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The belief that New York needs a Museum of Modern Art

scarcely requires apology. All over the world the rising tide of interest in the modern movement has found expression not only in private collections but also in the formation of great public galleries for the specific purpose of exhibiting permanent as well as temporary collections of modern art.

That New York has no such gallery is an extraordinary anachronism. The municipal museums of Stockholm, Weimar, Düsseldorf, Essen, Mannheim, Lyons, Rotterdam, The Hague, San Francisco, Cleveland, Providence, Worcester, Massachusetts and a score of other lesser cities provide students, amateurs and the more casual public with more adequate permanent exhibits of modern art than do the institutions of our vast and conspicuously modern metropolis.

In two or three rooms of these small museums it is often possible to gain some idea of the more progressive phase of European painting and sculpture during the last fifty years. But far more important than these smaller provincial exhibitions are the modern collections owned by the great world-cities - London, Paris, Berlin, Munich, Moscow, Tokio, Amsterdam. It is to them that New York may look for instruction for they have each solved the problem with which New York is confronted. And this problem is as delicate as it is difficult.

For the last dozen years New York's great museum, The Metropolitan, has been continually and scathingly criticized because it did not add the works of the "modernists" to its collections. Nevertheless the Metropolitan's policy is reasonable and probably wise.

The Metropolitan as a great historical museum should quite justly acquire only those works of art which seem certainly and permanently valuable. But the value of all contemporary art is debatable and much of it is certainly transitory, however important it may seem and be to us at present. The Metropolitan can therefore well afford to wait until the present shall become the past, until time, that nearly infallible critic, shall have eliminated the probability of error. But we cannot afford to wait for we are far more transitory than is our art. Nor can we depend upon the occasional generosity of collectors and dealers to give us a necessarily haphazard impression of what *has developed in the last half century* is going on.

The Louvre, the National Gallery of England and the Kaiser Friedrich Museum to mention only three national museums follow a policy similar to that of our Metropolitan. But they are comparatively free of criticism because there are in Paris, London and Berlin, in addition to and distinct from these great historical collections, museums devoted entirely to the exhibition of modern art. There can be no rivalry between these institutions because they supplement each other and are at times in close co-operation.

The Luxembourg for instance exhibits most of the French national accumulation of modern art, a collection which is in continual transformation. Theoretically all works of art in the Luxembourg are tentatively exhibited. Ten years after the artists death they may go to Louvre, they may be relegated to provincial galleries or they may be forgotten in storage. In this way the Louvre is saved the embarrassment of extending its august sanction to the work

of living men. At the same time it is possible for the Luxembourg to buy and show the best works of living men while they are still the subject of popular interest and controversy and before death sends prices beyond the range even of national institutions.

In Berlin similarly the historical museums are supplemented by the National Galerie in the Kronprinzen Palast. Here Picasso, Derain, Matisse rub shoulders with Klee, Nolde, Dix, Feininger, and the best of the modern Germans. In Munich the Neue Staatsgalerie with its five Cézannes and six Van Goghs, its Maillols and Matisses, completes the series of old masters in the Alte Pinakothek. In Amsterdam the Stedelijk Museum bears a similar relation to the Rijks Museum. Even in London which Americans tend to consider rather conservative in art there has been the most remarkable activity. To the Tate Gallery have been added largely through the gifts of Mr. Samuel Courtauld, magnificent rooms of modern French painting - Seurat, Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Matisse, Bonnard, Braque, Rouault, Utrillo, Dufresne. Very recently Sir Joseph Duveen has given money for a new gallery of modern sculpture for which works by Maillol, Epstein, Mestrovic, and Modigliani have already been purchased.

Paradoxically New York, if fully awakened, would be able in a very few years to create a public collection of modern art which would place her as far ahead of Paris, Berlin, London as she is at present behind them. This museum of modern art would in no way conflict with the Metropolitan but would seek rather to establish a relationship to it like that of the Luxembourg to the Louvre.

The New York museum would however far exceed the modest and somewhat hampered achievements of the Luxembourg. It would have many functions. First of all it would attempt to establish a very fine collection of the immediate ancestors of the modern movement such as Van Gogh, Seurat, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri Rousseau, artists dead some of them forty years but whose paintings are still too controversial to be accepted freely by the Metropolitan. This collection would be formed by gifts, bequests, purchase and perhaps by semi-permanent loans.

Other galleries would display carefully chosen permanent collections of the most important living masters, especially those of France and the United States, though eventually there should be representative groups from England, Germany, Italy, Mexico and other countries. Through such a collection American students and artists and the general public could gain a consistent idea of what is going on in the rest of the world and, what is also very important, visiting foreigners could be shown a collection which would fairly represent our own accomplishment in painting and sculpture. The latter is especially impossible at the present time.

In time the Museum would probably expand beyond the narrow limits of painting and sculpture in order to include departments devoted to drawings, prints, and photography, typography, the arts of design in commerce and industry, architecture (a collection of projects and maquettes), stage designing, furniture and the decorative arts. Not the least important collection might be the filmotek, a library of films, with a projection room such as is already maintained in

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Moscow, where the score or so finest films of the year would be preserved and shown.

In addition to these permanent collections much space would be set aside for great loan exhibitions, national and international.

Within ten years New York with its vast wealth, its already magnificent private collections and its enthusiastic but not yet organized interest in modern art, could achieve the greatest modern museum in the world.

But even the beginnings of such a museum are not created overnight. A large building, a trained staff, as well as collections are needed - and none of these can be had immediately. A gradual approach is necessary and to make this approach the following plan has been proposed:

The New York Museum of Modern Art will function during its first two years as a gallery for temporary loan exhibitions. Ample and centrally located space will be leased in which will be held six major and a dozen minor exhibitions a year. The first exhibition to open in November 1929, will comprise a collection of a hundred paintings and drawings by

Other subsequent exhibitions might include.

Paintings by Living American Masters.

Sculpture by Maillol and Despiau.

Ten Living French Painters.

Modern Mexican Art.

Modern German Sculpture

(Lehmbruck, Belling, Kolbe, Sintenis, Haller, Barlach)

The Rise and Decline of Abstract Art.

The New Realism in Painting.

(French, American, German, Italian).

and selections from the following "one-man shows".

Daumier, Thomas Eakins, Ryder, Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec,  
Modigliani, Picasso, Matisse, Bonnard, de Segonzac, Henri Rousseau,  
Derain, Paul Klee, Edward Hopper, Eugene Speicher *etc*

to be accompanied by smaller exhibitions of work by John Marin,  
Varnum Poor, Hunt Diederich, Poupelet, C. C. Rumsby, Fran von Allesch,  
Ralph Steiner *etc*.

For such exhibitions the co-operation of other museums,  
private collectors, and dealers is warmly invited. In addition,  
to cover the expenses of a gallery of such size and activity, \$100,000  
a year will be necessary.

Before these two years of temporary exhibitions are over it  
should be possible to discover whether New York is really willing  
to build and support a great permanent Museum of Modern Art.