

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

No. 100

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Wednesday, October 16, 1968

THREE TITLES LAUNCH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PAPERBACK SERIES

To provide high-quality reproductions in a small format at low cost, The Museum of Modern Art has launched a new series of inexpensive, profusely illustrated trade edition paperbacks with Jim Dine designs for "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Feininger: Ruin by the Sea, and Manhattan Observed. All are based on Museum exhibitions drawn from its collection. Future titles in painting and sculpture, photography, and drawings and prints will draw upon the Museum's resources but will not necessarily be directly related to exhibitions.

Each of the first three titles is \$1.50, distributed to the trade by New York Graphic Society Ltd. William S. Lieberman, Director of the Museum's Department of Drawings and Prints, is General Editor of these three titles.

Jim Dine designs for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by Virginia Allen presents the artist's witty and brilliantly colored drawings for an anti-traditional interpretation of Shakespeare's play. The costume and set designs were created in collaboration with theatrical director John Hancock for the San Francisco Actor's Workshop production in 1966. The twenty-one illustrations (5 in color) include photographs from the stage production, showing the transition from drawing board to performance.

Miss Allen, Assistant to the Director, Department of Drawings and Prints, observes that Dine came to the long-standing collaboration between the visual and performing arts through the "happening" movement, of which he was a pioneer. Environmental theater ideas were readily adapted to these designs, which emphasize the often ignored bawdy and anti-romantic aspects of Shakespeare's play. A rainbow motif dominates the entire production design, from the patchwork crazy-quilt curtain, a colorful endpaper for the book, to the proscenium arch painted in enamel and the Wurlitzer jukebox on stage which played Mahler and Mendelssohn. "The shock of pure color and modern costumes erased decades of cliches and plummeted Hancock's production into the world of hippies and happenings," says Miss Allen. "Had Hermia been re-christened Baby Jane Holzer, and Demetrius yclept Batman, the audience would not have batted its collective eye."

(more)

For over thirty years, Lyonel Feininger was preoccupied with the ruins of a fourteenth-century Gothic church as a theme for paintings and drawings. Feininger: Ruin by the Sea by Eila Kokkinen reveals the artist's working methods and the evolution of his ideas, as he developed his subject matter from factual reality, apparent in the earliest sketches of around 1928, to increasingly abstract, precise delineation of form in his major painting, Ruin by the Sea, of 1930 and in later drawings and watercolors. Writing to his wife, Julia, in the summer of 1932, Feininger pinpointed the relationship of drawing to his paintings: "In the medium of charcoal I have discovered a great relationship with pure painting. Jotting down one's first nebulous, chaotic conceptions, one gradually can work...through to firm ground and precise form. That which has been half way indicated is open to further evolution. Nothing is quite definite until it has reached final clarity in the completed oil painting."

Twenty-six illustrations, including four in color, indicate the many variations in Feininger's treatment of a single, inspiring theme, from 1928, when he discovered the ruin on the Baltic coast, to 1953 when he executed watercolors from memory. Lyonel Feininger was born in the United States in 1871, spent the years between 1887 and 1936 in Germany, and returned to the United States, where he lived until his death in 1956. Miss Kokkinen is Assistant Curator for Drawings at the Museum.

In Manhattan Observed, William S. Lieberman has selected thirty-seven prints that offer a series of interpretations and impressions of the city from the 1900s to the present, illustrating the city's dramatic contrasts, its dynamism, its hectic pace, and its humanity in the face of all that threatens to dehumanize it. "Many artists have chosen to represent the changing landscape and architecture of the city; many have also attempted to define its disparate activities, moods, and weather," writes Mr. Lieberman. "The sum of these views is not a portrait of Manhattan, but, rather, a collection of impressions. As observations they are essentially romantic or impersonal. The misery or the poverty of the city is seldom described."

The city's themes persist; their treatment varies enormously. Feininger's The Kin-der-kids Abroad, a cartoon of 1906, is a grotesque fantasy of the port of New York dominated by the Statue of Liberty. A 1964 work, Robert Rauschenberg's Front Roll, offers a dramatically different interpretation of the iron-spiked colossus. John Marin's tumultuous improvisation

of the Brooklyn Bridge stands in contrast to a precisionist rendering by Louis Lozowick. "Which image is more real? The heroic triumph of the architectural span or the depiction of structural detail?" Mr. Lieberman asks.

From George Bellows's pastoral Central Park landscape of 1916 to Raphael Soyer's Bowery mission of 1935 or Reginald Marsh's Breadline to David Hockney's contemporary depiction of gospel singers; from Charles Sheeler's Delmonico Building of 1926 to Antonio Frasconi's nostalgic reminiscence of the Fulton Fish Market (1952) or the British artist Richard Hamilton's "pop" portrait of the Guggenheim Museum (1956), the reader is offered many visions in many styles. The common link is the ongoing inspiration of the city.

DETAILS: All three titles are distributed to the trade by New York Graphic Society.

Jim Dine designs for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" with an introduction by Virginia Allen. 32 pages; 21 illustrations (5 in color). Paperbound, \$1.50.

Feininger: Ruin by the Sea with an introduction by Eila Kokkinen. 32 pages; 26 illustrations (4 in color). Paperbound, \$1.50.

Manhattan Observed with an introduction by William S. Lieberman. 48 pages; 37 illustrations. Paperbound, \$1.50.

Review copies, photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, and Patricia Bauman, Coordinator, Press Services, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.