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The Mainstreaming of Modern Art in America

(Under the direction of WILLIAM T. SQUIRES)

This interdisciplinary research project investigates the individual and collective efforts of a four-pronged advocacy coalition which promoted Modernism in America between 1930 and 1950. The study documents the activities of the commercial art dealers, the patrons and collectors, the museums and the educators who mainstreamed modern art into the cultural psyche of the United States. Through their interactions and collective power, they were instrumental in the grafting of fledgling American art sensibilities to vanguard European practices, the establishment of valid educational mechanisms to promote an appreciation of Modernism, the recognition of New York as the international capital of art and culture, and the formation of aesthetic theories which were uniquely representational of America.

Through the analysis of unpublished archival material, journals, memoirs, artists' statements, relevant critical writings and educational publications, the individual and concomitant activities of these advocacy groups are examined. The research documents the congruent exhibitions, theoretical discussions, and didactic programs devoted to Modernism and draws correlations between the modern art movement and the catalytic shifts in educational practices. Findings from the research suggest the conscious formation of a cultural coalition which proselytized modern art, created a system of patronage for the art and disseminated its philosophical and iconographical principles throughout the United States.

The research indicates that it was the unfaltering efforts of a powerful art collective which included the dealers, the patrons, the museums and the educational systems, who used their aegis to transform the aesthetic identity of the United States and poise America to become the new center of the artistic world. This collective promoted not only a body of work, but also a body of institutions and a matrix of practices which were dispersed into and absorbed by the American public. The result of their actions was an amalgamation of ideals concerning democracy, free will and individual creative expression which mark a meridian of the intellectual and artistic history of our society.

INDEX WORDS: Modernism, Modern Art, Automatism, Surrealism, Abstract Art, Non-objective Art, Abstract Expressionism, Avant-garde, Art Dealer, Art Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Patronage, Pierre Matisse, Julien Levy, Peggy Guggenheim, Expressive Stream of Pedagogy, Art Education, Vanguard Art Educators, Advocacy, Democracy, Creative Self-expression

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by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The two decades existing between 1930 and 1950 are generally regarded as a turning point in the history of American avant-garde art. It is an unparalleled period in the history of art, for within this twenty-year span, New York replaced Paris as the art capital of the world and America ascended to the role of leader in art practices; this included the making of art, the criticism of art, the birth of new aesthetic theories, and the practices of teaching art. To fully understand how this shift took place, requires an examination of the aesthetic climate existing in the United States at that time. During this period, America was at a crucial crossroad concerning the future of the arts on both a national and international level.

America's survival of the economic depression of the 1930s and her victorious participation in World War II had a profound impact on the dynamics of western society. As the United States emerged as the socio-economic and political leader of the Western world, the country began to reflect upon and reconsider her status as an artistic nation. The aesthetic dilemma facing America was whether to remain as a cultural dependent of Europe or to establish her own identity as an artistic nation. Ultimately, the question to be faced was whether America would remain shackled to the past or look bravely toward the future. The decision, as to which path America would take, was greatly influenced by organized activists who supported modern art in the United States. To these activists, the



future of American art practices was inextricably bound to the future of Modernism.

These

advocacy groups, functioning as agents of change, promoted modern art as a visual symbol of independence and intellectual freedom, “a symbol of the human spirit in its search for truth, for freedom, for perfection” (Barr, 1943, p. 5). To achieve their goal of

establishing America as the guardian of avant-garde art, these activists called for what

had

been the divergent components of the art world, the dealers, the patrons, the cultural

institutions and the educators to unite in a shared quest for a modern aesthetic in the

United States.

#### Purpose of the Study

This study surveys the individual and collective efforts of a four-pronged advance guard which promoted modern art in America. Included in this group are the commercial art dealers, the collectors and patrons, the museums which promoted modern art and the educators who mainstreamed modernism through the expressive stream of pedagogy.

Through the analysis of journals, memoirs, unpublished essays and documents,

educational theories, relevant critical writings and archival material, the concomitant

philosophies and activities of these organized advocacy groups will be investigated. The

theme and general structure of this dissertation will be a narrative which draws

correlations between the influences of the modernist art movements and the catalytic

shifts taking place in our art education practices. The succeeding chapters examine the

interaction between the proponents of modern art at the apex of the epochal moment

when “artistically, at long last . . . America has become a protagonist not to be smiled off the world’s stage” (Jewell, 1932, p. 2).

Chapter II introduces and defines the four advocacy groups which collectively promoted modern art. Included are the commercial dealers, the patrons, the museums and the educators who used their aegis to proselytize modern movements and modern artists in America. Chapter III examines the activities of these advocates and documents the exhibitions and didactic programs which embraced modern art and disseminated its philosophical and iconographical principles throughout America. Chapter IV surveys germane educational and professional periodicals such as Parnassus, The College Art Journal and The School Arts Magazine which document both the progressive educators’ awareness of Modernism and their commitment to introducing modern art into the classrooms of this country. Chapter V synthesizes the congruent activities of the four advocacy groups, examines their symbiotic relationship in establishing America as the leader in avant-garde art practices and suggests areas for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ADVOCACY OF MODERNISM

For both the United States and Europe, the two decades between 1930 and 1950 were years of contrast and continuity: a struggle for identity on a personal, national, and global level. It was a period which witnessed antithetical acts representing both humanity's finest and cruelest capacities, both the achievements and the destructiveness of humankind. Artistic and intellectual movements, such as Surrealism, produced manifestos in a quest for absolute freedom while six million copies of Adolph Hitler's Mein Kampf were sold. The Museum of Modern Art opened its doors with a battle cry "The business of every modern museum is to live as dangerously as possible" (Lynes, 1973, p. 431) while the Schutzstaffel (the SS) demonstrated how dangerous it was to practice Modernism by purging the museums and galleries of the Third Reich. In America, educational reformers responded to Sir Herbert Read's declaration of "we do not insist on education through art for the sake of art, but for the sake of life itself" (Read, 1943, p. 27), while in Nazi Germany, educational reform meant the closing of the Bauhaus.

