the subject were called academic.

The results of the agreement so far with the Modern Museum, Mr. Redmond said, justified "our hope that cooperation between the two museums will benefit the public by better service and more comprehensive exhibitions."

He pointed out that the ten-year program by which the collections of the Modern Museum might gradually be transferred to the Metropolitan as they achieve a "classic status" had resulted in the purchase of works of art of established importance and had provided the Modern Museum with resources for contemporary art.

Rigid Agreement Denied

Mr. Redmond denied that the agreement with the Modern Museum was hard and fast, and contended that although the Metropolitan was committed to consult with it on the acquisition of modern works, it was free to make final decisions. This was in answer to Mr. Rosenberg's charge that the Metropolitan had placed self-imposed limitations upon itself.

Quoting certain passages from an article by Mr. Taylor published in the December Atlantic Monthly, Mr. Rosenberg demanded to know whether a man who held the views expressed in it should be retained by the museum. He asked Mr. Redmond whether he would appoint a committee to investigate Mr. Taylor's opinions.

"Do you stand by the language you used about American art and artists?" asked Mr. Rosenberg, turning to Mr. Taylor. "I'll be glad to have your answer if you dare."

Addressing the meeting at large, Mr. Taylor replied that the phrases quoted had been taken from their context and "twisted to a single point of view. Mr. Rosenberg did not take the courtesy of discussing this with me in advance, and I don't see why he should have the courtesy of a further answer."

A further answer was supplied

NEW YORK TIMES: JANUARY 18, 1949

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

New York
Times

Jan. 18, 1949

by Mr. Redmond when he said that the right of members of the staff to express their personal views on art matter was essential to the vitality of the institution.

"We are not disposed to impose any form of censorship by removing from office any individual who expresses opinions which are controversial or unpopular," he added.

Mr. Redmond pointed to the record of Mr. Taylor's administration, marked by a notable increase in attendance; the growth of the museum's collections and membership, and the outstanding exhibitions as the best evidence of his fitness for his post.

Some of the passages cited from Mr. Taylor's magazine piece, a philosophical treatise on the effect on art by the forces of its environment were: "the innocent layman visiting the national exhibitions may be forgiven for suspecting that the chief purpose of American art is to illustrate the Kinsey Report"; and that "the contemporary American artist has been reduced to the status of a flat-chested pelican, strutting upon the intellectual wastelands and beaches, content to take whatever nourishment he can from his own too-meager breast."

In his report, before he was taxed with holding views detrimental to a public educational institution, Mr. Taylor asserted that if purchases of European modern art had been infrequent in his administration it was because during the war, and because of it, greater opportunities had presented themselves in other fields. Mr. Rosenberg had charged that the museum had neglected this field.

Mr. Taylor said that the curatorial departments had demonstrated the ability of the staff by their acquisition of great works of art. "Pressure groups, conflicting tastes and the irresponsible accusations of persons on the outside," he said, "will not affect the judgment of the curators or their purpose."

For the third consecutive year, the museum and its branch, The Cloisters' at Fort Tryon Park, recorded in 1948 more than 2,000,000 visitors. A modest operating surplus of \$23,594 was reported for the year as the fruits of the policy of rigid economy.

Mr. Redmond told of the initiation of a comprehensive program in the field of contemporary American art, the result of the abandonment of the agreement between the Metropolitan and the Whitney and the appointment of Robert Beverly Hale as its head.

Important bequests, gifts and purchases for the year included the collection of French silver left to the museum by Mrs. Catherine D. Wentworth, the bequest of two Van Goghs by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr., the gift of Vuillard's "Still Life in the Studio" by Robert Lehman, and the purchase of Andrea del Castagno's "Saint Sebastian."

At the close of the meeting Mr. Rosenberg said that his criticisms had "only begun."

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

NINE OPEN LETTERS

TO

ROLAND L. REDMOND

PRESIDENT OF THE

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

FROM

JAMES N. ROSENBERG

JR
1949

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

NINE OPEN LETTERS TO
ROLAND L. REDMOND, PRESIDENT OF THE
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
FROM JAMES N. ROSENBERG

Letter I, Jan. 6, 1949

DEAR MR. REDMOND:

The recent divorce of the Metropolitan Museum from The Whitney Museum of American Art, with which organization your agreement of September 15, 1947 planned a "coalition", has been followed by your announcement of December 7th that the Metropolitan Museum is "re-entering the field of contemporary American Art". Hence this is a fitting time to take stock of the past, the present and the future of your Museum.

I submit that another step is called for if your Museum is to take the place it ought to have in the field of art. You should, if possible, also sever your ties with the Museum of Modern Art, and thereby regain and exercise complete freedom over the whole domain of art, "modern" as well as "classic".

The radical change in policy just announced by you calls for a candid review of your past and present policies and for formulation of sound plans for the future under forward-looking direction. Hence this and the letters to follow. They have been composed in no spirit of captious criticism, rather in the hope that they may be of aid to you and your fellow trustees.

Most of these trusteeships are elective. Since yours is a public institution, housed in Central Park and supported by large funds from the City (over a half million dollars in 1948, I believe), Mayor O'Dwyer, Comptroller Joseph, Park Commissioner Moses, also Hobart Nichols, President of the National Academy, are official trustees. To all of these

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

trustees, elective and official, I submit that the Museum is confronted with the need of thorough self-analysis.

It will no longer suffice for the Museum to be chiefly a treasure house of the past. Its charter and earlier history make clear that it should also be a vital dynamic educational body. I hold that this objective, which is of paramount significance to the public, cannot adequately be achieved so long as the Museum's philosophy, as officially expressed in the 1947 agreement, guides its actions in any respect.

That agreement opens with your declaration that the "Metropolitan Museum is concerned primarily with the visual arts of the past". This has long been the Museum's purpose. I protest against that self-imposed limitation which is still in force except as to art of the United States.

Let me here say that the 1947 agreement was an understandable consequence of the Museum's long time policies. You were an inheritor of the past. Through the sponsorship, prestige and purses of the Rockefeller, Whitney and Guggenheim families and their followers, the field of "modern" art seemed to have been captured.

Largely, I believe, because of the importance and influence of the institutions thus sponsored, the "dominant trend in the art of our time", as the magazine *Life* puts it, has in recent years consisted of "distortions of reality, private nightmares, . . . human figures and objects that 'look wrong', cubes and geometrical patterns that accord with nothing recognizable in nature". A wholesome rebellion has begun against this domination. In such a movement the Metropolitan Museum can become the spearhead.

The annual meeting of your Museum is to be held this month. I am given to understand that, as a Fellow for Life of your institution, I am a member of the corporation entitled to take part therein. I hope to do so. Hence I deem it only proper that you, your fellow trustees, your staff and this great community to which you look for support, should, in advance, be acquainted with my criticisms and recommendations. These will be frankly and, I trust, fairly stated in succeeding letters.

