A group of 8 Museum of Modern Art Christmas cards will be distributed nationally for the first time to retailers throughout the country. Another group of cards, consisting of new designs, will be for sale as usual at the Museum, 11 West 53 Street, or by mail order.

The Christmas cards to be distributed nationally by the Stephen Lawrence Company, 1140 Broadway, include 2 by Saul Steinberg, Christmas Tree and Santas Shaking Hands; 2 by Loren MacIver, Little Silent Christmas Tree and The Snowman; a quill drawing of a deer by an unknown American primitive artist, and cards simply titled Design by Charlotte Trowbridge, Florence Bezrutczyk and Nathan Gluck. They retail at 10¢ and 15¢.

The new cards which will be sold only at the Museum or by mail order include work by Ben Shahn, Saul Steinberg, Matisse, Picasso, Rouault, Utrillo, Glackens, Florence Bezrutczyk and Andy Warhol.

NOTE: Sample Christmas cards from those being nationally distributed and from those to be sold at the Museum are available at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, Publicity Dept.