Ironically, these inimical acts of inspiration and brutality would result in a collective pursuit for a new home for a new art order. The advocates of modern art

believed that Modernism was a visual synonym for democracy and the exercise of free will and as such required nurturing and protection against the tyranny of Fascism and the Nazi regime. The democratic soil of the United States would be the fertile ground in which this new art would grow and the formations of both art movements and art practices in the United States, at this time, were inevitably shaped by these circumstances. This transformation emerged from the confluence of European artists and philosophers and American art patrons, artists, educators and critics. As such, it was an evolutionary process of influences and exchanges. During this period, many of the recognized members of the European avant-garde, including Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Stanley William Hayter, Wolfgang Paalen, and Roberto Matta escaped their homelands which were being torn apart during World War II and came to America. Andre Breton, Piet Mondrian, Yves Tanguy, Gordon Onslow Ford, Andre Masson and Man Ray also sought sanctuary in the United States. Alfred Barr stated “thanks largely to the influx of artists and writers from Europe, New York supplanted occupied Paris as the art center of the western world” (1979, p. xvii). It was the heritage of such European artists that would form a bridge to the future for a young group of Americans grappling with the dual concepts of making art and teaching art. The Europeans offered new directions concerning the source, concept, iconography and the methods of creating avant-garde art. The Americans would reciprocate with the gifts of freedom and advocacy. According to Martica Sawin, in Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School, “American support derived from a combination of sympathy for the plight of the refugees, excitement generated by their work and their presence, and a desire to graft onto

this European stock some new developments in American culture” (1995, p. 197). The concept of “grafting” fledgling American art to the established European vanguard traditions became an important aspect in the development of America as an artistic nation. According to the leading art critic of the day, Edward Alden Jewell, the development of a modern art movement in America depended on the continued exposure of our young artists to the established avant-garde from Europe. Jewell stated “art, like any other human expression is a matter of evolution, usually groping and painfully slow. Its ultimately coming to flower may be traced back, inevitably, to a significant germination” (1932, p. 1). The metaphors of transplanting, cross pollination, budding and flowering represented, to the advocates of modernism in the United States, the possibility of growth for a new tempered aesthetic, unique and representational of this country. In this aesthetic schema, modern art in the United States became synonymous with American culture for it symbolized the democratic ideals of emancipation and humanism. The desire to embrace the exiled artists, to interact with them and learn from them, simultaneously represented a refutation of the mass oppression occurring in Europe and a vindication of individual expression which represented the United States. A collective statement issued by the directors of the Institute of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art attest to this principle:

The field of contemporary art is immensely wide and varied, with many diverse viewpoints and styles. We believe that this diversity is a sign of vitality and of freedom of expression inherent in a democratic society . . . We recognize the humanistic value of abstract art, as an expression of thought and emotion and the

basic human aspirations towards freedom and order. In these ways modern art contributes to the dignity of man. (1950, p. 6)

Prior to 1930, American artists, as well as the American public, had limited exposure to modern art unless they traveled to Europe. To end the isolation, perpetuating the provincialism dominating our culture during that time, a few gifted individuals worked to bring modern art to the United States. In pursuit of that goal Alfred Stieglitz, in 1905, opened his Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, later to be known simply, but famously, as "291". Along with avant-garde photography, Stieglitz mounted "the first New York exhibitions of works by Cezanne, Matisse, Rousseau, Picasso, African art, and the art of children"(Hartt, 1993, p. 1006). In 1920, the farsighted collector of modern art, Catherine Drier, founded the Societe Anonyme to encourage American and European avant-garde art in the United States. In a similar turn, in 1927, A.E. Gallatin lent his modern art collection, which included works by Cezanne, Seurat, and the Cubist epoch, to New York University to establish the Gallery of Living Art. These efforts to expose the country to modernism were important for they represented a desire to encourage their artistic countrymen to pursue new concepts and iconography. Although valiant in their dedication "to the task of broadening the audiences for modernist works," their venues were overly elite and too limited in access to broadly and seriously effect the aesthetic climate of American art (McCarthy, 2001, p. 82).

Americans were given their first great public opportunity to view modern art when Arthur B. Davies, Walt Kuhn, and Walter Pach, in conjunction with the Association of

American Painters and Sculptors, organized the International Exhibition of Modern Art at the New York National Guard's Sixty-Ninth Regiment Armory. At the Armory Show, "hundreds of thousands of Americans received their first exposure to new art" (Hartt, 1993, p. 1006). Although the show witnessed record-breaking attendance, reviews from the time, such as "Armory Show: Chamber of Horrors," "The So-Called New Art," and "A Bomb From the Blue," suggested that the masses "relatively ignorant on the subject of art" were attracted more by sensationalism; "a rush to see the freaks," rather than satisfying an intellectual or aesthetic curiosity (Merrick, 1913, p. 23). James B. Townsend, former editor of the New York Times, while agreeing that the general public was not prepared to accept modern art, suggested that the importance of the show lay in its ability to awaken American artists to the possibilities of modernism. He stated in his review that "the object of the exhibition is frankly to stimulate American artists by showing them what the rest of the advanced world is doing" (1913, p.23).

Sixty-four years later, the critic Harold Rosenberg concurred with Townsend's view that the show was to function as a stimulus, but he also agreed with other editorials as to the broad chasm separating the European vanguard and the American art public. He wrote "the Armory show revealed how far art and thinking about art in the United States lagged behind the advanced painting and criticism in Europe. This gap was not soon to be filled" (1977, p. xi). Yet, in less than twenty years after the Armory Show, America would not only close the gap, New York would become the art capital of the world.