Because yours is a public institution; because I hold that art is a yardstick of our civilization; because—I quote your eminent director's words as to the place of art in this world of ours—"it remains for our

genera
of deb
public

DEAR M

In

Metrop
the pas
the cult
in thos
instituti
of estab
art, of c
applicat
general
popular

You
Museum
contemp
cational
the outst

Thro
Michael
Munsey,
F. Grigg
Crane, Li
Huntingto
These don

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

generation to decide . . . whether we . . . shall bear the responsibility of debasing the one remaining currency of civilized man'', I am making public this, and the letters to follow.

Sincerely,

JAMES N. ROSENBERG

LETTER II

January 7, 1949

DEAR MR. REDMOND:

In protest against your 1947 agreement, which declares that the Metropolitan Museum "is concerned primarily with the visual arts of the past", I turn to your charter, granted in 1870, to the then leaders of the cultural life of our city (among them noted poets and painters who in those days were thought to be fit trustees). It states that your institution is "to be located in the City of New York, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining in said city a Museum and library of art, of encouraging and developing the study of the fine arts, and the application of arts to manufacture and practical life, of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects, and, to that end, of furnishing popular instruction."

You will look in vain for any such limit on the functions of the Museum in the field of art as you officially adopted in 1947. Modern and contemporary art were certainly not excluded from its important educational objectives. Such exclusion would not have been tolerated by the outstanding artists numbered among the incorporators.

Through magnificent donations of Catherine Lorillard Wolfe, Michael Friedsam, Benjamin Altman, J. Pierpont Morgan, Frank A. Munsey, H. G. Marquand, M. K. Jessup, Theodore M. Davis, Maitland F. Griggs, George Blumenthal, H. O. Havemeyer, Mrs. Murray W. Crane, Lizzie P. Bliss, Jules S. Bache, through the Rogers fund, the Huntington and countless other gifts, the Museum became preeminent. These donors filled your galleries with splendor. But when we turn to

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

"modern" paintings you do not own and possess a single example of the works of Seurat, Van Gogh, Matisse, Rouault, Soutine, Modigliani, De Segonzac, Friesz, Braque, Chirico, Orozco, Rivera, the new school of British painters, Kokoschka, Corinth, Chagall, Bonnard, Vlaminck, Utrillo. The only Picasso you own—the important Portrait of Gertrude Stein—came to you by her bequest and has been deposited by you with the Modern Museum—apparently for a long time to come. The works of some of these artists you purchased from the Museum of Modern Art by your 1947 agreement; but you have left them in its possession until 1957 and perhaps much longer. As for modern sculpture I suggest that you examine your position.

Meantime, have others outstripped you? The Chicago Art institute's far-seeing direction has acquired modern masterpieces which should put us to shame. What great Seurat is left for you to acquire at whatever expense, now that Chicago has "La Grande Jatte"? Is it not a cause for embarrassment to visit the Boston Museum and to see there, instead of in your Museum, Gauguin's "D'ou venons nous"? I do not forget that you have on loan the De Groat pictures. But it is of ownership that I am speaking.

Thirty or forty years ago excellent examples of most of the painters I have listed could have been purchased for a song. Having lived abroad in 1921-22, I know that a competent curator then in Paris could, with a pittance of a twenty-five hundred dollar annual purchase fund, have acquired pictures which today would have been treasures. In his lifetime Cezanne, so far as I gather, never received as much as \$200. for a picture. Will it be possible to acquire such a Cezanne as his "Bathers" at the Philadelphia Museum? In art, as elsewhere, there can be a policy of too little and too late.

As for today's fabulous collectors of modern masterpieces from overseas, will the policies set forth in the 1947 agreement encourage them to bequeath their collections to you?

Tomorrow I shall detail the treatment accorded by your Museum to modern American artists.

Sincerely,

JAMES N. ROSENBERG

DEAR MR. REDMOND
The name of
of art appreciation
Museum by gifts
gave twenty-seven
works as those
Hogarth, Claude

Mr. Hearn d
paintings given by
Homer. Mr. Hearn
What of your M
Hearn gifts of m
answer to that qu

On December
Mr. J. Pierpont
was a discrimina
letter indicates t
Hearn not only co
also arranged to
\$150,000). In a l
Vice President of
in memory of his

Both these g
the art of paintin
that the incomes
living, who are,
United States of
time of purchase,
give American p
authorities of th
paintings purcha
for, or proceeds
or paintings by
exchanges have e

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

LETTER III

January 8, 1949

DEAR MR. REDMOND:

The name of George A. Hearn deserves a high place in the history of art appreciation in our country. Prior to 1906 he had enriched your Museum by gifts of twenty-four important paintings. In that year he gave twenty-seven more. This collection of 51 paintings included such works as those of Gainsborough, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Constable, Hogarth, Claude Lorrain, Ostade, Romney, Cuyp, Poussin.

Mr. Hearn did not look only to foreign lands. Among American paintings given by him were those of Innes, Blakelock Martin, Wyant, Homer. Mr. Hearn, God bless him, was a believer in American art. What of your Museum? The story of the treatment accorded the Hearn gifts of money to your institution gives none too pleasant an answer to that question.

On December 30, 1905 Mr. Hearn addressed an historic letter to Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan. That far-seeing President of the Museum was a discriminating collector of treasures of the past. The Hearn letter indicates that he could also look forward. By its terms Mr. Hearn not only completed his gifts of masterpieces to the Museum, but also arranged to give it \$125,000 (later he increased the fund to \$150,000). In a later letter of June 14, 1911 to Mr. Robert W. de Forest, Vice President of the Museum, Mr. Hearn gave a second fund of \$100,000 in memory of his son, Arthur.

Both these gifts were expressly dedicated to "encouragement of the art of painting in this country". To that end Mr. Hearn directed that the incomes were to be "expended for paintings by persons now living, who are, or may be at the time of purchase, citizens of the United States of America or by those hereafter born who may at the time of purchase, have become Citizens thereof". Hoping evidently to give American paintings wide recognition, Mr. Hearn "empowered the authorities of the Museum . . . to exchange or sell any painting or paintings purchased with the income . . . such paintings to be exchanged for, or proceeds of paintings sold to be expended for another painting or paintings by Citizens of the United States". Whether any sales or exchanges have ever been made I do not know.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

The earlier letter continued with the following significant language: "To make the \$100,000 immediately available and to insure an income of \$5,000 for some years to come, I desire to give an additional \$25,000 so that \$5,000 could be spent for paintings during the year 1906 and from the \$20,000 remaining there could be taken sufficient to make up each year such amount as the income of the \$100,000 would fall short of \$5,000."

Mr. Hearn evidently wanted the incomes of his gifts expended. He died in 1911. Mr. Morgan died in 1913. Have Mr. Hearn's wishes met with compliance? Today the accumulated, unused incomes of these trusts amount to \$125,000—one-half the principal of the original gifts; enough to mean a long stretch of years of unused income. Have there been no living American artists while these incomes piled up in your Treasury? Why were these incomes permitted to be accumulated?

This does not complete the story. In 1943 this accumulation apparently gave concern. Dr. Taylor, your present director, was then in office. For five consecutive years the Museum annually spent \$10,000 of the income—\$50,000 in all. How was this large sum spent? Were your trained curators entrusted with selection and exhibition of the paintings to be purchased? These substantial funds were turned over to the Whitney Museum for purchase by it of contemporary American paintings for your account.

