

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART HOLDS EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN DESIGNS
FOR ABSTRACT FILMS

A novel exhibition entitled American Designs for Abstract Films will open at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, on Wednesday, April 3. Hung in the foyer of the Museum auditorium, it will include paintings, drawings, gouaches and collages by:

Douglass Crockwell, American artist known for his murals in the United States Treasury Department and his covers for the Saturday Evening Post, who makes abstract color films as a hobby. Painting on the reverse side of glass panes, he obtains depth and flexibility by photographing mobile forms against backgrounds superimposed on one another at various levels. Without showing any direct influence, his films have a curious resemblance to the paintings of the surrealist Yves Tanguy.

Howard Lester, photographer and technical demonstrator of photographic materials active in commercial and advertising work, whose designs would be executed in transparent colored plastics. Those shown here, intended for an advertising film, would be used with musical accompaniment.

Horace Pierce, member of the Transcendental Painting Group in New Mexico. His designs are planned in a sequence of four movements suggesting vegetable, mineral, planetary and unicellular forms.

Mary Ellen Bute has executed several abstract films in black and white or in color in collaboration with Theodore Nemeth, employing objects seen abstractly, or geometric forms. The designs shown are rough work-drawings or collages.

It is remarkable that today, when many have claimed that abstractionism is moribund or dead, such artists have turned spon-

taneously, separately and from various impulses, to the planning or making of abstract films in color. But patrons are few and experiment with celluloid is costly: not all of these artists have contrived to execute their designs. In England the success of the Australian painter, Len Lye, in producing gay film-kaleidoscopes with lively music for novel uses in advertisement has possibly encouraged some of them, like Miss Bute and Mr. Lester, to hope for a similar outlet for their activities. Mr. Pierce, on the other hand, is interested purely as an artist in the aesthetic problems such work sets up. While these three await patrons, Mr. Crockwell has developed what began as a hobby into an intense examination of the technical problems involved in his methods of making 16mm abstractions in Kodachrome.

In the summer of 1939, as part of the film section of the Museum's exhibition Art In Our Time, a series of designs for abstract films by Léopold Survage of Paris, were shown. These designs by the Cubist painter who in 1913 was first in this field, have never been executed. The controversial theory he advanced was that "an immobile abstract form does not say much... it is only when it sets in motion, when it is transformed and meets other forms, that it becomes capable of evoking a feeling."

A short abstract film in color by Douglass Crockwell will be shown by continuous projection in one of the Museum galleries throughout the exhibition of American Designs for Abstract Films.

NOTE: A program of ABSTRACT FILMS has been arranged as a supplement for this exhibition and will be given in the Museum auditorium daily at 4 P.M. and at 2 and 4 P.M. on Sundays from April 8 to 14 inclusive. The program includes films by Hans Richter, Fernand Léger, Marcel Duchamp, Len Lye and Mary Ellen Bute.