This transformation occurred through the confluent efforts of several influential agents and institutions of modern art which formed a hierarchal sequence of supply and

demand for modernism. According to Serge Gilbaut, in How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, “Before the nation could support a modernist avant-garde, however, it first needed to develop an awareness of art and organizations within which dialogue and controversy could take place” (1983, p. 55). This necessary awareness emerged from the interactions of individual and organized activists including art dealers, patrons, museums and educational systems. Through their collective and concomitant power, they were instrumental in transforming the national aesthetic, for they provided valid mechanisms for uniting the European modernist approach with the American artistic psyche. By promoting their belief that only a new art, founded upon universal truths and nurtured in American soil, could redeem humanity, they effectively charted a future for our cultural heritage. Through the efforts of these agents of change, America became the capable guardian of the European vanguard and the architect of an American avant-garde. The editor of Vanity Fair, John Bishop Peale, attested to this phenomenon in the opening statement of an article entitled “The Arts” when he wrote “I shall begin with the single conviction that the future of the arts is in America . . . it is possible even now to say that the center of western culture is no longer in Europe. It is in America. It is we who are the arbiters of its future and its immense responsibilities are ours” (1941, p. 179).

These agents of activism assumed the responsibilities of Modernism and became “the arbiters of its future.” As a cultural coalition, they mobilized support for Modernism and championed the unification of advanced European approaches with fledgling American art. Through an impassioned advocacy, they opened the doors to Modern art in America and assisted in the formation of a national aesthetic which would garner for



American artists and their practices international recognition. Of greatest import, through their commitment to creating interest in a new avant-garde, they created forums for Modernism which could be accessed by the broad public.

### The Commercial Art Dealer

The first prong in the advocacy of the modern artists and creative intelligentsia was the commercial dealer. Calvin Tompkins stated “the history of modern art is inextricably bound up with the profession of art dealing” (1981, p. 75). The role of the dealer was twofold involving both the commercial and the aesthetic realms of modern art simultaneously. First, the dealer had to open a market by introducing the work of the avant-garde and promote the work as a commodity for future returns. According to the artist Rudy Blesh, in Modern Art USA: Men, Rebellion, Conquest, 1900-1956, “soon a brave dealer or two arises who on one hand supports the new artists, often out of his own pocket, while on the other hand he waits as the market slowly grows” (1956, p. 115). Then as now, the economy of the art world was not a distinctive or special form of commodity production. The art world, where the dealer was an entrepreneur, was similar to any other supply and demand forum, which had only three options for success. One could either own the market, steal the market or replace the market. As entrepreneurs, the dealers of modern art, understood that replacing the market, by shifting the emphasis from the collecting of Old World masters to the collecting of works of modern artists, was the only guaranteed road to successful commodity exchange.

Yet, these dealers did not just see themselves as entrepreneurs, nor, did they see

art as strictly a commodity. They believed an art dealer should not simply concern himself with exchange value. They believed that the art dealer should also serve as a steward of the aesthetic value of modern art which dealt with humanistic communication and reception. Germaine Seligman, in Merchants of Art: 1880-1960, stated “as is often true when a new phase of art is introduced, the financial return is likely to be in the realm of future hopes than present reality . . . To be willing to invest in the future this way, the dealer must have complete conviction about what he is promoting. By the same token he offers the most convincing evidence of his faith in what he has to sell” (1961, p. 181-182).

Through their championship of new work, the dealers were the first substantial patrons of modernism.

The dealer’s dual role, as both the professional “taste maker” in a commodity exchange and the “first patron” in the championship of modernism, greatly influenced the future of the arts in America. Serving simultaneously as merchants and mentors, they became the source as well as the spokesmen of the avant-garde. In turn, their commitment to modern art would influence the other links in the chain of agencies which helped to establish the aesthetic values of our culture.

### The Patron

The second prong, in the championship of modernism, was the patron, “the private collector of means, who buys from the dealers” (Blesh, 1956, p. 115). In a concomitant relationship with the dealer, the patron set the desirability and market standard by collecting the work. Russell Lynes commented on the symbiotic relationship

between the dealer and the patron when he wrote “obviously if there were successful dealers in modern masters there had to be prosperous collectors willing -indeed, eager- to sit in armchairs before velvet covered easels in the inner sanctums of the galleries and buy some of what was propped up in front of them” (Lynes, 1973, p. 38). The earliest patronage of Modernism was indeed from the elite for “art patronage was an inherently expensive proposition, and even with the best professional alliances, it fell beyond the parameters of middle-class sponsorship” (McCarthy, 2001, p. 85). Wealthy individuals, as well as powerful representatives of museums using institutional funds, purchased modern art from commercial dealers. Through their positions of wealth, power and prestige, these visionary collectors amassed many of the now recognized masterpieces of avant-garde art.

Yet, within a few years of its introduction, modern art was not patronized by the wealthy collector alone. Surveys conducted by Art News in 1944 and 1945 attest to a broad demographic for the support of Modernism. According to the surveys, modern art was being purchased by middle-class individuals from all areas of the country. The author of the surveys, Aline Louccheim, stated “in this respect, art buying now differs from the picture boom of 1916-1918. Then a small group of millionaires accounted in main for the activity; now buying is far more general, and in the contemporary field” (1944, p. 12). In conclusion, Louccheim posited that the new demographic purchased works of modern art because it appealed to them visually on a personal level. “These collectors, both new and old, fall into a pattern of persons buying art to live with, not to store in closets or as show horses” (1945, p. 10).

The courageous efforts of these individual patrons, patrician and middle class alike, helped to promote Modernism through their willingness to purchase works by the vanguard. As collectors, they were active in the campaign to establish the market value as well as the aesthetic value of modern art. In time many of these early purchases would become, as gifts or acquisitions, the nucleus of many of the public treasuries of modern art.

### The Art Museums

The third prong in the advancement of modernism was constituted by the museums. These institutions lent their aegis to the cause in two ways. First, as purchasing establishments, they were financially instrumental in “establishing the modern artist as a cultural figure of stature”(Hunter, 1984, p. 9). By utilizing collective funding to procure and promote modern art, the museum became an important patron. According to Germain Seligman “In the United States, the years between the two world wars witnessed the rise of the American museum as a new and formidable buying power in the modern art market” (1961, p. 219). By presenting themselves as patrons and arbiters of advanced taste, institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, officially sanctioned the work for the general public.