Whether this delegation of authority to another institution constituted compliance with the spirit of Mr. Hearn's wishes is now perhaps an academic question, for these gifts have stopped. I cannot forbear asking, however, whether your eminent director initiated, approved, or opposed such action. I wonder how your curators relished being thus shelved. Did such an action build or injure their morale and their prestige in the art world? Might the painters whom Mr. Hearn wished to encourage have derived wider recognition had your great institution, visited annually by some two million people, purchased and exhibited such paintings? Do you suppose that painters have preferred exhibitions at the Whitney Museum whose annual visitors number about fifty thousand? Was not this arrangement a sort of exile of living American art?

What the purchased pictures are, I do not know. I hope they take high rank. The late Juliana Force who, I believe, directed their

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

purchase, was a dynamic personality, wholeheartedly devoted to what she regarded as representative modern American art. So was the generous creator of the Whitney Museum, the late Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. Whether or not we may agree with the selections made by Mrs. Force, there can be no doubt that the Whitney Museum has rendered a conspicuous service to living American painters. It still does so, even though I am not alone in believing it has in the past few years placed undue emphasis on dated abstraction and its progeny.

If the pictures thus purchased have merit, I beg that in memory of Mrs. Whitney and Mrs. Force, in fairness to the Whitney Museum and the artists whose works that fifty thousand dollar fund acquired, and—not least of all—in justice to the public which is entitled to see them, they be exhibited in a group by your institution, if this has not been done. This might be a prompt beginning for your promised re-entry into the field of contemporary American art. I ask that, if possible, these pictures be conveniently arranged so that members of the corporation may have an opportunity to inspect them prior to the annual meeting on January 17th.

The effect of your 1947 agreement with the Museum of Modern Art, which, as I am informed, is still in force, will be my next topic.

Sincerely,

JAMES N. ROSENBERG

LETTER IV

January 9, 1949

DEAR MR. REDMOND:

Because your 1947 agreement is still in effect so far as concerns the Museum of Modern Art, and because it expresses a philosophy with which I profoundly disagree, I turn to its text. As a corollary to its declaration that your "Museum is concerned primarily with visual arts of the past both American and Foreign", Article First undertakes to state what is meant by the words "the past". It attempts to differentiate "modern" and "classic" art.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

party thereto shall be "free to control its own policy of purchases" has consistently been interpreted to permit purchases by the Metropolitan Museum of such works as it may wish to acquire. This practice, it appears, has already abandoned some of those provisions of Article Second to which I object. This, I trust, will lead, at the very least, to a change in that agreement so that the conduct of your affairs will not contradict the agreement.

Sincerely,

JAMES N. ROSENBERG

LETTER V

January 10, 1949

DEAR MR. REDMOND:

The financial results of the principles upon which your 1947 agreement was founded are of special interest. They suggest that your Museum was aware of a compelling need of ownership of "modern art". This, I suppose, must have been the reason why you agreed to pay \$191,000 to Modern Museum, mainly for a scheduled list of "moderns"; viz., Cézanne, Despiau, Kolbe, Maillol, Matisse, Picasso, Redon, Rouault, Seurat, Signac. These works you have, however, left in the Modern Museum's possession for the term of the agreement; viz., at least until 1957; perhaps longer, because the agreement recites the "expectation . . . that this agreement will be renewed".

Why this arrangement? Do you hold that the artists whose works you purchased have not even yet deserved a place in your Museum? The agreement also arranges for a loan to Modern of your one and only Picasso (the Gertrude Stein portrait) because you believed it could be "more appropriately exhibited by Modern Museum".

Maillol was born in the year when our Civil War began. Cézanne died in 1906. Redon, born in 1840, died in 1916. Seurat died in 1891. Matisse is eighty years of age. Signac was born in 1861. They and Picasso have for decades been famous artists.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

How long does the Metropolitan Museum propose to wait before giving full recognition to such acknowledged masters? How can real education in art be given if these artists are omitted? And how much longer must a now living foreign painter wait before his works cross your threshold?

What does such a policy do to the morale of your curators or the reputation of your Museum? What must collectors think of your interest in modern art when you leave the works of such masters as Cézanne, Picasso, Maillol, Redon, Matisse and Seurat in the possession of others for years?

The historic Armory show of 1913 brought our country an invigorating rebellion against academic prettiness, sentimental romanticism and photographic realism. It encouraged that bold exploration into new fields which is the essence of living art. But this happened thirty-six years ago. Though many of the offspring of the revolutionaries of that era have, in my view, either become today's reactionaries or sensation-seekers, psychopaths or academicians, the men of 1913 were undoubted leaders of challenging movements in art. If you regard their activities as destructive, have you fought them by brave exhibitions of the work of artists who refused to climb upon the bandwagon of bewilderment?

The significant contributions of the Whitney Museum and the Museum of Modern Art deserve the thanks of artists and public. I do not forget the splendid Teke, Earl, Ryder and Blakelock shows at the Whitney Museum. Nineteen years ago I so strongly felt your Museum's lack of attention to modern art that I was glad to become one of the earliest life members of the Modern Museum. Its officers, trustees, and staff have devoted themselves with great energy and devotion to its growth. Its stimulating exhibitions, and steady stream of useful informative publications set an example to any institution. It has rendered great service. It has exhibited those important moderns whom the Metropolitan Museum has for years failed to recognize. Its 1948 catalogue is an especially important volume. Its preface by Mr. John Hay Whitney, President, speaks of the "catholicity and tolerance" of the Museum of Modern Art. I grant you this has been its sincere purpose; I recognize that many of its acquisitions are outstanding; but I urge you to examine the 298 photographs of paintings in that catalogue. One third of those paintings are thirty years old or

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

LETTER VI

January 11, 1949

DEAR MR. REDMOND:

The questions I shall propound to your director, and the comments I shall make upon his published statements are, I trust, pertinent. Dr. Taylor became director of the Metropolitan Museum in 1941. Since I am aware of the powerful influence the director of an Art Museum has upon its policies and its trustees, it follows that I am alarmed for the future by the fact that it was during his tenure of office that the 1947 agreement was made. In his book, "Babel's Tower", he mentions that trustees are "suffered as highly ornamental and occasionally useful sacred cows to be milked on sight". Was it then he who planned to close the doors of your institution to "modern" art?

I am concerned also because \$125,000 of the incomes of the Hearn fund still stand unexpended. What has been his position in respect of encouraging contemporary American Art? It was during his tenure of office that fifty thousand dollars of Hearn income were turned over to Whitney Museum for purchase of such art for account of your Museum, instead of being expended and exhibited at your Museum under his direction and that of your curators and committees. Was this his idea?

I contend that your staff was entitled to be entrusted with this grave responsibility, especially in recent years when strange and meaningless art has occupied much of the stage and when balanced judgment has been particularly requisite. More important than this, I deplore the fact that the vitally significant direct personal contact with living artists which your curators ought to have had, was thwarted by the effect of the Whitney arrangement. I find it difficult to believe that the busy men who are trustees of your Museum would have approved these various actions had Dr. Taylor opposed them.

