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	MSB	III.F.41

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK

11 WEST 53rd STREET
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
STEPHEN C. CLARK
149 Broadway
New York 6, N. Y.

October 15, 1943

Dear Alfred:

For some time past a number of our more active Trustees have been greatly concerned about your position in the Museum. Their concern has arisen from the fact that so much of your time has been spent on administrative routine and so little on the kind of work you are particularly qualified to do.

Mrs. Rockefeller and I have talked to you frequently about this matter. I find that as far back as November 1940 we were disturbed over your neglect of critical writing and over your failure to make any progress with the History of Modern Art. You gave as a reason the pressure of administrative duties; particularly with reference to the organizing and directing of the exhibitions of the Museum. As a result of our discussions at that time, Monroe Wheeler was appointed Director of Exhibitions.

The appointment of Monroe Wheeler as Director of Exhibitions relieved you of much of the work you had been doing. But nothing constructive happened so far as your own productivity was concerned. You still continued to be involved in the minutiae of museum administration. You did little or nothing on the History of Modern Art. In April 1942 you declined to undertake the Mary Flexner lectures at Bryn Mawr on the ground that you were too busy with the affairs of the Museum; although the delivery of these lectures would have redounded greatly to the credit both of yourself and of the Museum.

Finally, on December 15th, of last year, I had a long talk with you at the University Club. At that time I told you frankly that unless you resumed your literary activities your usefulness to the Museum would be ended. You replied that you were eager to do so but were still too busy with administrative duties. I suggested the appointment of Mr. Soby as Assistant Director of the Museum so that you would be free from interruptions and could be away from your office the greater part of the time. You were enthusiastic about this suggestion and declared that it would give you a new lease on life. Indeed, you said when I left you that you felt as if you were walking on air.

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Mr. Soby was duly appointed Assistant Director of the Museum, at a salary of $7,500. a year. He has been hardworking, painstaking and able and has relieved you of practically all of the routine duties of your position. But, again, nothing constructive happened so far as you were concerned. Instead of devoting your energies to writing you spent a large part of your time checking and rechecking with meticulous care the work of other people or engaged in endless discussions of matters of minor importance. The amount of time you are able to devote to unimportant matters and to philosophical discussions in the course of a presumably busy day has been a constant source of wonderment to me.

Considering all that has been done to relieve you of duties and distractions, your literary output during the past few years has been very disappointing - consisting for the most part of a few short introductions to catalogues and to annual reports. During the period that has intervened since Mr. Soby's appointment your only original literary contribution has been "What is Modern Painting" - a work of 38 pages, which engaged your attention for nearly five months. So far as I can ascertain, little or nothing has yet been done on the History of Modern Art, although that work was projected more than three years ago.

I am sure that in your own mind there are plenty of reasons, which appear to you valid, to explain this lack of productivity on your part. But whatever those reasons may be, the fact remains that after several years of urging on the part of Mrs. Rockefeller and myself, it has been impossible to get you to realize where your usefulness to the Museum lies. In these difficult times the relatively unimportant work you are doing does not justify a salary of $12,000. a year.

Because of that fact, we have regretfully reached the conclusion that in the best interests of the Museum you should retire from the office of Director and assume the position of Advisory Director, at a salary of $6,000. a year. As Advisory Director you would not have any administrative or executive duties or the obligation to maintain an office in the Museum. We would, however, expect to have the benefit of your knowledge and advice as a Trustee and as a member of various committees. We would hope, also, that you would produce various works of art history and criticism which would be published under the sponsorship of the Museum. This change will be effective November 1, 1943, but in order to give you time to readjust yourself to this new situation, we shall be glad to continue your present salary until May 1, 1944.

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Under this arrangement you will be entirely free to supplement your salary from the Museum by writing and by delivering courses of lectures, such as those offered at Bryn Mawr. Also, we would be glad to let you have any profits derived from the sale of the History of Modern Art, or of any other of your works that may appear as Museum publications. It would seem, therefore, that if you really use your literary talents to their full extent you should not suffer any loss of income by reason of this change.

It may interest you to know that after your retirement we intend to abolish the position of Director of the Museum. We shall appoint a Director of Painting and Sculpture to take over part of your present duties and we shall rely upon a small and efficient Executive Committee to coordinate the various departments and maintain the cultural standards of the Museum.