Second, the museums established unprecedented educational programs to proselytize modern art. “The museum demonstrated a special talent for mixing demanding intellectual content in a controversial field of knowledge with a decided flair for appealing to the lay public. The museum’s combination of sober art-historical scholarship with

evangelical zeal for its subject helped popularize modern art at a moment in its history when it did not enjoy public confidence” (Hunter, 1984, p. 9).

As powerful cultural entities, the museums used their accepted aegis as institutions for societal reform and public enhancement to champion the modernist cause. Forming foundations, made up of collectors, patrons, presenters, and educators, they used their authority to disseminate modern art. By presenting itself as a leader of the vanguard in the fight against stagnant traditionalism and myopic nationalism, the museum became a champion for the modernist cause.

#### The Educational System

The fourth prong, in the propagation of modernism, was the educational system of the United States. Both the colleges and universities as well as the private and public school systems became the final powerhouses for the dissemination of modernism in the United States. Between 1930 and 1950, with the advancement of the expressive concept by progressive educators, the art teacher came to the forefront of the aesthetic debate. The expressive stream in education promoted the idea of nurturing individuality through creative self-expression. The practice of this pedagogical philosophy was considered to be beneficial on both a personal level and a societal level. The expressive stream became synonymous with democracy for it promoted individual liberty and redemption through the reformatory potential of the arts. To the participating educators, Modernism became the visual realization of their ideals for the work portrayed the great leitmotifs of the modern human predicament, ecstasy, tragedy and renewal. Teachers of the expressive doctrine

assumed the combined role of creator, arbitrator and communicator as they introduced modern art to new generations of students; not as just an esoteric discipline, an ephemeral intellectual puzzle outside of everyday realities, but as an important role model for the creative process, intrinsically valuable and inherent to the act of making and viewing art. In the expressive stream, the teachers of art history, art education, and art production embraced modern art as a major part of its intellectual discourse and extolled the work as exemplars for future practice.

At this time, modern art became a major part of the intellectual discourse concerning independence and intellectual freedom. Members of the avant-garde, the intelligentsia, and political activists assembled together as champions for societal reformation through the expressive potential of the arts. New York became the capital of this artistic utopia and progressive education became the means of achieving this democratic ideal. According to a Kerry Freedman essay, entitled “The Importance of Modern Art and Art Education in the Creation of a National Culture,” “the intention of creating a modern, mainstream culture of the United States, based in part on an ideology of individualism, was reflected in the dialogue between educators, intellectuals, and members of the fine art community in New York during the first half of the twentieth century” (1988, p. 90).

During this period, the paralleled destinies of modern art and the expressive movement in education converged to help form an American artistic identity. This amalgamation was reflected not only in the exhibitions in galleries or in the arcane artistic periodicals such as VVV, the Tiger’s Eye, or the Partisan Review, educational

publications, such as the School Arts Magazine, Art Education, Parnassus and the College Art Journal, mirrored this consolidation as well. Articles and lesson planning concerning the subconscious and expressive art appeared. Model curricula beseeched educators at all levels to introduce modernists' principles into the classrooms, the lecture halls, and the studios. Essays and commentaries by and about great educators such as Thomas Munro, Sir Herbert Read, and Franz Cizek encouraged art educators to keep abreast of modern art trends and modern artists. Esteemed curators, art dealers, educational directors, and art world denizens, such as Alfred Barr, Victor D'Amico, James Thrall Soby, and Sidney Janis composed articles and essays extolling Modernism. Students of every age were encouraged to experience great works of art from all cultures through galleries and museums. Editorials, by elementary teachers and college professors alike, advocated subscribing to contemporary art journals along with viewing as many exhibits of modern art as possible. Announcements of major exhibitions, calls for entries for upcoming juried shows, and critical reviews of contemporaneous art movements, entreated educators to become active participants in the modernist movement. In addition, examples of Automatism, Surrealism, Abstraction, and Nonobjective work would be included as an ideal which all students of art should analyze and emulate.

When the four agents of change converged, the cultural aesthetic of the United States was transformed. As an individual conduit of change, each functioned as an agent of modern art. As cooperative entities, each prong worked to promote a common visual language which articulated the characteristics of democracy. For these agents, modern art

represented three fundamental goals of democracy; the celebration of the individual, the right of free speech and expression, and the pursuit of happiness. Modernism was perceived as important for it represented a paradigm of a new and personal exploration of truth through visual form. Modernism not only challenged the past accepted standards of mimetic subject matter, the designation of appropriate techniques and the regimentation of style, it exalted individual genius and originality. To the participants of this advance guard, the innovative and autonomous nature of modern art equaled individual and intellectual freedom.

Arthur Efland stated that throughout history “powerful elements in each society determined the purposes to be served by the arts and created appropriate institutions to carry out these tasks” (1990, p. 2). In further clarification of the cultural mechanisms for artistic advancement, he stated “as history unfolds, it will become clear that the teaching of the arts was organized within a series of institutional settings . . . a complex network of formal and informal institutions” (1990, p. 2). According to Efland, these institutions included galleries, museums, museum schools, public schools, and liberal arts colleges. In concurrence, Robert Hughes (1990) designated such institutions as “formidable systems of cultural patronage” (p. 391). It was through the unfaltering efforts of a powerful art collective which included the dealers, the patrons, the museums, and the educational system, that helped transform our aesthetic identity and poised America to become the center of the artistic world. The result was an amalgamation of ideals which mark a meridian of the intellectual and artistic history of our society.