As to Dr. Taylor's art philosophy, I turn first to the October 11 issue of Life. Fifteen experts conducted a Round Table discussion in June of 1948. For three days they sat, Dr. Taylor tells us, "in an atmosphere of Kleig lights and candid cameras, borrowed from Lake Success, and pondered on the ultimate". The Round Table had before

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

it a group of pictures excellently reproduced in color in the Life issue. The participants knew they were addressing a vast audience. "Distinguished critics and connoisseurs", the Life narrator tells us, met to "clarify the strange art of today". Dr. Taylor was one of the experts whose views were intended to educate the public. His summary of the meeting is stated in the December 1948 Atlantic Monthly. "The elephants of the art world had labored and produced a mouse"; a flattering tribute to his colleagues.

Life opens with a summary declaring that the "dominant trend in the art of our time" is in distortions, nightmares, and depictions of objects "that accord with nothing recognizable in nature". But it takes pains to point out that "these 'modern' works do not, of course, constitute the whole of 20th Century Art. Many artists have remained quite unaffected by them".

There was brisk disagreement as to what Life calls this "dominant trend". Debate centered around Picasso's famous "Girl Before A Mirror" which was put forward as "key to the whole discussion". Dr. Meyer Schapiro, Columbia University Art Professor, explained this "great classic". His hearers were "spell bound". "The girl is in a state of tension which is highly sensual", he concluded. "Highly sexual" was the rejoinder of Sir Leigh Ashton, Director of the Victoria & Albert Museum of London.

To furnish contrast, Rembrandt's St. Bartholomew, (a characteristic and noble, if not one of the most important works of the Master), was shown. Rembrandt was treated "with respect". But a majority found Picasso "more interesting". This did not entirely surprise me. I recall that even "connoisseurs" sometimes find certain amorous passages in the Ulysses of Joyce "more interesting" than the Book of Job.

When it came to Dr. Taylor's turn, he declared flatly that "Girl Before A Mirror" "bored him". But then I read on. This is what followed. "If as a collector or as a museum director", he declared, "I had the opportunity of acquiring one or the other (Girl before a Mirror or the Rembrandt), on purely esthetic grounds I would prefer the Picasso".

On "esthetic grounds"? This floored me. The reasons for this pronouncement from a man who holds what is almost, if not, the most

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

authoritative post in the field of art in the entire United States, are not reported.

I am anxious to learn on what esthetic grounds Dr. Taylor puts the Picasso ahead of the Rembrandt; equally anxious to know why, since he entertains such an opinion, no single Picasso has (so far as I have been able to learn) been purchased by your Museum for exhibition by it during the eight years of his incumbency in office. Does he not want even one Picasso? Or have the trustees refused to have one? Dr. Taylor's Atlantic Article speaks of Picasso's "almost unearthly power"; describes him "as the storm center of the contemporary movement"; "at once the giant paradox and the towering genius of our day". Does Dr. Taylor approve disregard of one whom he considers such a genius by an educational institution dedicated to "advancing knowledge" of art?

Just as freedom of speech requires that we grant freedom even to the thought we hate, so too does freedom of art call for an open door even for the art we disapprove. We will not be able to strengthen youth's love or understanding of art by banning Picasso or Seurat or Matisse or Rouault.

Sincerely,

JAMES N. ROSENBERG

LETTER VII

January 12, 1949

DEAR MR. REDMOND:

At Life's Round Table, your director, Dr. Taylor, referred to an abstraction entitled "Cathedral", which he termed "very lovely". Life does not report whether he explained this statement. Kindly look at Life's colored reproduction. Would you wish to have it in your Museum? Miro's "Person Throwing a Stone at a Bird" he thought "a lot of fun". When it came to Picasso's celebrated abstraction "Ma Jolie" Dr. Taylor observed "I think Ma Jolie a very beautiful

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

picture and I like it enormously. But I haven't the foggiest idea of what it means". A "very beautiful picture"? Why so, when in his Atlantic article he insists that art must communicate some meaning? "The one and only quality denied to a work of art throughout the ages is privacy" he writes. "Unless participation is allowed the spectator, it becomes a hopeless riddle and ceases to be any work of art at all". Then why does he say that "Ma Jolie" is "a very beautiful picture"? Has he not rejected it as not being "a work of art at all"?

Round Table talk about symbolism in art reached its peak in a participant's statement that "in the privacy of symbolism there is a guarantee of validity". This seems to mean that the more meaningless a picture, the more certainly is it an authentic work of art. This Alice in Wonderland philosophy of incomprehensibility was answered by Dr. Alfred Frankfurter, editor of Art News, who neatly observed "that by giving license to every kind of private symbol, every kind of private experience . . . we are setting up a real cult of unintelligibility . . . unintelligible even to the followers of the School who practice it." At least one of Dr. Taylor's "elephants" talked good sense.

Dr. Taylor's Round Table talk was extemporé. It may have been just "a lot of fun". It may not have been reported in full. We can take it, however, that the Atlantic article expresses his considered convictions as to modern art. I submit that it is fair to say that, according to him, such art, especially of the United States, deserves only contempt. While Life emphasized that many artists remain unaffected by the cult of the occult, you will search Dr. Taylor's essay in vain to find even one good syllable for any aspect of modern art whatever.

"The modern movement is not a theory; it is a condition". This is Dr. Taylor's opening gun. Cancelling out, as if it did not exist, all such art except abstraction and its spawn, he proclaims that "the innocent layman visiting the national exhibitions may be forgiven for suspecting that the chief purpose of American art is to illustrate the Kinsey Report". To what exhibitions does he refer? This statement is either justified or it is an outrageous libel on American art and artists. Coming from the Director of your world famous institution, it can not be glossed over. At the annual meeting I shall ask Dr. Taylor for a bill of particulars.

"We can not have a double standard", says Dr. Taylor—"a gold standard reserved for the old Masters and a blocked currency or scrip

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

for a national art of the present". The art of today "announces the sterility and the intellectual vacuum of twentieth century America", he declares. He leaves no one unscathed. He issues a stern warning to the American artist. "As a citizen the time has come for him to choose whether he is for civilization or whether he is against it". To buttress his assault on modern art, Dr. Taylor leans on the historian Arnold Toynbee. "We have willfully cast out of our souls the great masters. We have been wrapped in self-complacent admiration of the spiritual vacuum we have created. The decline is not technical in origin but spiritual". Modern art is in "a state of inanition and sterility; we have forfeited our spiritual birth right". This is "the consequence of . . . spiritual breakdown in our Western civilization". Such words sound like echoes from the Kremlin.

In answer to such declarations of contempt and despair, not only as to art, but as to our entire Western civilization, I refer you to "Art of the Americas", a thrilling volume just published by The Art Foundation and distributed by Art News. Therein are reproductions of "the magnificent aesthetic heritage of the Americas and its brilliant contemporary art". There you will find a foreword by the late Frank Crowninshield who tells us of the notable service of your fellow trustee, Thomas J. Watson, toward "furthering the cause of contemporary art". I beg your trustees to examine that volume.

