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Modern Art

Brooklyn

5/6/32

The Museum of Modern Art has just opened to the public its new galleries at number 11 West 53rd Street. This event marks the beginning of a new period in the Museum's history and makes possible a greater service to modern art and the American public. It is a pleasure and privilege to say a few words about the Museum's past and future and then to introduce Mr. William Sloane Coffin, President of the Metropolitan Museum *of Art.*

The Museum of Modern Art is now almost three years old. For many years those interested in modern art had wanted a public institution which would give adequate presentation ~~to~~ modern painting, sculpture, architecture and graphic arts. The question, "Should New York have a museum of modern art?" had been positively answered by the example of other great cities. Everyone is familiar with the Louvre Museum in Paris and the National Gallery and British Museum in London. These ^{historical} great museums display the art of the past, of Egypt and Greece and Rome, the Middle Ages, and the ~~great~~ ^{masters} paintings of later periods by such ~~men~~ as Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Rubens, and Rembrandt. But the work of modern artists is shown in separate museums. The Luxembourg in Paris is almost as famous as the Louvre and everyone who knows the National Gallery in London also knows the Tate Gallery for modern art. In addition to London and Paris most other great cities throughout the world have museums devoted exclusively to modern art, among them Berlin, Munich, Amsterdam, Dresden, Brussels, Vienna, Copenhagen, Moscow, Rome, Prague, and Madrid.

^{were among the} ~~These facts~~ ^{which} convinced a group of art collectors and patrons that New York should have a museum of modern art. They decided to try an experiment which might answer a second question, "Does New York and the country at large ^{really} want such a museum?" They proceeded to organize ^{experimental} an institution ~~which they~~ called The ~~Museum of Modern Art~~ but which was really a gallery ^{changing} for ~~temporary~~ exhibitions. In a Fifth Avenue skyscraper 15 temporary exhibitions have been held including painting, sculpture and architecture by contemporary artists together with a few exhibitions of work by the great painters of the 19th century who are now looked upon as ancestors of the modern movement. Exhibits were borrowed from collections in over 75 cities in America and Europe, including twenty-five American museums and a dozen European. ^{It} During the past three seasons almost 500,000 people have attended these exhibitions. The Trustees of the Museum have taken this astonishing popular response as well as the enthusiasm of art critics and other authorities as ^{an answer to their questions} ~~evidence that~~ New York really wants a museum of modern art.

We are now convinced that

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The recently opened building of the Museum at 11 West 53rd Street is the result of ^{Today if you ~~visit~~ ^{visit} the new galleries} this public interest in the Museum's previous exhibitions. If you visit the Museum ^{at 11 W 53rd} today you will find two ^{kinds of} exhibitions: the first is a temporary exhibition of mural paintings and ^{mural-} photographs by American artists; the second is an exhibition of a more permanent character, the collection bequeathed with certain conditions to the Museum by the late Miss L. P. Bliss ^{together with} the pictures and sculpture which have been ^{outright} given to the Museum. This permanent collection includes both work by living men and by such painters as Cézanne and Gauguin who died thirty years ago but whose work is still intimately connected with contemporary art. On the top floors of the Museum, which are not yet open to the public, there will be a library and collections of lantern slides and photographs for educational purposes, not only for the use of the Museum but for other institutions as well.

At the present time the Museum's activities outside its own building are just beginning. If you should visit Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn or Theodore Roosevelt High School in the Bronx, you would find exhibitions of modern pictures sent out by the Museum. If you should go through the Museum at Hartford, Connecticut, you would find the exhibition of Modern Architecture organized by the Museum of Modern Art which is to ^{be} travel over the country to Cleveland, Buffalo, Chicago, Worcester, Milwaukee, Rochester, Cincinnati, Toledo, Boston and as far west as Los Angeles. What the Museum is doing today we hope to continue and to expand. We shall continue both large and small loan exhibitions in the Museum. We shall send out to other museums and to clubs, schools and colleges carefully prepared exhibitions. We shall continue to publish catalog^{ues}. We hope to make available to the public our collections of photographs and books. We hope also to increase and improve our permanent collection. The permanent collection is, of course, a special problem for ^{that which} ~~it~~ is modern today will not be modern in 1952, or ¹⁹82. Our permanent collection will, therefore, be continually changing. As pictures grow old and no longer seem a logical part of the Museum's collection the best of them will go to other institutions. The best paintings of the Luxembourg eventually go into the Louvre and the best pictures in the Tate Gallery in ^LLondon are eventually hung in the National Gallery. In this way the Museum of Modern Art ^{would} ~~might~~ be the source from which the collections of other museums ^{might} ~~may~~ be drawn.

We particularly wish to establish such a relation with the Metropolitan Museum. No other institution includes so wide a public as the Metropolitan and to it should go ultimate-

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ly the finest works of the foremost modern artists. Already, active coöperation between the two museums has been established. The Metropolitan Museum has lent paintings by Daumier and Winslow Homer to our exhibitions, and this summer the Museum of Modern Art will lend a Cézanne "Still Life" from the Bliss Collection to a special exhibition at the Metropolitan. We do not, however, wish to become merely the feeder to other museums. To live, we need the bone and sinew of a permanent collection which has strength and vigor, which looks toward the future but ~~retains the support of the recent past.~~ *which stands upon the finest work of the recent past.*

The Museum was founded only a few weeks before the financial crisis of 1929. During the present depression it is impossible to seek for an adequate endowment fund for the Museum. Financially we have had, therefore, to depend upon the generosity of a comparatively small group of people supplemented by a growing list of annual members subscribing small amounts. The Museum needs these annual subscribers not merely because of their financial support but because membership is concrete evidence of interest. Upon a larger national membership depends the realization of our plans.

The value of the Museum to New York and to the country at large has been most generously acknowledged. The Museum's international value is attested by these three interesting messages: ~~From~~ Monsieur Henri Verne, director of the National Museums of France, writes, "In that mutual understanding and appreciation which are achieved with such difficulty by modern democracies mutual knowledge and mutual respect are essential. ^{The intelligent appre-} ciation of the art of each can contribute to this spirit. / Art teaches us not to love, through false pride and ignorance, exclusively that which resembles us. It teaches us rather to love, by a great effort of intelligence and sensibility, that which is different from us." From Germany, Doctor Gustav Pauli, director of the Hamburg Museum, writes, "You have to fulfill a very important mission as an international means of the highest cultural relationships." Art seems to us the best and finest bridge leading toward an understanding among civilized nations." And, lastly, a message from President Hoover which I have the honor to read publicly for the first time. President Hoover writes, "The establishment of the Museum of Modern Art opens wide opportunities for appreciation by the public of the trends of the times in the fine arts and also for friendly emulation among contemporary artists of all countries."

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5/7/32

*Barricade
articles*

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