CHAPTER III  
THE ROLE OF AVANT-GARDE GALLERIES, PATRONS, MUSEUMS AND  
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE CREATION OF A NEW AMERICAN  
AESTHETIC

The Art Dealer as an Agent of Modernism

By the 1930s, “a new day dawned for the dealers of modern art” (Blesh, 1956, p.209). According to Sidney Janis, “there were maybe a dozen galleries in all of New York which promoted Modern art” (Weld, 1986, p. 301).

There was Marie Harriman and there was Julien Levy and Pierre Matisse, all of them set up in business by the early 1930's. Marian Willard by 1940 had opened the gallery that bears her name. Bucholz (later Curt Valentin) set up trade, and so did Carl Nierendorf from Berlin. Along came the ACA Gallery, and from Paris, the renowned Paul Rosenberg. Many of the early pioneers continued to hold their own:

Valentine Dudensing, J. B. Neumann . . . Edith Halpert and her Downtown Gallery, and the famous Parisian, Seligman. (Blesh, 1956, p. 209)

Along with these established galleries, visionary newcomers such as Peggy Guggenheim, Sidney Janis, and Howard Putzel promoted Modernism as well. These important dealers established premises in midtown Manhattan which showcased diverse examples of American primitivism, Proto-modernism, European Automatism and Surrealism, and contemporaneous American Abstraction. Through such commercial enterprises “57<sup>th</sup> Street became the foreshortened Miracle Mile of modern art” (Blesh, 1956, p. 209).

From this small, but elite group, three galleries and three dealers would emerge as the most critical to the development of modernism in the United States. Their extraordinary talent, foresight, and aesthetic commitment to advancing European modernism as the basis for the future of American arts catapulted them to the forefront of a new artistic schema. They were Julien Levy for being the first to show Surrealist art in the United States, Pierre Matisse for showing the most influential European and Surrealist artists over the longest period of time, and Peggy Guggenheim for continuing these traditions as well as being the first to introduce the artists of the New York School.

At the zenith of their success, Levy’s, Matisse’s, and Guggenheim’s influence cast long shadows. In the commercial realm of art, they were the respected colleagues and dealers of some of the most influential and illustrious artists in modern history. To Julien Levy, the responsibility of the art dealer was “to embellish the city, ennoble the patron, educate, the citizen, and encourage the arts” (Levy, 1977, p. 136). To Peggy Guggenheim,

“one had to support the art of the day as it was a living thing” (Guggenheim, 1979, p. 163). To Matisse, the art dealer served a dual role: a combination of an executive of a business and an advocate for the betterment of society. As such, the dealer had not only the primacy to introduce artistic innovation, but the privilege as well. In an essay concerning the role of the art dealer as a champion of freedom in a war-torn world of dislocation and rootlessness,

Matisse wrote:

In a nomadic life the shepherd recognizes the cry of each one of his sheep . . . and in the artists’ peregrinations, the art dealer has become a fellow traveler. If necessity called for it, I believe that, all sincere art dealers would not hesitate to exhibit pictures in a tent; for wherever the artist can find a wall to hang his pictures he has a home, his art is no more in exile. ( Matisse Archives)

Critics and historians such as Harold Rosenberg (1977) and Edward Lucie-Smith (1996) recognized the importance of these galleries to the formation of an avant-garde and the cultural shift from Paris to New York with statements such as “no longer would a pilgrimage to the City of Light be indispensable to an encounter with the art of the day” (Rosenberg, 1977, p. xii). Jonathan Fineberg (1995) credits these galleries with profoundly affecting the young American artists by providing them with a meeting place to interact with the European artists.

Having the artists personally on the scene in New York was very different from just looking at the works by them. The European moderns provided a compelling

new model of what an artist was. To them art and life were inseparable and they lived this heightened existence twenty-four hours a day. In conversations with the younger Americans they also imparted their insight into the more subtle formal concerns of painting, thereby implicitly encouraging them to come up to the aesthetic level of European modernism . . . The presence of the Parisian vanguard in New York finally gave young Americans an opportunity to see this firsthand, creating the fertile soil out of which the new American avant-garde grew. (p. 30).

As such, these dealers became the conduits for the avant-garde practices which influenced the entire chain of agencies which dictated the aesthetic values of our culture. Julien Levy, Pierre Matisse, and Peggy Guggenheim would ultimately alter how we made art, how we valued art, how we viewed art, and how we taught art.

#### The Julien Levy Gallery

According to Julien Levy, his gallery “was begot of a couple of haphazard indeterminates” (1977, p. 9). The first, was his induction into the Art Department at Harvard in 1924. Levy had entered the university with the idea of majoring in English. In his memoirs, Levy wrote “my path seemed clear and bright until, tangled in the faulty spelling and catastrophic grammatical lapses of my first term paper, I was led into a conference with my faculty advisor, who happened to be Paul Sachs” (Levy, 1977, p. 9). Sachs counseled him to switch majors and “sign up with us for Fine Arts” (Sachs in Levy, 1977, p. 10). His destiny was altered forever according to Levy when “impulsively I followed his advice” (1977, p. 10). On entering the department, Levy became immersed in

the curricula of the fine arts. This included art history, studio work, art appreciation, and museology. To Levy, these studies were crucial for the knowledge garnered from each field would later become the amalgamated foundation on which he would build his dream to open an art gallery. During this time, he was also introduced to several graduates and postgraduates who would later greatly effect his career in the New York art world. This august group included Chick Austen, Henry-Russell Hithcock, and Alfred Barr.

Of his colleagues at Harvard, Levy believed that he was the most influenced by two men in the desire to open an art gallery. The first was Paul Sachs whom Levy designated “the King Maker” (1977, p. 10).

The centrifugal force, I felt, was Paul J. Sachs . . . He conducted an important course in the techniques of museum direction; for in addition to art appreciation, he was able to cover the down-to-earth side of how to manage an institution, its finances and its budget, how to handle trustees, and how to interest the rich in donating funds- the last an essential function for which any museum director should have an exaggerated talent. Later I was to discover that he was marvelously successful in placing museum directors throughout the country . . . Perhaps I was a candidate to become one (Levy, 1977, pgs. 10- 11).