May I say, in conclusion, how greatly we regret the necessity for taking this step. All of us are mindful of the great services you have rendered to the Museum and all of us have the friendliest and kindliest feelings toward you. When the first shock of this decision wears away you may, perhaps, realize that in taking this step we are acting in your own real interest. If you go on worrying over petty details of museum management and continue to spend most of your time editing and revising the work of other people you will soon lose the capacity to do any original work of your own. You have great talents and a great reputation in the world of art, but for several years past you have done little to justify that reputation. You will now have the opportunity and the incentive to devote your undivided attention to the kind of work that will be of real value to yourself and to the Museum. Our best wishes for your happiness and success will always be with you.

Very sincerely yours,

Stephen C. Clark

Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
49 East 96th Street
New York 28, N. Y.

P.S. This letter has been written with the approval of a group of our more active and influential Trustees, but without the knowledge of any member of the staff.

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Dear Mr. Clark,

This is my answer to your letter of October 15th.

Although I believe that you acted with entire good ~~faith~~ willand in the best interests of the Museum as you saw them, your letter is, in effect, both ~~and~~ an indictment and a sentence which you prepared, showed to a number of Trustees, and then executed without my having a chance to make any expl anation . I believe that I owe you and the Trustees such an explanation which , I think, may have a certain value in clarifying some of the Museum's fundamental problems. Because my explanation is rather long I should like to summarize it here at the beginning.

In your letter you overlook my services as Director of the Museum and Curator of Painting and Sculpture and insist: ~~that~~

that my usefulness is and should be that of an historian or critic (except for limited advisory services). ~~Therefore~~ In order to give me time to write you appointed a Director of Exhibitions in 1941, and an Assistant Director in 1943. But, you charge, I have failed to "produce", continuing instead to be involved in "the minutiae of Museum administration". More specifically I failed to give the Mary Flexner lectures at Bryn Mawr (scheduled for the spring of 1943) and have made insufficent progress in writing a history of modern art. Therefore you required me to resign my position as Director and take the title of Advisory Director at half my previous salary, ~~the other half to be recovered through royalties and lecture fees.~~

b My explanation may be summarized as follows:

much as I should like to have done more completely what you and Mrs' Rockefeller had in mind, and greatly as this would have been to my personal advantage, I ~~c~~ould not do ~~s~~ because of my respo~~n~~sibilities and the circumstances which have affected the Museum, especially during the past three years.

~~As your letter is retrospective I should like to answer it point by point and then make a brief analy~~

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As your letter is retrospective I should like to answer it point by point and then make a brief analysis of what my functions in the Museum have been. (pages 10 ff.)

You write that "as far back as November 1940" you and Mrs. Rockefeller were disturbed over my "neglect" of critical writing and my "failure" to make any progress in the History of Modern Art.

During the twelve months previous to November 1940 I had, following the Art in Our Time show, ~~done~~ worked on the Picasso and Italian Masters exhibition, editing and writing elaborate critical catalogs for both. I had twice hung large parts of the Museum Collection; supervised the Mexican show installation, doing the modern section with an emergency bulletin myself; worked all summer with the exception of two weeks on "Exhibition X"; installed the Portinari show and edited the catalog; prepared a badly needed 28 page bulletin on "American Art in the Museum".

In December I was New York Chairman of "Art Week" and then worked on our Annual Report. I do not mention here my other duties as ~~Director~~ Director and Curator of Painting.

~~To my best recollection~~ So far as I can recall the "History of Modern Art" was both a new and a tentative idea in November 1940. In any case the above paragraph explains my initial "failure".

In January 1941 Monroe Wheeler was appointed Director of Exhibitions so that I "would have more time to devote to the Museum's collections, general research and the proposed publication of a book on the history of modern art" (Trustees' minutes, January 9, 1941) or, in President Whitney's words, "devote more time to research and to developing the Museum's Collection" (Museum Bulletin, Vol. VIII, no.3, Feb-Mar 1941, p.11)

The Museum collection ~~took most~~ used up much of my time during the following months, planning with the curators permanent departmental exhibition spaces (postponed because of war exhibitions) and working with the Advisory Committee on their analysis of the Collections. I also gave more time to curatorial duties in painting and sculpture. These I have outlined in appendix 2 together with my services as director.

The rescue of important refugee artists also took much time which, perhaps wrongly, I assumed was worth

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~~giving~~ as did work for American artists, particularly in connection with the W.P.A. Art Project.

