

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

ALFRED H. BARR, JR.

In 1929 Alfred H. Barr, Jr. was named the first Director of the new Museum of Modern Art. At that time, as a Professor of Art at Wellesley College, he was teaching the first college course devoted to 20th-century art.

Director of the Museum from 1929 until late 1943, Mr. Barr was appointed Director of Collections in 1947, the position he held until his retirement in 1967, when he was appointed a Counselor to the Board of Trustees.

When he became Director, Mr. Barr proposed to the Trustees the radical concept of a multi-departmental museum concerned with all the modern visual arts -- architecture, industrial design, photography, film, and theater design, as well as painting, sculpture, drawings and prints. Within a few years, under his leadership, the Museum presented major exhibitions and issued important publications in all these fields, and by 1941, curatorial departments had been established. In addition, soon after it was founded, the Museum established a Department of Circulating Exhibitions which eventually extended the Museum's program to every state.

The Museum's exhibition catalog for its opening show in 1929 marked the beginning of a pioneering publication program which has provided a permanent record of scholarly achievements. Many of these books, considered modern classics, were written by Mr. Barr, including three reissued in paperbound editions in 1974 -- "Cubism and Abstract Art," "Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art," and "Matisse: His Art and His Public." Mr. Barr also wrote the Museum's best-selling publication "What Is Modern Painting?," an introduction to the modern movement that has been translated into four foreign languages in nine editions and will be reprinted this summer. Besides his own special responsibility

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for acquiring paintings and sculpture for the Museum, he also supervised the development of the collections of the other departments. Over the years, it was his eye for quality and his sense of historical importance that made the 20th-century collections of the Museum unique in the world. This great feat was accomplished despite the fact that the Museum had no endowment for buying works of art.

Mr. Barr directed many of the Museum's most important exhibitions, introducing the Museum audience to the major movements and masters of the 20th century including pioneering shows devoted to Dada, Surrealism, Cubism and retrospectives of Matisse and Picasso.

From 1964 to 1970 Mr. Barr was an Overseer of Harvard College and Chairman of the Harvard Fine Arts Visiting Committee from 1965 to 1970. He was also a member of the Advisory Council of the Department of Art and Archeology at Princeton University.

Alfred Barr has received honorary degrees from the universities of Bonn (Germany), Buffalo, Adelphi, Yale and Princeton and has been decorated by the governments of Germany, France and Italy.

Born in Detroit in 1902, son of a Presbyterian minister and teacher, Alfred Barr attended Boys Latin School in Baltimore before going to Princeton, where he earned an A.B. in 1922 and an M.A. the following year, and later to Harvard from which he received a Ph.D. He is married to the former Margaret Scolari-Fitzmaurice of Rome, also an art historian, whom he met at the opening night of the Museum's first exhibition. Mr. and Mrs. Barr live in New York City. Their daughter Victoria Barr is an artist.

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Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501; 7504.