If Sachs had hoped that, through his influence, Levy would become, like many of his protégées, an important museum director, he would be disappointed. According to Levy, “another teacher in the department was sending me piping in a different direction. This was Chandler Post” (1977, p. 11). Post encouraged Levy to experiment with photography and cinematography as fine art media. In his memoirs, Levy wrote:

Owing to Chandler Post . . . I became seriously interested in the cinema as an art form and combined with my art history courses some work in the physics of optics and the psychology of vision . . . I was given access to a laboratory which included a darkroom. There I spent considerable time experimenting with photography during my last year at Harvard. Thus, in 1931, when I opened my gallery of contemporary art, one of my initial interests was to promote the recognition of photography as a form of modern art.(1977, p. 11)

The second “haphazard indeterminate” which was to effect Julien Levy’s future was his meeting Marcel Duchamp whom Levy referred to as a “spiritual father” (1977, p.17). Levy met Duchamp in 1927 at the Joseph Brummer gallery. Within weeks of their initial introduction, Levy found himself “bound for Europe in the company of Marcel, who had undertaken to introduce me to Man Ray and secure for us an opportunity to use Man Ray’s studio and camera to make a short experimental film for which I had been writing the scenario” (Levy, 1977, p. 19). Unfortunately, Man Ray had sailed for America and upon their arrival in Paris, it was discovered that neither Levy nor Duchamp knew how to operate the film equipment. Therefore, the plan had to be aborted.

Although Levy was not to fulfill his dream of becoming an avant-garde artist, during his pilgrimage to Paris, that sojourn would prove to be catalytic to his future as an art dealer. While there, Levy met many of the great American expatriates and Surrealist artists and poets who dominated the Paris art scene. Levy realized that the moment was perfect to make “the most fertile contacts between the best talents of Paris and New York”

(Levy, 1977, p. 35).

Upon returning to New York, Levy used these contacts to pursue his dream of opening a gallery which showcased both modern photography and painting, “a hopeful successor to Stieglitz’s 291” (Tompkins, 1981, p. 76). In 1931, he rented space at 602 Madison Avenue and opened with a retrospective show of American photographers including Paul Strand, Charles Sheeler, Edward Steichen, and Alfred Stieglitz. He followed the November showing with six more photography exhibits which presented the work of the well known artists Bernice Abbot, Matthew Brady, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Imogen Cunningham, Margaret Bourke-White, Walker Evans, and Louis Daguerre. Along with showing this work, Levy introduced Eugene Atget, George Platt Lynes, Paul Nadar, and Man Ray to the New York patrons during his first season.

Over the next two years, Levy would continue to mount major photographic exhibitions representing both European artists such as Henry Cartier-Bresson, Man Ray, Walter Hege, Helmar Lerski, Umbo, and Maholy Nagy, and American artists such as David Octavius Hill, Bernice Abbott, and George Platt Lynes. Unfortunately, these exhibitions were not commercial successes. According to Levy:

I was to fail at my attempt to bring photographs into the market as fine art in a price range adequate to justify limited editions . . . my three early years of efforts seemed a total loss and did not meet with sufficient support to continue to nourish the photography hope of my gallery. Almost no one bought, in spite of the fact that during the period between 1931- 1933 I showed Bernice Abbott, Eugene Atget,

Margaret Bourke-White, Matthew Brady, Brassai, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Imogene Cunningham, Walker Evans, David Octavious Hill, Daguerre, George Platt Lynes, Man Ray, Paul Nadar, Paul Outerbridge, and others.(1977, p. 69)

Fortunately, Levy had also pursued his desire to exhibit works in other media such as drawing, painting, and sculpture. “It was fortunate that mine was also an art gallery; thus I was not without another string to my bow . . . even if most of these were neither conventional or easily sold” (Levy, 1977, p.69). During his first three seasons, Levy showed successfully the paintings by Massimo Campigli and Charles Howard, drawings by Eugene Berman and Pavel Tchelitchew, etchings by Pablo Picasso and Georges Rouault, and sculptures by Joseph Cornell and Alexander Calder. In his memoirs, Levy recorded his delight in his exhibitions:

I wish I could make precise the feelings I had of what I can only call self-significance that opening day . . . my first art exhibition, as I looked around the gallery and the two-score visitors who were being served sherry at closing time. I was not the impresario of a smashing success, but neither was I the undertaker of a failure . . . The press promised to be reasonably kind, there was a chance of enough sales to give bread and butter to the artists for what amounted to a year of work, and encouragement enough for another show another year later, when they might be ready with new material. All the indications were towards expanded sales, there being no place to go but up. (p. 88)

In the seventeen years of its existence, during what Levy termed “those crucial



years between Dadaism and the apotheosis of Moma-ism [Museum-of- Modern-Art-ism] (1977, p. 12), the Julien Levy Gallery would host a varied assortment of exhibitions representing widely divergent artists. The 1933- 34 season not only included the works by Campigli, Berman, Tchelitchev, Picasso, Roualt, and Calder, but paintings by his mother-in-law Mina Loy, lithographic posters of Toulouse-Lautrec, costume and set designs for the Russian Ballet, and Impressionist works by Monet and Renoir as well. During the next five years, between 1934 and 1939, Levy continued to show disparate work such as early American folk art and theatrical posters, Walt Disney gouaches of Snow White, the drawings and paintings of the comedienne Gracie Allen, sculptures and constructions by Giacometti and Gabo, etchings by Gabor Peterdi, and the work of Jean Cocteau, Yves Tanguy, and Tamayo. During the following decade, Levy showed paintings by nineteenth century American artists such as Jerome Thompson, William Bradford, and Thomas Chambers, shows of costume design and advertising illustrations along with paintings from the Federal Art Project. To this mix, he introduced a new stable of artists including Leon Kelly, Dorothea Tanning, Kay Sage, David Hare, Matta, Victor Brauner, Paul Devaux, Jean Raynal, and Arshile Gorky. According to Levy, this diverse approach to exhibiting art was the key to his success. “Almost immediately the gallery assumed a certain prestige, already seemed more assured and established than it really was. A small but steady stream of the general public was supplementing the friends, artists, and gallery habitues who constantly came in and out. We were selling”(1977, pgs. 74-75).