Your letter continues: "In April 1942 you declined to undertake the Mary Flexner lectures at Bryn Mawr on the ground that you were too busy with the affairs of the Museum."

Let me review what happened, when and why:

In February 1942, encouraged by you, I accepted the Bryn Mawr invitation, though with some misgivings caused by the War . During the spring the War went from bad to worse. The Germans were ~~approaching~~ in Egypt, the Japanese in Australia and Alaska. threatening

A few months before in the annual report for 1940-41 I had stated the Museum's war policy with the full approval of yourself and the Trustees:" We must do what we can, as much as we can for defense. At the same time we must maintain our normal program...."

Everyone in the Museum wanted to work for the War. As time passed several important members of our curatorial staff went into the army; other staff members gave up normal museum work to attend to special government contracts and services. In May 1942 we faced the very serious problem of cutting our budget by over 100.000 dollars.

Twentyone members of the staff were let go including my assistant. The remaining members of the staff were informed that they would have "more work to do individually" and that department heads would have to do their own work without the help of discharged assistants.

That we should reform our lines and batten down our hatches in this drastic manner made perfect sense to me. But in the face of this emrgency the Bryn Mawr lectures began to seem less urgent. I consulted the Bryn Mawr authorities; they asked me to postpone my decision until fall. Extremely reluctant to give up the lectures I agreed to this.

In July and August because ~~our~~ Latin American relations seemed ~~one of~~ the most direct way in which I could contribute to the war effort I went to Mexico and Cuba to establish or confirm friendly relations and make purchases under a plan which, two years before, I had proposed to Nelson Rockefeller. You approved this trip and when I returned you were enthusiastic about the results saying that you believed I should go on similar expeditions

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every year.

Latin America continued to take a great deal of time throughout the following months for reasons I give ~~in appendix C~~ on pages 6, 16-17.)

I do not think you ever understood the amount of time the Bryn Mawr lectures would have taken. You once ~~suggested~~ remarked I might write them up at night. Actually Bryn Mawr suggested that, starting from scratch, a total of six months work might be expected.

After careful thought it seemed to me that all things considered it was my duty to give up the Bryn Mawr lectures so that I could give all my time to the Museum. I had - I hope you remember this - talked with you about my dilemma. You expressed regret in the friendliest manner but made no specific recommendation nor did you offer to relieve me of responsibility or musam work.

Actually during that very period, you asked me to work on a bulletin and exhibition about the Museum and the War which, of course, I was very glad to do.

~~I quote from my letter of November 4, 1942 to President McBride of Bryn Mawr resigning the lectureship:~~

I quote from my letter of November 4, 1942 to President McBride of Bryn Mawr resigning the lectureship:

"Our Museum is now working without heads of three of our five curatorial departments. We have also lost many subordinates, ~~including my assistant~~. We are, however, trying to maintain our normal program and at the same time carry on a good deal of special work for the Government, so that altogether I shall have my hands full.

This has been a very difficult decision and perhaps I am mistaken, but I feel that my first obligation is to the Museum, especially as it is so deeply involved in war activity. The Mary Flexner lectus would require not only time, but peace of mind, neither of which during the next few months I feel I have the right to expect."

I sent you a copy of the letter and wrote you ~~as follows:~~

~~After a good deal of wrestling, I finally decided to ask the Bryn Mawr President to excuse me from my engagement to give the Mary Flexner lectures next February.~~

"As I told you, I had already informed Bryn Mawr last June that complications of work here in the Museum might

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prevent my being able to go ahead. That was at the time our staff was cut down and I lost my assistant.

"I have given my reasons in my letter to President McBride and although I took this step with the greatest hesitation and reluctance, I feel that it was the right decision. While I myself don't contribute in any very direct way to the Museum's war work, I can take over the work of some others and help out as I did in the War Bulletin and the Museum at War exhibition. The trip to Latin America cut out a good deal of time during the summer that I could have spent on the lectures but the work .... on the Latin American front really seems to me more relevant than giving the lectures.

A few weeks later you received a letter from Prof. Sachs (written entirely without my knowledge) expressing his regret about Bryn Mawr, and on December 15th you most generously proposed Mr. Soby as Assistant Director to relieve me of routine duties. Unfortunately it was then too late to reopen the Bryn Mawr engagement. Had mR. Soby been appointed two months before or had it been possible to keep my assistant, discharged the previous June, I would certainly have done the Bryn Mawr lectures. We then agreed that I should give all possible time to writing the history.