In 1945 a booklet by Dr. Taylor entitled "Babel's Tower" was published. I quote from it at random. "More than ever before, the American Museum will be called upon to fulfill a social function". "The Museum must become . . . the liberal arts college". "New disciples will flock to those masters who sit, not in any ivory tower with their vision fixed on a bygone day". . . . "The same liberty which we seek to derive from art must be . . . guaranteed to the creative artists of our time. It is not for us to judge too hastily . . . they have freed themselves from the pre-war introspection of an hysterical and defeated Europe and are looking for strength in the ample American landscape" . . . "We must consider our responsibilities in terms of Twentieth Century America". This was the Taylor of 1945. What has happened to the man who then seems to have believed in the American artist of our time?

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

Today he asserts that this same contemporary American artist "has been reduced to the status of a flat-chested pelican, strutting upon the intellectual wastelands and beaches, content to take whatever nourishment he can from his own too meager breast". Yes, these are his very words. You will find them in last December's Atlantic.

I ask you and your colleagues to take due note of Dr. Taylor's present views and beliefs and his manner of expressing them, and to determine whether he should be continued as director of the Metropolitan Museum.

Sincerely,

JAMES N. ROSENBERG

LETTER VIII

January 13, 1949

DEAR MR. REDMOND:

Dr. Taylor's primary interest in art is perhaps indicated by the fact that his recent history of collecting begins with Rameses and ends with Napoleon. I turn to the noble epilogue of his book. The works of art discussed by him are, he writes, "the timeless pieces of currency for which ideas, ideals and aspirations have been exchanged for thirty centuries. For this reason they have been treasured, often beyond price; they never have been static; like gold coins they have moved from one country to another as the economy or cultural stature of each people has required. It remains for our generation to decide whether we shall guarantee the ebb and flow of these spiritual values, or, whether we, the temporary custodians, shall bear the responsibility of debasing the one remaining currency of civilized man".

"Debasing the one remaining currency of civilized man". A thrilling phrase. What can we expect of this powerful custodian of those spiritual values? Will his convictions as to contemporary art and civilization help us to have that currency protected?

I grant you we live in times of chaos and confusion. All the more reason then is it for courageous men of faith and good will to strive for

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

a better tomorrow. Nor need we succumb to counsels of despair. Despite its discords, the U. N. General Assembly last December—largely through American leadership—proclaimed an International Declaration of Human Rights and unanimously outlawed the awful crime of genocide, the mass murder of racial, religious ethnical and national groups. Thus a new Magna Carta for all peoples everywhere has been written. Such acts refute Toynbee and Taylor. Art can and must help to give life to these hopes. In the past, art has been a main stream in the history of civilization. It is so today. It must and will be so tomorrow. Recent meetings of Unesco have concerned themselves with art. Steps are being taken to facilitate the exchange of exhibits. Thus an agency of the United Nations emphasizes the significance of art in the field of international relations.

We could have applauded Dr. Taylor for a temperate and needed criticism of today's abstract art, much of which has become stale academism. His Atlantic article might have been a beacon-light. The "Nude Descending The Staircase" was in 1913 an exciting and revolutionary painting. But the descent of thirty-six years has sunk much of contemporary non-representative art into a musty cellar of the past. Experimentation of 1913 has become tiresome mimicry. This, however, gives no warrant for Dr. Taylor's wholesale denunciation of all modern art and of Western civilization itself.

Sincerely,

JAMES N. ROSENBERG

LETTER IX

January 14, 1949

DEAR MR. REDMOND:

More than two million people visited your Museum last year. Three hundred thousand young people of our country are reported in Life to be art students. I have it on authority of Dr. Taylor that fifty million people visit the Art Museums of our country annually. At your Museum, youth can learn much from the masterpieces of the past. Yet some of

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

your greatest American paintings gather dust in your cellars. Down there I recently saw such pictures as one of the greatest of Ryders, splendid examples of Mary Cassatt, and Winslow Homer's tremendous "Northeaster", which I would match against any other seascape in the whole world. I suggest that, though portions of your roof require repair and thereby close some of your galleries, American art deserves a more conspicuous place on your walls than it now receives. Can not adequate space be found for a few more works by our most noted Americans? I had hoped that as one result of the Whitney Museum abandonment of the 1947 coalition plan, your lecture courses would touch on contemporary American art. Not one of the forty lectures announced for January and February 1949 does so.

Some months ago a member of the United Nations General Assembly staff, a distinguished foreigner, marvelled at your superb collection of "classic" art, but sadly remarked that Americans have all the treasure for acquisition of such treasures. Then he asked me whether there is any good United States Art. The U. N. General Assembly will meet at Lake Success next April. Verbum sap. I hope your galleries will soon begin to answer such questions. Can we not turn homeward from French tapestries, Berlin masterpieces and other importations? While I am far from championing provincialism or parochialism, I beg that all the worthy art of all ages, and lands including the Americas, receive your balanced attention.

As for us of the United States, Dr. Taylor notwithstanding, I maintain that we need not hang our heads in shame. Only one year after the Fathers wrote our Bill of Rights, Benjamin West succeeded Sir Joshua Reynolds as President of the Royal Academy of Great Britain. Young America suffered from no sense of inferiority; and let me remind you that when it comes to art we still are a young America. This the Art Foundation has well demonstrated. This country is, in the field of art, neither a colonial dependency, a docile mimic of the Rive Gauche, nor a mere copyist of abstraction and distortion. Neither is it only an industrial giant and financial octopus. We can say without boasting that its art, music and literature and architecture deservedly have high rank. Our great orchestras are not ashamed of Gershwin or Carpenter, Schuman, Bernstein, Copland, Deems Taylor, Harris. I pray that you heed their example.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

From the earliest folk art of our Colonial period (so splendidly represented in the Boston Museum) to the present, ours has, on a general survey, been and is an authentic and notable art. Your great galleries can, and I urge that they should, over a period, not of weeks, but of years, hold a series of large scale exhibitions of the art of the United States and the Americas, from the beginnings to the present time. Simultaneously you should publish a series of authoritative volumes containing that history, to be written by noted historians, scholars and critics. This would, I believe, be a gainful as well as a high adventure in the field of education. And it would give American art and your Museum a place they ought to have.

I grant you that so magnificent an exhibition as that which you presented of French tapestries, was important. But I submit that a comprehensive plan such as I have here indicated, is, in these times of ours, more important for this City, this home of the United Nations. In such wise, I submit, you can render immense service to education and culture at home. You can also demonstrate to the world that we of the United States are not merely a nation of check-books and assembly-lines, and that the Americas have a worthy art.

Why not devote several of your galleries to what might be called "Art of Our Times"? That would get rid of your impossible distinction between "modern" and "classic". It could assure a properly balanced showing of modern art, both American and foreign. Your Museum urgently needs to own and exhibit "modern" masterpieces. The Rogers fund bequeathed to you in 1901 has superbly enriched your galleries with treasures of the past. I am informed that its annual income is about \$175,000. This is dedicated to acquisition of any "rare or desirable art objects". Can not some of this income be used for acquisition of "modern" masterpieces?