Although these diverse exhibitions brought Levy recognition, it was his advocacy of the art and artist representing “the literal dream world . . . the nostalgic world of

fantasy” (Levy, 1977, p. 158) which established him as a serious dealer of the vanguard. According to Levy, “it was to be his gallery that represented the most enduring artists of the period: the Surrealists” (1977, p. 12).

In 1932, Levy presented the first Surrealist exhibit hosted by a commercial gallery in the United States. The show entitled “Surrealism: Paintings, Drawings, and Photographs” included the work of Pierre Roy, Max Ernst, Salvador Dali, Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Jean Cocteau, and Joseph Cornell. According to Levy, “my Surrealist exhibition in January of 1932, was, overnight, to turn my gallery into the unforgettable moment in art history it can still claim. I could not have been more delighted with the phenomenal excitement it achieved, in New York and elsewhere . . . Even Europe was suddenly conscious of the Julien Levy Gallery, it seemed. Mail and press clippings poured in” (1977, p. 79). Critical reviews of the time, such as the editorial which appeared in the January edition of Art News, attested to Levy’s success:

A pleasant madness prevails at Julien Levy’s new and interesting gallery, with its miscellany of surrealist paintings, drawings, prints, and whatnot. Mr. Levy has been at considerable pains to inform us what these ultra-modern men are up to, and he is to be congratulated on the well rounded line-up of the surrealist camp. If the so-called modern movement has done nothing more than free us from the necessity of sticking to those facts immediately relevant to our immediate and, in most cases, rather limited experience, it has worked a great wonder. (1932, p.16)

Given the success of that unprecedented show, Levy continued his aegis for

Surrealism. In 1932- 33 season, Levy exhibited the work of Man Ray, George Platt Lynes, and Joseph Cornell as well as hosting a solo exhibit of Max Ernst. In the following two years, he continued to represent these artists as well as giving three one-man exhibitions to Salvador Dali. In the 1935-36 season, he showcased the work of Rene Magritte and Yves Tanguy and the following year continued with Dali, Ernst, and DeChirico. Between 1937 and 1940, the gallery again showed Dali, Ernst, Magritte, and DeChirico as well as presenting new works by Wolfgang Paalen and Frida Kahlo. The years between 1941 and 1947 witnessed twenty-more shows of Surrealist art including the work of David Hare, Marcel Duchamp, and Arshile Gorky. In less than sixteen years, Julien Levy presented forty-six shows championing the Surrealist cause. Through his monumental efforts to promote Surrealism, Julien Levy's name "in the popular mind, became firmly identified with the movement" (Levy, 1977, p. 158).

During the two decades that Julien Levy worked in his gallery, he developed an avid and auspicious clientele. According to Levy "my best clients were those who, by whatever accident, had already stumbled on one or another artists I was planning to unveil, or who already owned a painting or two of the recondite moderns that I would show and, considering them their own special pets, found my activity most sympathetic, a confirmation of their own independent judgement" (1977, p. 84). The earliest clients of Levy were Maude and Chester Dale who bought Dali, Edgar Kaufman who patronized Frida Khalo, and the collector, Dr. Albert Barnes, who was interested in De Chirico. Later, the cultural elites such as Kirk and Constance Askew, T. Catesby Jones, and the

financier, Eddie Warburg patronized Levy's gallery. According to Levy, two of the most singularly important clients were the Museum of Modern Art trustee, James Thrall Soby who "rounded out his impressive modern collection through my gallery" (1977, p. 112), and Chick Austin "who acquired from me works of almost all my artists for the Wadsworth Athenaeum" (1977, p. 136). To Levy, placing the work of his artists in museums through clients such as Soby and Austin, was paramount for this guaranteed success for the creative individual, as well as acceptance by the public via the power of the institution. For almost two decades, Julien Levy, as a gallery owner, serving as both mentor and marketer of modernism in the United States, devoted himself to this principle.

In 1949, Levy decided to close his gallery for varied and complicated reasons. First were financial concerns. According to Calvin Tompkins, Levy "was an amateur in the old sense, a man so infatuated with art that, in a demanding profession, he functioned unprofessionally" (1981, p. 75). Levy himself stated that he had little business acumen, indeed, he had "a downright foolish but basic disinterest in or distrust of business drive or making money" (1977, p. 89). As early as 1934, entries in personal diaries and gallery notes, which were later published as part of his memoirs, indicate that although his exhibitions were often popular successes, they were not always financial successes. Levy wrote in his journal "The entire season of 1934-1935 bore an overcast of gloom for me . . . Nobody bought" (1977, p. 155). In 1940, Levy again attested to financial failure when he noted "I invited Sweeney to the preview. He was polite and noncommittal. He did not buy then or for some time to come. The exhibition was a resonant flop" (1977, p. 251). The following year, Levy stated that business had not improved, indeed it had worsened. "In

1941 business is not only terrible, it is nonexistent” (1977, p. 255). According to Levy, despondency over his economic difficulties led to a despondency concerning the artists he represented. “Having been disappointed in previous hopes of sales, I began to discourage young artists coming by the gallery and tried to avoid looking at their work” (1977, p. 275). This attitude cost Levy many of the brightest stars in his artistic stable. He would lose Giacometti, Tanguy, Calder, Matta, and Tamayo to Pierre Matisse and Kay Sage, Dorothea Tanning, David Hare, and Joseph Cornell to Peggy Guggenheim.