On January 11th, 1943, Mr. Soby was appointed Assistant Director and early in February after his first therapy show opened, he undertook his new duties. However he retained two previous responsibilities which ~~have~~ continued ~~ever since~~ to take much of his time. These were the Department of Photography, of which he is Trustee Chairman, and the Armed Services Program which involved him in exhibitions, bulletins, interviews and conferences concerning soldier art, therapy and psychiatry and even the Bali show. And, from June to October, most of the balance of his time ~~has been~~ was given to writing the essay for the Romantic Painting in America catalog.

~~As you say Mr. Soby relived me most efficiently of almost all my routine work but he was not able for~~

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I must assure you that in December when we talked ~~togethrxxsoxenthusiastixallyxaboutxMrxxSoby~~ togethr so enthusiastically about Mr. Soby's appointment I honestly did not foresee that my continuing obligations as director and curator would conflict with my plans for writing.

As you say Mr. Soby relieved me most efficiently of almost all my routine work but he was not able for lack of time or experience or knowledge to do certain work which, therefore, I still felt obliged to do.

Take for instance the Latin American ~~show~~ catalog and exhibition: In December it was decided for want of money to have no catalog but in January at the last moment the Trustees (quite wisely) changed their minds..

Unfortunately, at that late date, Mr. Kirstein ~~he~~ who had collected the South American works was about to go into the Army. Miss Miller who would ordinarily have supervised the cataloguing had the schedule been arranged in time was deeply involved in an American painting show. Mr. Soby knew nothing about Latin American art and was working into his new job. Mr. Wheeler's doctor had ordered him away for a badly needed vacation. Under the circumstances there was no one else to see the job through.

Furthermore I felt that the catalog had to be done just as well as possible. The Museum owed ~~its~~ this to Nelson Rockefeller who had put up the money for buying the pictures. A slipshod, below standard job would not have escaped notice in Latin America.

Also the catalog concerned a part of the Museum Collection which involved me directly both as director and curator of painting. I had personal obligations too, since I had originally suggested buying the pictures.

So, with Mr Kirstein I planned the book and while he wrote his text I laid out the illustrations, directed research and supervised the catalog with an emergency crew made up of my secretary, the registrar's office and Mr. Wheeler's assistant. Then I edited Mr. Kirstein's text which was brilliant but - as he would be the first to admit - hasty and inexact. And finally I wrote the preface, in itself a diplomatic problem.

~~At the end of February I wrote you that the catalog was done and that I was free at last to start work~~

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At the end of February I wrote you that the catalog was done and that I was free at last to ork on the history. I had not expected any credit or any thanks for the Latin American work, ~~though~~ I ~~received both from Mr. Kirstein.~~ At the same time I was not prepared for the talk I had with you shortly afterwards in which you told me angrily that I had been wasting my time and that my usefulness to the Museum would be ended if I did nd devote myself to my own writing. You would consider neither the professional standards involved nor the practical problem of the Latin American book which had been made doibly difficult by the last minute decision of the Executive Committee.

In March and April I worked on the history, taking a couple of days off to hang the Latin American show.

On April 16 you wrote asking for a report of progress. I answered at length explaining what I was doing and mentioning that Mr. Wheeler and Mr. d'Amico both strongly recommended a brief popular introduction to modern painting as a more urgent need than the more extended history.

You approved and at the end of April I agreed to write the text of a 32 page booklet before the end of May. I did this although it was by far the most difficult writing I had ever attempted.

To insure the ~~success~~ effectiveness of this booklet "What is Modern Painting?" it was necessary to submit the text to a great variety of readers, particularly teachers and students, during the following weeks of June. Altogether several dozen people read it and rendered really valuable criticisms, ~~which I studied and incorporated.~~ I added a concluding chapter and, at the request of Mr. d'Amico, a reading list. Then thebook

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had to be laid out for the printer - each page composed so that the text would fit the pictures - and then carefully proof-read.

This did not, as you suggest, take five months, though I did give some time to it during the summer period and again in September.

I also gave time in June to planning the American Romantic & Painting show which I had proposed and which had become an urgent problem because it had been advanced from early in 1944 to the present November giving neither Miss Miller adequate time to properly assemble the show and catalog nor Mr. Soby time to write the introduction.