A pamphlet of your Museum, given to visitors, accurately states that in the space of three generations the Metropolitan Museum "has become one of the great treasure houses of the world" . . . "Your Museum needs your support . . . The Metropolitan Museum of the future is being built today by the gifts of thousands of New Yorkers". It is not enough for your Museum of the future to be a mere treasure house. Art did not come to an end with the advent of the twentieth

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

century. Yours must be an unshackled, forward looking, educational institution not in one area only, but in the entire field of art. I hope that your leadership will achieve such results. It can do so if you will look and march forward. It is to speed you to such goals that I have written these letters.

Sincerely,

JAMES N. ROSENBERG

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

THE MUSEUM NEWS

PUBLISHED BY

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF MUSEUMS

Subscription price of five dollars a year is included in annual dues of members. Entered as second class matter, December 8, 1926, at the post office at Washington, D. C. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized December 29, 1923. Published semi-monthly September to June, inclusive.

VOL. 27 JANUARY 15, 1950 No. 14

to a list of some 12,000 artists prior to May 1, 1950.

"In the matter of prizes and awards . . . the following practice is hereby recommended: a. That the question of the growth of the Museum's collection in American art be divorced from the questions of the exhibition *per se*, and that, although the Museum would remain at liberty to purchase any picture recommended to the committee and approved by them from the exhibition, it would be under no obligation, actual or implied, to purchase from it. b. That the sum of \$8,500 be offered as prizes: a first prize of \$3,500, a second of \$2,500, a third prize of \$1,500, and a fourth prize of \$1,000.

"It is further suggested that such painting exhibitions be held every other year and that in the intervening years similarly comprehensive exhibitions of sculpture, drawings, water colors, and prints be held at the Museum."

The announcement continues, "the contemporary collections of the Metropolitan Museum are far more comprehensive than people realize. Since 1906 through the income of the Hearn Funds and from other sources there has been a steady accretion year by year. To show the public the scope and quality of this collection Mr. Hale is organizing an exhibition of *American Painters 1900-1950* which will open on June 16th and remain during the summer and early autumn. The pictures, comprising some two hundred oils and one hundred water colors, will serve as a fitting preliminary for the large jury show to follow in December. It will further remove certain misconceptions in the critical and public mind which for one reason or another have arisen in recent years and serve to guide the

committee in strengthening the collections."

Mr. Hale stated in his report to the trustees, "A large and fairly representative exhibition of the painters of our period can be arranged from our collection as it now stands. A splendid background of the so-called academic-eclectic painters active at the turn of the century may be shown by Abbey, Brush, Cox, Dewing, Duveneck, LaFarge, Thayer, and many others. American Realists such as Eakins and Homer are well represented, as well as the more romantic painters, Blakelock and Ryder. We possess good examples of the full history of American Impressionism in the works of Mary Cassatt, Child Hassam and others. We can trace Academic portraiture from 1900 to the present.

"The so-called 'Journalistic Revolution' of 1908 is well represented . . . Certain American painters, some of whom were further inspired by the Armory Show of radical European art, are unfortunately missing. The Journalistic Revolution of course culminated in the present large school of painters of the American scene, the most widely-represented group in the Museum.

"I hope very much that by means of judicious buying throughout this winter certain evident gaps in our collection may be filled and better examples may be found of artists already represented . . . I feel the collection should be broad. Certain advanced trends now missing should be represented and we should acquire certain painters who are well known in far sections of the country but little known here."

CASTLE CLINTON

Preservation of Castle Clinton in Battery Park, New York City, has been assured by an appropriation of \$165,750, carried in a recently approved Interior Department appropriation act, for rehabilitating the building and developing the Castle Clinton National Monument. Establishment of the monument was authorized by Congress in 1946, and in February of 1949 the New York State legislature passed a bill for transfer of the property to the federal government upon the condition that funds

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF MUSEUMS

HEADQUARTERS AT THE
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

President: George H. Edgell. Vice-Presidents: Margaret M. Brayton, William M. Milliken, Albert E. Parr, Hardinge Scholle. Treasurer: Luke Vincent Lockwood.

Staff. Director: Laurence Vail Coleman. Associate Director: Lauder Greenway. Editor: Theodosia Cox. Registrar: Jeannette H. Edgar. Assistant: Stella Halit.

needed for restoration be made available before July 1, 1950. Actual establishment awaits formal presentation of deed to the property by the city and acceptance by the federal government.

Castle Clinton, as Fort Clinton, was an early defense for New York Harbor and was headquarters of the U. S. Army in New York during the War of 1812. From 1855 to 1890 it was the principal immigration station for the United States, and later it was the New York City Aquarium. It had been slated for demolition in connection with the construction of the Battery-Brooklyn vehicular tunnel. In the move for its preservation, the Interior Department's announcement gives credit to the American Scenic and Historical Preservation Society, the New York Historical Society, the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and to other organizations.

The name of the University of South Dakota Museum, Vermillion, has been changed to the W. H. Over Museum, in honor of its founder.

The Honolulu School of Art is now the Art School of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, with offices and studios at the academy. The school was formerly a separate organization. Willson Y. Stamper continues as director of the school.

The Arnot Art Gallery, Elmira, N. Y., has received \$90,000 for its endowment fund. Ernfred Anderson is director.

The Detroit Institute of Arts has been given \$8,000 by the Ford Foundation for educational activities.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

THE MUSEUM NEWS

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

VOL. 27

JANUARY 15, 1950

No. 14



INTERNATIONAL FOLK ART MUSEUM JUST ESTABLISHED

The International Folk Art Museum, Santa Fe, has been established as a unit of the Museum of New Mexico. The new museum will occupy a building to be erected after plans by John Gaw Meem and Associates, on a site near the Laboratory of Anthropology. It is expected to be open in about a year.

The museum is the gift of Miss Florence Dibell Bartlett, of Chicago, who has also given an extensive collection of folk art of New Mexico and Latin America. The collection includes peasant costumes, jewelry, ceramics, wood carvings, embroideries, textiles and furniture. A projected program calls for the establishment of an ethnological study center, maintenance of studios for folk art production, and possibly the construction of outdoor exhibits showing peasant cottages of different countries.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION GETS GREENWOOD GIFT

The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, has received a large collection of arts and furnishings of colonial New England. The collection, of nearly 2,000 objects assembled over many years by Dr. and Mrs. Arthur M. Greenwood, of Marlborough, Mass., is the gift of Mrs. Greenwood in memory of her late husband. It includes examples of folk art, decorative arts, and household and farm implements dating from the early settlements to the beginning of industrialism in New England. Selections are on view in the U. S. National Museum, and the museum is planning later to install the entire collection to illustrate American customs and occupations between the 1620's and 1830's.

The Idaho Historical Society, Boise, has received a state appropriation for completion of its building, started under the Works Progress Administration. The building is expected to be open in September.

