

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

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TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

224 NEW ACQUISITIONS MAKE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART COLLECTION
OF MODERN LATIN AMERICAN ART MOST IMPORTANT IN WORLD

In the large Exhibition of Latin American Art in the Museum's Collection opening to the public Wednesday, March 31, two hundred and twenty-four new acquisitions recently acquired by gift or purchase from the artists of the other American Republics will be shown here for the first time. Added to the works already owned by the Museum these new acquisitions make the Museum's Collection of modern Latin American art the most important in the world.

The purchase of most of the newly acquired works was made possible by the Inter-American Fund, a sum of money received by the Museum in 1942 for the purpose of enlarging its Latin American Collection. To make the purchases Lincoln Kirstein, the Museum's Consultant on Latin American art, visited many countries of South America during the summer of 1942; for the same purpose, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum, went to Mexico and Cuba. In addition to the 195 purchases made through the Inter-American Fund, the Museum has recently received gifts of 29 works which will also be included in the exhibition.

Although the new acquisitions show the variety and quality of Latin American painting ranging from realistic portraits to abstract and surrealist compositions, many of the pictures have a special interest because they are concerned with the people and background of the countries which produced them. A humble funeral procession in Peru, a Cuban tornado with chairs and horses hurtling through the air, a newly rich Mexican supervising the building of his gaudy suburban villa, a melancholy Argentine summer resort of the 1880's, the magnificent mountains of Colombia, a Brazilian holiday, are some of the themes interpreted in these paintings. Further commentary on the life of people is offered by the large groups of prints from Mexico and the Argentine. The vitality and humor of the Mexican political broadsheets are especially noteworthy.

Of particular interest is The New Chicago Athletic Club by Antonio Berni of Argentina, purchased through the Inter-American Fund, which shows a group of young Argentinean boys at an age when all boys whether North or South American yearn to belong to a gang. Were it

not for the architecture and fruit shown in the picture. these boys of the New Chicago Athletic Club of Buenos Aires might be members of any of the innumerable "athletic" clubs that abound in the United States. This very large canvas, about 6' x 10' in size, offers vivid psychological and physical evidence of the fundamental similarity between the peoples of a North and a South American country. Another outstanding new acquisition is the 10'6" x 11'6" mural Festival, St. John's Eve by Portinari, leading modern artist of Brazil, and given to the Museum by the Brazilian Government.

These new purchases and gifts more than triple the Museum's Latin American Collection, bringing it to a total of 294 works. The sub-divisions are as follows: 3 frescoes, 69 oil paintings, 31 water-colors, 35 drawings, 94 prints (signed proofs), 49 posters and broad-sides, 4 sculptures and 9 photographs.

Mr. Barr points out, however, in his foreword to Mr. Kirstein's book on the Collection that:

"Even with these considerable numbers the Collection must be considered incomplete. Unexpected exigencies of travel, caused by the War, prevented visits to many countries. Indeed of the twenty other American republics ten are not yet represented at all and only one, Mexico, is shown at full length.

"Limitations of time, accessibility and funds have created certain regrettable omissions both of countries and of artists but as it stands the Latin American division of the Museum Collection is rather more complete than the European--for the Museum now owns more Chilean paintings than British, more Brazilian than Italian; and if certain Latin American countries are not yet represented this is also true of important European countries.

"However, the Museum Collection is not a static but a dynamic affair, continually changing. Errors of omission will be repaired; errors of inclusion will be eliminated. To this field of friendly competition, to this company of living works of art, the Museum welcomes the new arrivals from the other American republics."

Before the new acquisitions the Collection was particularly rich in important works by Mexico's leading artists. A gift from Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. of Orozco's The Subway started the Museum's Collection of Latin American art in 1935; and a year later the same donor gave two large Rivera panels. In 1937 another Museum trustee anonymously gave a remarkable group of Orozcos including the famous Zapatistas; and the same year Dr. Gregory Zilboorg presented the first of the Museum's paintings by Siqueiros, a series to which Lieutenant Edward M. M. Warburg and the Estate of George Gershwin have also contributed.

The Museum's acquisition of art from countries south of Mexico began in 1939 with the purchase of one of the Brazilian Portinari's best paintings. In 1942 the Museum received its most

important Latin American sculpture: Maria's Christ, the gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller. Leigh Athearn gave the first Bolivian painting, and from the Cuban National Commission for Intellectual Cooperation came the first Cuban acquisition. Thus by the end of 1941 the Museum had some 70 Latin American works by 11 artists in four countries. Four artists are of great importance and are magnificently represented: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros and Portinari.

Partly as a result of the stimulating effect of the Inter-American Fund, other donors have recently added important gifts to the Collection. The Honorable and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss have given one of the few pictures in this country by the Uruguayan master, Pedro Figari; and from Dr. Fresnedo Siri of Montevideo has come a painting by Torres García, another important Uruguayan. At the cogent suggestion of Señora María Luisa Gómez Mena of Havana, the distinguished surgeon Dr. Ramírez Corría most generously presented the Museum with paintings by two of the best Cuban artists, Ponce de León and Carlos Enríquez. Lieutenant Edgar J. Kaufmann, Jr. has made it possible to purchase a number of excellent paintings, drawings and photographs by the younger Mexican artists, and Mrs. Edgar J. Kaufmann and Mr. Samuel A. Lewisohn have given additional works in the same category. All of these gifts are shown in the exhibition.

New Publication

The first survey in English of Latin American art from the Colonial period to the present day will be published by the Museum in conjunction with the exhibition. The book The Latin American Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* consists of 112 pages and 113 halftones with a text by Lincoln Kirstein and a complete list of the Museum's Collection in this field. In his long introductory essay Mr. Kirstein examines the cultural circumstances which have shaped the art of Latin American countries, revealing the story of the colonial powers, the patronage of the church and viceregal courts, and the rise of national spirit and local salons with the ultimate political independence of the 19th century. Many illuminating comparisons and contrasts are drawn between the art of our own country and that of the Latin American republics. The emphasis of the book, however, is upon contemporary work.

Mr. Kirstein has worked on the exhibition almost the entire past year, but as he entered the Army three weeks ago the installation has been directed by Dorothy C. Miller, Associate Curator of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture. The exhibition fills the entire second floor of the Museum and will be on view through Sunday, May 9, after which it will be divided into several shows and sent by the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions on a tour of other museums and art galleries throughout the country.

72.00
* \$1.75