I had hoped to be free again during the rest of the summer for reading and study but even in Vermont I was pursued by Museum problems made more acute by Mr. Abbott's illness and Mr. Soby's necessary absorption in his "Romantic" book.

For example:

1) An important and costly architecture show and book had been scheduled and the personnel hired but neither the show nor the book had been financed. This involved considerable figuring and correspondence with Mr. Goodwin, Miss Ulrich and Mrs. Mock during August.

2) Miss Courter had scheduled a large show of paintings for circulation under Mr. Abbott's new but not yet organized plan of expansion. But because of financial confusions she could not hire a label writer until the last moment. Miss Miller was in New England scouting for the Romantic show. Miss Rindge had not yet taken office. Mr. Wheeler was on vacation. The labels, written hastily in 2 days were submitted to Mr. Soby who was desperately busy with a report on therapy and could give them only passing attention. Miss Courter then sent them to me for approval at the end of August. They were so far below standard I took three days to put them in shape, re-writing most of them.

I was responsible for the qulity of these labels specifically as Curator of Painting (that is the Museum's expert in the field of the exhibition); generally, as Director. I could not delegate this responsibility for the reasons given above .

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3) The Calder catalog:

Fearing editorial difficulties Mr. Wheelerhad tried to persuade Mr. Calder to accept some other critic than Mr. Sweeney but Calder was adamant. Result: at the request of both Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Sweeney I edited the text taking 4 or 5 days in early September to straighten out Mr. Sweeney's valuable but gnarled and repetitious essay. I could not refuse : first because Mr? Sweeney wild not have accepted anyone elses revisions; second: we could not have published the text as it stood. (For the value of such editing see appendix.x)

4) Mr. Soby's article for the Romantic Painting in Americ a catalog:

Mr. Soby undertook this difficult job at my request but with strong misgivings because he was unfamiliar with the ma terial and had very little time for research. For these reasons I felt obliged to help him when he asked me to go over his text. I made only a few suggestions in the 19th century se ction but in the unexplored 20th century section I worked out with him a radical revision. Work on this catalog took se veral days in June, August and September.

Returning to the Museum early in September in the midst of these emergency editorial jobs I began to feel that the dilemma of my position had to be faced and solved with your help. For at the end of May we had agreed informally that I should aim to finish the history in a year. Already three months had passed in a series of interruptions and more lay just ahead.

On September 3 I wrote to ask you for a chance to discuss this problem with you, ~~talk to you.~~ You did not reply.

I wrote you again, on September 13th: "It would relieve my mind a great deal if we could talk over the Museum some place quietly..." You replied but set no time and although you were frequently in the Museum you gave me no opportunity to talk with you.

I wanted to explain to you that I feared I could not meet my responsibilities as Director of the Museum and Curator of Painting and at the same time do the writing which you wanted me to do until the Museum's administrative staff had caught up with its promotion program and the curatorial staff with its schedule and lack of experience .

Nevertheless on Friday October 15 I had finally cleared my desk (as Mr. Soby and my secretary will

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cleared my desk(as Mr. Soby and my secretary will testify) for a long pull at the book.

On October 16th I received your letter dismissing me.

In my reply I agreed to resign and accepted the position of Advisory Director. I was glad to be relieved of the Directorship which, without your support or understanding had become a thoroughly thankless, indeed an impossible, position. I was however very much upset by the manner and terms of my dismissal and by the fact that, while you condemned me for not having written a book, you recognized no value at all in the work I had felt obliged to do instead.

It is the character and value and difficulties of this work that I now want to analyze; and although your letter already discounts what I am about to write so far as my own case is concerned I think that it may still be of some use to you in understanding the present and planning the future of the Museum.

During the past three years, the period covered by your letter, my work may be considered under the following headings

1. Director
2. Editor
3. Writer
4. Curator of Paintings etc.
5. Latin American Art.

I. Director.

As Director I have had general responsibility to the Trustees and in the eyes of the public for the character and quality of the artistic, educational and scholarly work of the Museum. In theory most of these responsibilities were delegated to:

a) the heads of the curatorial departments
b) the Director of Exhibitions and Publications (since Jan. 1941)
c) the Assistant Director (since Jan 1943)

a) Heads of curatorial departments. In theory these are experts whose work should need only the most general coordina-

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tion, supervision and support.

In practice the curatorial departments with the exception of the Film Library have required continual behind-the-scenes attention because the heads have been newly appointed, inexperienced, part-time, or provisional - conditions caused in part by the War.