VIRGINIA ART MUSEUM TO ADD TO ITS BUILDING

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Va., is planning an addition to its building that will double the exhibition space and provide an auditorium. The new structure was planned by Leslie Cheek, Jr., director of the museum, Merrill C. Lee, Richmond architect, and the New York firm of Eggers and Higgins. The work will be financed by a \$1,000,000 state appropriation and \$120,000 pledged by individual donors.

The addition will have galleries for permanent display and for temporary exhibitions. Partitions will be movable, and the artificial lighting will be flexible. The auditorium, to seat 500, will be suitable for theatrical performances, motion pictures and television shows. It may be curtained into two sections. There will also be a library, a members' suite, offices and workshops.

OFFICERS OF NORTHEAST CONFERENCE ANNOUNCED

The Northeast Museums Conference has announced officers elected at its annual meeting in November (MN, Nov. 1 and Dec. 15, 1949). President, Robert Tyler Davis, director, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; 1st vice-president, Mrs. Mary Cooke Swartwout, director, Montclair Art Museum; 2nd vice-president, Louis C. Jones, director, New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown; secretary-treasurer, Walter K. Long, director, Cayuga Museum of History and Art, Auburn, N. Y.; and board members, H. O. McCurry, director, National Gallery of Art, Ottawa, Ellsworth Jaeger, curator of education, Buffalo Museum of Science, and Anna W. Olmsted, director, Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts.

The Mohawk-Caughnawaga Museum, Fonda, N. Y., has been opened as a museum of local archaeology and history. Exhibits are mostly Indian artifacts found in the Caughnawaga area, with some pioneer objects.

REPORT ON AMERICAN ART BY METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, has reported on a year's study and review of its role in American contemporary art, and has announced its policies for acquisition and exhibition of work by living American artists. The announcement, made by Director Francis Henry Taylor, took the form of a release to the press on December 30.

The report mentions: the appointments of Robert Beverly Hale as associate curator of American art and Roland J. McKinney as consultant; field studies of artistic activities in Western, New England and Southern states; forming of an advisory committee, composed of Elihu Root, Jr., chairman, Walter C. Baker and Sam A. Lewisohn; and holding of a series of conferences attended by a group of artists representing Artists Equity, with the conclusion that the most pressing need is "for an open competitive exhibition of a national character to be held periodically at the Metropolitan Museum."

"It is therefore proposed to hold the first national open exhibition of *American Painting of Today* in the late autumn and early winter 1950-1951. This exhibition would be formulated on the following principles: a. The exhibition would be an open competition, national in scope. Paintings would be submitted first to regional juries in different sections of the United States for preliminary judging, and for final judgment of those accepted locally by a national jury in New York. b. Local juries would consist of a representative of the Metropolitan Museum, *ex officio*, a representative of a local museum and three artist members from the region. c. The national jury shall be a jury of 7 people, 5 of whom shall be representatives of the 5 local juries, and such additional persons as may be designated by the Museum. Notices of the exhibition to open December 7, 1950, together with a prospectus of the conditions of entry will be mailed

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

January 18, 1949

MEMBER'S CHARGES DENIED BY MUSEUM

Redmond, Head of Trustees,
Defends Metropolitan Policy
and Work of Director

ERA OF EXPANSION CITED

Rosenberg 'Dares' Taylor to
Say He Stands by Opinion
About American Art

In an unusually lively session, members of the corporation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art at their annual meeting yesterday heard Roland L. Redmond, president of the board of trustees, repudiate charges made against the institution's policies and its director by James N. Rosenberg.

A retired lawyer, a painter by avocation and a life member of the museum, Mr. Rosenberg is the author of nine open letters to Mr. Redmond. In these letters he criticized various phases of the Metropolitan's policy, particularly in regard to contemporary art. He also accused the director, Francis Henry Taylor, of an attitude of "contempt and despair" toward modern art.

As Mr. Rosenberg had promised, he followed up his series, ended last Wednesday, by attending the meeting in the hope he would be answered. His letters had been sent to each of the trustees to acquaint them with his views, and theirs in reply were ready for him as they filed into the corporation meeting after a meeting of the board.

After the reports of president, directors and the treasurer of the activities and finances of the museum in 1948, Mr. Rosenberg took the floor. He demanded clarification of the museum's agreement with the Museum of Modern Art, calling upon the trustees to "examine their conscience" as to the fitness of Mr. Taylor as director.

Pact Was Three-Way

Originally a three-way pact, the agreement signed last year by the Metropolitan, the Whitney Museum and the Museum of Modern Art now affects only the Metropolitan and the Modern Museum. Designed to coordinate the activities of the three, the agreement assigned the fields of arts of the past to the Metropolitan; modern art, American and foreign, to the Modern Museum, and American art to the Whitney.

With the Whitney's cancellation of amalgamation with the Metropolitan in October and the re-entry of the Metropolitan into the field of American art, an activity that had more or less been suspended in anticipation of the coalition, Mr. Rosenberg's criticisms of the Metropolitan's interest in the subject were called academic.

The results of the agreement so far with the Modern Museum, Mr. Redmond said, justified "our hope that cooperation between the two museums will benefit the public by better service and more comprehensive exhibitions."

He pointed out that the ten-year program by which the collections of the Modern Museum might gradually be transferred to the Metropolitan as they achieve a "classic status" had resulted in the purchase of works of art of established importance and had provided the Modern Museum with resources for contemporary art.

Rigid Agreement Denied

Mr. Redmond denied that the agreement with the Modern Museum was hard and fast, and contended that although the Metropolitan was committed to consult with it on the acquisition of modern works, it was free to make final decisions. This was in answer to Mr. Rosenberg's charge that the Metropolitan had placed self-imposed limitations upon itself.

Quoting certain passages from an article by Mr. Taylor published in the December Atlantic Monthly, Mr. Rosenberg demanded to know whether a man who held the views expressed in it should be retained by the museum. He asked Mr. Redmond whether he would appoint a committee to investigate Mr. Taylor's opinions.

"Do you stand by the language you used about American art and artists?" asked Mr. Rosenberg, turning to Mr. Taylor. "I'll be glad to have your answer if you dare."

Addressing the meeting at large, Mr. Taylor replied that the phrases quoted had been taken from their context and "twisted to a single point of view. Mr. Rosenberg did not take the courtesy of discussing this with me in advance, and I don't see why he should have the courtesy of a further answer."

A further answer was supplied.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

New York
Times
Jan. 18, 1949

by Mr. Redmond when he said that the right of members of the staff to express their personal views on art matter was essential to the vitality of the institution.

"We are not disposed to impose any form of censorship by removing from office any individual who expresses opinions which are controversial or unpopular," he added.

Mr. Redmond pointed to the record of Mr. Taylor's administration, marked by a notable increase in attendance; the growth of the museum's collections and membership, and the outstanding exhibitions as the best evidence of his fitness for his post.

Some of the passages cited from Mr. Taylor's magazine piece, a philosophical treatise on the effect on art by the forces of its environment were: "the innocent layman visiting the national exhibitions may be forgiven for suspecting that the chief purpose of American art is to illustrate the Kinsey Report"; and that "the contemporary American artist has been reduced to the status of a flat-chested pelican, strutting upon the intellectual wastelands and beaches, content to take whatever nourishment he can from his own too-meager breast."

