

The Museum of Modern Art

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ROBERT MOSKOWITZ

February 10 - May 1, 1990

The first museum retrospective devoted to works by the contemporary American painter Robert Moskowitz opens at The Museum of Modern Art on February 10, 1990. Featuring more than sixty paintings, collages, and drawings, the exhibition spans the artist's career from his first works of the late 1950s to recent compositions based on art historical and architectural monuments.

On view until May 1, ROBERT MOSKOWITZ has been organized by Ned Rifkin, chief curator for exhibitions, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., and coordinated for The Museum of Modern Art by Linda Shearer, director of the Williams College Museum of Art, Massachusetts, and former curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art. The New York showing is supported in part by a grant from The Bohen Foundation.

The exhibition opens with collages using window shades, for which Moskowitz first received critical recognition in the early 1960s, as well as subsequent small works with an idiosyncratic Surrealist flavor. His next series of large, monochrome paintings revealing the corner of an empty room--his preoccupation from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s--were transitional to his later large-scale work, for which is he best known.

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Moskowitz's achievement as a New Image painter is visible in works of the 1970s in which recognizable and often incongruous images appear within an abstract format. In the painting Cadillac/Chopsticks (1975), for example, a black profile of the automobile's tail fins is juxtaposed with a small red "x" in a field of pale brown color. In Swimmer (1977), a pinkish head and an arm emerge from a waterlike expanse of deep blue pigment.

The artist's paintings and pastels from the past decade have become increasingly subtle in their play of image and abstraction. They feature looming silhouettes of such well-known buildings as the World Trade Center and Empire State Building, such structures as a windmill and a smokestack, and masterpieces ranging from the ancient Greek statue Discobolus and Rodin's The Thinker to Brancusi's Bird in Space. Some of these vertical compositions are as tall as ten feet.

In his essay in the accompanying catalog,* Mr. Rifkin summarizes Moskowitz's tenacious pursuit throughout his career of the perennial relation between abstraction and representation. "In his unique way," he writes, "Moskowitz has polarized these ideas, pulling them sufficiently apart so that each has overlapped the other, fused again in an original visual language that he has successfully employed to express his inner-most feelings and define his insights about creativity, vitality, and the ever-unknown realm of the imagination."

Born in Brooklyn in 1935, Robert Moskowitz studied at the Pratt Institute under Adolph Gottlieb. Living in London from 1959 to 1960, he developed a fascination with Marcel Duchamp's found objects, as well as with emerging Pop artists. From the mid-1960s on, the artist pursued a singular direction, building a reputation apart from the critical mainstream. Wide recognition

did not come again until 1978, when Moskowitz was represented, along with other artists, in the influential "New Image" exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

The New York showing is the last stop for the exhibition, which opened at the Hirshhorn Museum last June and was subsequently shown at La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art in California.

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*PUBLICATION

Robert Moskowitz contains an essay by Ned Rifkin and an interview with the artist by Linda Shearer. 208 pages. 67 color plates and numerous comparative and documentary illustrations. Also included are a chronology, exhibition history, and select bibliography. Published by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in association with Thames and Hudson. Hardbound (\$50.00) and paperbound (\$25.95) are available in The MoMA Book Store.

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For further information, contact the Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 212/708-9750.