The following table shows that during the past three years new heads have been appointed three times to each of four curatorial departments (I omit the Film Library, which is stable and practically autonomous, and my own department).

	ARCHITECTURE	INDUSTRIAL DESIGN	PHOtoGRAPHY	DANCE ARCHIVES
1940	Mr. McAndrew appointed 1938	New department formed Mr. Noyes		(New sub-department) Mr. Magriel
1941	(discharged) Miss Henrich		(New dept.) Mr. Newhall	
1942	(resigns) Miss Carsons	(joins Army) Miss Carsons	(joins Army) Mrs. Newhall	(joins Army) Mr. Edison
1943	(takes war job) Mrs. Mock	(takes war job) Miss Tredick	Mr. Morgan	(discharged Mr. Amberg

Not only have the curatorial heads changed but the curatorial committee chairmen too - and also because of the War: Mr. Harrison and Mr. Kaufmann, chairmen in sequence of the Industrial Design depart-

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department; Mr. McAlpin , Chairman of Photography, Mr. Kirstein of the Dance Archives. All the above chairmen were actively interested in their departments so that their loss was serious.

These 17 changes in personnel have naturally disrupted the work of these departments . As a result, during the past three years I have had not only to assist at the birth of three of the four departments but to help reorganize them and guide new personnel over and ~~over~~ over again. Of course Mr. Goodwin (Architecture), Mr. Soby (Photography), Miss Hawkins (Dance Archives) have taken much of the responsibility but I have had to spend much time and thought myself often with a feeling that I was not really giving adequate help because I could not ~~take enough~~ give more time.

#2 b.) B. Director of Exhibitions and Publications. As everyone knows Mr. Wheeler has worked hard in his difficult double ~~role~~ role but at times he has simply not had the strength or time or knowledge to cope with his complicated schedule.

On pages ~~00 and 00~~ 6, 8 and 9 of this letter I mention examples of exhibitions or publications to which I felt obliged to ~~give~~ give help . To them I must add such emergency exhibitions as the Armed Sevices Art Sale and The Museum and the War; certain educational and travelling shows which I had to edit; and - finally exhibitions of new additions to the Museum Collection for which, as Curator of Painting I had direct responsibility.

In short: by appointing Mr. Wheeler you relieved me of a great deal of work - but the exhibition and publication schedule was also greatly increased so that, in the end, I still had much more to do.

c C.) Assistant Director. I delegated to Mr. Soby (in 1943

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the Director's routine responsibilities, but as I have pointed out p. 00 he was ine xperienced and had other serious demands on his time; and though he did valiant service in Photography he did not feel competent to back up Industrial Design and Architecture and was unable to handle several other emergency jobs such as those I have described on pages ~~00 to 00~~ 6, 8 and 9.

In the above paragraphs I have described how as Director I tried to delegate responsibilities to Heads of Curatorial Departments, the Director of Exhibitions and Publications and the Assistant Director. I now proceed to other functions.

EDITOR

During the first dozen years of the Museum I edited practically everything that the Museum published. ~~This sometimes required extensive re-writing.~~

Since 1941 Mr. Wheeler, Miss Chamberlain, Miss Hawkins and Mr. Soby all helped reduce my work as editor.

But as Director I still had general responsibility for the standards of the Museum publications, particaulrly during a period when several of our departments had inexperienced ~~help~~ hands.

As Curator of Painting and Sculpture I also felt a special responsibility for publications in my own field which included not only books but also bulletin articles, labels etc.

Since January 1943, following your wishes, I tried to limit my editing to a minimum but as I have explained ~~on p. 00~~ I felt obliged to help in emergencies. I did not as you suggest "check and re-check with meticulous care" except for the Latin American catalog and for my own writings. I know you see neither the necessity nor the value of my editing in spite of the expressed opinion of Messrs. Soby, Sweeney, Wheeler, Kirstein and Johnson. Though I do not hope to convince you I would like to quote for the record a passage from a letter about James Sweeney's Calder text from his brother John Sweeney, himself a critic and writer

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head of a department in the Harvard Library:

"I have been reading Barr's Criticism of your text with real pleasure. It's a fine piece of editing. Practically every adjustment he proposed seems an improvement in the direction of precisin, clarity and economy. Graves and Hodge in the Reader over your Shoulder devote a whole book to procedures parallel to Barr's but nom of their examples is as convincing. They frequently quibble and perform unnecessary surgery. His comments are reasonable and objective and, on the whole,, well-supported by the substitutions he suggests." (October 1, 1943).