In his report, before he was taxed with holding views detrimental to a public educational institution, Mr. Taylor asserted that if purchases of European modern art had been infrequent in his administration it was because during the war, and because of it, greater opportunities had presented themselves in other fields. Mr. Rosenberg had charged that the museum had neglected this field.

Mr. Taylor said that the curatorial departments had demonstrated the ability of the staff by their acquisition of great works of art. "Pressure groups, conflicting tastes and the irresponsible accusations of persons on the outside," he said, "will not affect the judgment of the curators or their purpose."

For the third consecutive year, the museum and its branch, The Cloisters at Fort Tryon Park, recorded in 1948 more than 2,000,000 visitors. A modest operating surplus of \$23,594 was reported for the year as the "ruits of the policy of rigid economy."

Mr. Redmond told of the initiation of a comprehensive program in the field of contemporary American art, the result of the abandonment of the agreement between the Metropolitan and the Whitney and the appointment of Robert Beverly Hale as its head.

Important bequests, gifts and purchases for the year included the collection of French silver left to the museum by Mrs. Catherine D. Wentworth, the bequest of two Van Goghs by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr., the gift of Vuillard's "Still Life in the Studio" by Robert Lehman, and the purchase of Andrea del Castagno's "Saint Sebastian."

At the close of the meeting Mr. Rosenberg said that his criticisms had "only begun."

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

January 18, 1949

MEMBER'S CHARGES DENIED BY MUSEUM

Redmond, Head of Trustees,
Defends Metropolitan Policy
and Work of Director

ERA OF EXPANSION CITED

Rosenberg 'Dares' Taylor to
Say He Stands by Opinion
About American Art

In an unusually lively session, members of the corporation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art at their annual meeting yesterday heard Roland L. Redmond, president of the board of trustees, repudiate charges made against the institution's policies and its director by James N. Rosenberg.

A retired lawyer, a painter by avocation and a life member of the museum, Mr. Rosenberg is the author of nine open letters to Mr. Redmond. In these letters he criticized various phases of the Metropolitan's policy, particularly in regard to contemporary art. He also accused the director, Francis Henry Taylor, of an attitude of "contempt and despair" toward modern art.

As Mr. Rosenberg had promised, he followed up his series, ended last Wednesday, by attending the meeting in the hope he would be answered. His letters had been sent to each of the trustees to acquaint them with his views, and theirs in reply were ready for him as they filed into the corporation meeting after a meeting of the board.

After the reports of president, directors and the treasurer of the activities and finances of the museum in 1948, Mr. Rosenberg took the floor. He demanded clarification of the museum's agreement with the Museum of Modern Art, calling upon the trustees to "examine their conscience" as to the fitness of Mr. Taylor as director.

Pact Was Three-Way

Originally a three-way pact, the agreement signed last year by the Metropolitan, the Whitney Museum and the Museum of Modern Art now affects only the Metropolitan and the Modern Museum. Designed to coordinate the activities of the three, the agreement assigned the fields of arts of the past to the Metropolitan; modern art, American and foreign, to the Modern Museum, and American art to the Whitney.

With the Whitney's cancellation of amalgamation with the Metropolitan in October and the re-entry of the Metropolitan into the field of American art, an activity that had more or less been suspended in anticipation of the coalition, Mr. Rosenberg's criticisms of the Metropolitan's interest in the subject were called 'academic.'

The results of the agreement so far with the Modern Museum, Mr. Redmond said, justified "our hope that cooperation between the two museums will benefit the public by better service and more comprehensive exhibitions."

He pointed out that the ten-year program by which the collections of the Modern Museum might gradually be transferred to the Metropolitan as they achieve a "classic status" had resulted in the purchase of works of art of established importance and had provided the Modern Museum with resources for contemporary art.

Rigid Agreement Denied

Mr. Redmond denied that the agreement with the Modern Museum was hard and fast, and contended that although the Metropolitan was committed to consult with it on the acquisition of modern works, it was free to make final decisions. This was in answer to Mr. Rosenberg's charge that the Metropolitan had placed self-imposed limitations upon itself.

Quoting certain passages from an article by Mr. Taylor published in the December Atlantic Monthly, Mr. Rosenberg demanded to know whether a man who held the views expressed in it should be retained by the museum. He asked Mr. Redmond whether he would appoint a committee to investigate Mr. Taylor's opinions.

"Do you stand by the language you used about American art and artists?" asked Mr. Rosenberg, turning to Mr. Taylor. "I'll be glad to have your answer if you dare."

Addressing the meeting at large, Mr. Taylor replied that the phrases quoted had been taken from their context and "twisted to a single point of view. Mr. Rosenberg did not take the courtesy of discussing this with me in advance, and I don't see why he should have the courtesy of a further answer."

A further answer was supplied.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	AHB	II.C.65

New York
Times

Jan. 18, 1949

by Mr. Redmond when he said that the right of members of the staff to express their personal views on art matter was essential to the vitality of the institution.

"We are not disposed to impose any form of censorship by removing from office any individual who expresses opinions which are controversial or unpopular," he added.

Mr. Redmond pointed to the record of Mr. Taylor's administration, marked by a notable increase in attendance; the growth of the museum's collections and membership, and the outstanding exhibitions as the best evidence of his fitness for his post.

Some of the passages cited from Mr. Taylor's magazine piece, a philosophical treatise on the effect on art by the forces of its environment were: "the innocent layman visiting the national exhibitions may be forgiven for suspecting that the chief purpose of American art is to illustrate the Kinsey Report"; and that "the contemporary American artist has been reduced to the status of a flat-chested pelican, strutting upon the intellectual wastelands and beaches, content to take whatever nourishment he can from his own too-meager breast."

In his report, before he was taxed with holding views detrimental to a public educational institution, Mr. Taylor asserted that if purchases of European modern art had been infrequent in his administration it was because during the war, and because of it, greater opportunities had presented themselves in other fields. Mr. Rosenberg had charged that the museum had neglected this field.

Mr. Taylor said that the curatorial departments had demonstrated the ability of the staff by their acquisition of great works of art. "Pressure groups, conflicting tastes and the irresponsible accusations of persons on the outside," he said, "will not affect the judgment of the curators or their purpose."

For the third consecutive year, the museum and its branch, The Cloisters' at Fort Tryon Park, recorded in 1948 more than 2,000,000 visitors. A modest operating surplus of \$23,584 was reported for the year as the "fruits of the policy of rigid economy."

Mr. Redmond told of the initiation of a comprehensive program in the field of contemporary American art, the result of the abandonment of the agreement between the Metropolitan and the Whitney and the appointment of Robert Beverly Hale as its head.

Important bequests, gifts and purchases for the year included the collection of French silver left to the museum by Mrs. Catherine D. Wentworth, the bequest of two Van Goghs by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr., the gift of Vuillard's "Still Life in the Studio" by Robert Lehman, and the purchase of Andrea del Castagno's "Saint Sebastian."

At the close of the meeting Mr. Rosenberg said that his criticisms had "only begun."