

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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PRESS PREVIEW:
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Two special exhibitions, "Modern Allegories" and "Recent American Paintings" will open at the Museum of Modern Art on Friday, September 8 in honor of the 20th International Congress of Art History now meeting at Columbia University and the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University. Selected by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of Museum Collections, entirely from the Museum's own holdings, the exhibitions will remain on view throughout the fall.

Eleven nationalities are represented in the allegory show consisting of 19 paintings. Major works by nine Americans are on view in the second show.

"In its broad sense an allegory is a symbolic representation in literature or art, a story or painting, which means something beyond what you see, something different, possibly more important," Mr. Barr points out in the exhibition wall label.

"Beckmann's Departure, Tchelitchew's Hide-and-Seek are full fledged allegories. Simpler images such as the Siqueiros Ethnography and the Munch Shriek might be called allegorical figures; Klee's Around the Fish, de Chirico's The Sacred Fish and Dali's The Persistence of Memory allegorical still-lives.

"Traditionally allegories have intentional meanings--moral, political, religious. The paintings here by Beckmann (Departure), Blume (The Eternal City), Ensor (Tribulations of St. Anthony), Gauguin (The Moon and the Earth), Pickens (Carnival), and the Siqueiros are examples. The Delvaux Phases of the Moon is an allegory on the blindness of scholars; the Tchelitchew an allegory of nature.

"Allegories vary in clarity. Blume's Eternal City is as explicit as Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress but Tchelitchew's Hide and Seek calls to mind the manneristic elaborations of Spencer's Faery Queene. The visitor may discover his own analogs for a third famous English literary allegory, Alice in Wonderland.

"A few of these modern allegories adapt traditional symbolism. Graves' The Individual State of the World is reputedly Chinese in reference, Gauguin's The Moon and the Earth, Polynesian. Apparently Paul Klee's Around the Fish is related to Christian iconography. Ensor's St. Anthony is the most traditional of all; it even depends upon a 17th century engraving by Callot for its composition.

"However the symbolism of most of the works shown here is original and personal. Much of it cannot be interpreted with certainty even in terms of the greatest creator of modern symbolism, Sigmund Freud.

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"The psychoanalysts who 'explain' Picasso's Minotauromachy reveal more of themselves than they do of the artist. Yet, though they and we, and probably the artist himself, cannot interpret it precisely, this great etching remains a deeply moving allegory of the soul.

"Though we may laugh at it at first, Dali's The Persistence of Memory is strangely disturbing, unforgettable. Dali himself wrote '...I am the first to be surprised and even frightened by the images I see appear upon my canvases.' However, Freud remarked dryly that he found Dali's conscious mind more interesting than his subconscious.

"Asked to interpret his triptych Departure, Beckmann stated: 'The picture speaks to me of truths impossible to put into words and which indeed I did not even know before. It can speak only to people who consciously or unconsciously carry in themselves a similar metaphysical code.' "Nevertheless, as a powerful statement of human faith, Departure does speak to almost everyone who looks at it."

"Recent American Paintings" consists of major works by Adolph Gottlieb, Franz Kline, Clyfford Still, Robert Motherwell, Sam Francis, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Arshile Gorky and Willem de Kooning, leaders among the American group usually called abstract expressionist or action painters.

"Emerging in the 1940s these painters created a movement (they disapprove the term) which in the United States became dominant in the 1950s and won for this country a reputation abroad greater than ever achieved previously by American artists," Mr. Barr says. "Nevertheless they are still the subject of intense controversy and the lively inspiration of a number of interesting counter-movements."

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, is open daily, 11 a. m. to 6 p. m., Sundays, 1 to 7 p. m. and Thursday evenings until 10 p. m.

For photographs and additional information contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N.Y. CI 5-8900.