3) Writer . You write that my "literary output during the past few years has been very disappointing consisting for the most part pf a few short introductions and to catalogs and annual reports" .

This whole letter is an explanation of why I've not had time or peace of mind to write more..

I list my publications:

1941

The Year's Work - Annual Report (most of the text)

"An important Gift of Paintings" (M. of M.A. Bulletin, April-May).

"Van Gogh's Starry Night"; Ensor's St. Anthony; Modern Primitives" M. of M.A. Bulletin, November.

"Modern Art Makes History, Too". College Art Journal, November (Urging the more serious teaching of the History of modern art in universities, this article stimulated a controversy which lasted during the succeeding numbers)

1942

The Years Work - Annual Report (most of the text)

The Museum and the War
M. of M.A. Bulletin, (most of the text)

"Latin American Acquisitions"
M. of M.A. Bulletin , February

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"Introduction"; "Index of Artists by Movement and School" with 30 definitions, lists etc. for Painting and Sculpture in the Museum Collection.

1943

Preface to The Latin American Colection of the Museum of Modern Art.

What is Modern Painting?

Preface to Photography Center, M. of M.A. Bulletin Oct.-Nov.

Foreword to "Velasco: Painter of Time and Space" Magazine of Art, October

Preface to Romantic Painting in America

These reports and prefaces are short but they are highly concentrated. In them I have tried to present the Museum's policies and achievements, the continuity of its exhibitions and publications, the importance of its collections, with precision and enthusiasm.

The "30 definitions" in the checklist of the collection, the "38 pages" of What is Modern Painting? represent in condensed and simplified form the study of twenty years..

Moreover since you consider what I have written in purely quantitative terms I might add that What is modern Painting? printed in small type in double columns is actually 12,000 words long, considerably longer than many of the large and handsome art "books" now on the market.

#7

4. Curator of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts.

The care , exhibition, publication, labelling, lending, buying and selling of our collection in this department has taken most of my time since early in 1941. The Collection numbers several thousand items, is valued at over $1,000,000 and involves transaction of between $50,000 and $100,000 yearly.

Yet in your letter you do not even mention my own work as curator except to say that a successor will be appointed.

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I do not pretend that as curator I have done the job I should have done. I did not have the time or space or safety to exhibit the collection properly. I have not had the staff to document it thoroughly or the time to ransack the market and properly negotiate purchases, sales and exchanges.

I have had the following responsibilties as curator:

A. 1. Condition and framing.

2. Insurance valuations

3. Approving loans after weighing risks.

4. Initiating and planning precautions against air-raids.

B. Exhibition of collection:

1. Installation, involving frequent changes.

2. Educational labeling

3. Exhibition of new acquisitions with labels.

C. Publication of collection

1. Editing Painting and Sculpture in the Museum Collection with prefaces etc.

2. Editing The Latin American Collection of the Museum of Modern Art

3. Articles and captions in museum Bulletin and Magazine of Art

4. News releases on Collection

D. Acquisitions, sales, exchanges.

Miss Miller and, since January 1943, Mr. Soby have of course shared the above work but the responsibility and the more important decisions I was not able to delegate.

#7 5. Latin American Art.

In your letter you also overlook my work in the Latin American field which has taken so much of my time in the last three years.

Perhaps ~~mistakenly~~ I may have taken Latin American art too seriously. I have considered it a new field which we should

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work in supprting and supplementing the Coordinator's cultural program when ~~we~~ this could ~~ithou~~ be done without sacrificing our standards, I wrked as a member of the Coordinator's Advisory Committee on Art, as an organizer of the exhibition Pintura Norte Americana Contemporanea, as Chairman of the Jury for the Museum's Enter-American industrial design competition etc. I initiated our Index of Latin American Artists. And I proposed to Nelson Rockefeller that the Museum form a carefully selected collection of Latin American painting and sculpture as a part of our Museum collection.

Responding to this suggestion Mr. Rockefeller eventually gave $25.000 to be spent as I had proposed, that is, privately, anonymously and w thout political implications.

To make the purchases in Cuba and Mexico I spent most of the summer of 1942. In both Mexico and Havana I found the "Good Neighbor Policy" culturally bankrupt. At the same time the response to genuine non-political interest in painting was extraordinary. In both

unfinished