The second reason Julien Levy decided to close his gallery was that he felt his business had never really been able to recover from an enforced hiatus of several months due to illness in 1942. Julien Levy felt that during his absence profound changes occurred in the art world. In his memoirs, Levy stated “my prolonged illness, interrupted my participation in the events of the New York art world which was to prove of much significance for subsequent decades” (p. 258). In his memoirs, Levy clarified these “significant events.” The first was the meeting of the exiles from Paris with the American artists at Pierre Matisse’s gallery for the “largest Surrealist show in New York” (1977, p. 259). Second was “the debut of the magazine VVV, edited by Andre Breton and David Hare” (1977, p. 259). Lastly, there was “the opening of Peggy’s gallery, Art of This Century, which rocked New York” (1977, p. 259). Levy had been correct in his belief that the confluence of these events had changed the art world. The advancement of vanguard art now lay in other powerful hands. His exclusion from these events left him feeling “undernourished, bored, and tired of giving and not receiving” (Levy, 1977, p. 277). Bitterly writing in his journal, Levy stated:

I had begun to realize that credit of discovery and early recognitions that were mine were being brazenly claimed elsewhere. Such unpleasant instances appeared to be multiplying; instances when I felt I offered my aesthetic ideas and treasures only to see them immediately preempted by others. It became increasingly difficult for me to take these slights with humility. (1977, p. 277)

In 1949, Julien Levy “after arranging for a retrospective show of Gorky’s work and placing my various artists in other galleries . . . decided to close the gallery; to live simply in the country; to write perhaps; to pursue other interests; to finish my memoirs” (1977, p. 295). Although Levy exited the commercial realm of the art world with a “growing distaste for the work that I had so long pursued against all odds” (Levy, 1977, p. 295), he left a substantial legacy which was multidimensional and far reaching. Julien Levy was the first to mount a Surrealist exhibition in the United States at a commercial gallery. Levy’s early championship of Surrealism laid the groundwork for an aesthetic transformation in this country. The importance and influence of the artists he showed on the evolution of the avant-guard practices in the United States cannot be overestimated. Through his intense advocacy of Modernism, by enjoining his clients to support the modern artists, he enriched many private collections with avant-garde works. Most importantly, by successfully placing examples of modern art in museums and institutions, he contributed to the development of an appreciative awareness for Modernism in this country.

#### The Pierre Matisse Gallery

On December 24, 1924, Pierre Matisse arrived in New York with the intention of becoming an important figure in the art world in his own right. As the second son of the

famous artist Henri Matisse, he would face a difficult time establishing his own identity. “I cannot present myself simply as my father’s son. But if I, Pierre Matisse arrive with a batch of really important paintings, I can knock on any door in New York and be made welcome” ( Pierre Matisse Archives). Armed with borrowed paintings by Cezanne, Gauguin, Seurat, Utrillo and Derain, but with little or no capital, young Matisse began making the rounds of galleries and shops in New York. Undaunted by a lack of established connections, Pierre Matisse believed “I will get talked about. I shall exist as myself. That is the only way to get on. There is a great future in the States for a courageous young man” (Pierre Matisse Archives). By 1925, Matisse had indeed established himself as a successful dealer and had entered into a partnership with Valentine Dudensing. In this partnership, Matisse was to provide expert knowledge of and access to major modern artists through his personal relationship with his famous father while Dudensing provided the capital. Matisse would serve as the European liaison and procurer of art while Dudensing worked as the salesman in America. For three years, their gallery on East 57<sup>th</sup> would host highly acclaimed shows featuring the great modern masters of Europe. But by 1928, philosophical differences between the two partners concerning the future of the art world in the United States became insurmountable and the working arrangement between Matisse and Dudensing became strained. In a series of acerbic letters and telegrams which flew across the Atlantic from New York to Paris and back, the crisis between the two partners was clarified.

On November 9, 1928, Dudensing questioned Matisse’s wisdom of procuring abstract work by Picasso. Feeling he understood the buying taste of the American public

better than Matisse, he raged that Matisse was “going in too deep and too exclusively for Abstraction . . . I don’t want Picassos because I don’t know who to sell them to” (Pierre Matisse Archives). Yet it is in this very praxis of contention that Pierre Matisse’s vision of and commitment to introducing European Modernism to America can be seen. Rather than give up this vision, Matisse was willing to dissolve a successful partnership and start over on his own in the precarious art world of New York. Matisse would continue to gamble both his economic security and his professional reputation to establish a place for the artists and works he believed in. A testament to Matisse’s dauntless commitment to representing this new work can be found in an appreciative response from Joan Miro when he stated “I am well aware that it is not easy to handle my paintings. It calls for almost as much courage as it takes for me to paint them” (Pierre Matisse Archives). For Matisse, the gamble was necessary, and by establishing himself as an independent, Matisse was free to build a client base which had the foresight and aesthetic sensibilities to embrace the great modernists of the day. “Discerning clients were fundamental to the long term plans that Pierre had for his gallery. This was not simply because of the financial support for which they could be counted upon. It was because through them the work of Joan Miro, Alberto Giacometti, and Jean Dubuffet would become part of the imaginative climate of the United States” (Russell, 1999, p. 84). To Pierre Matisse, the building of an art gallery clientele and the establishment of a new aesthetic could not be separate pursuits. He perceived the roles of artists, dealers, patrons, and critics as a relational entity working in tandem. In an unpublished essay Matisse articulated his philosophy:



As the artist cannot always wait for the public to get used to his work and must live in the meantime, it is the role of the art dealer to discover what angle of a painter's or sculptor's work can first break the public's reserve. In this respect the cooperation of the critic is useful, his purpose being to establish on an always wider base, the relationship between artist and public . . . To sum up, for the art world to function properly, artists, critics, dealers, and patrons should cooperate. (Pierre Matisse Archives)

For the next sixty-five years, Matisse would devote himself to this vision. As a steward of modernism, Matisse would establish and develop relationships with singularly insightful and powerful collectors, critics, patrons and artists. Collectors such as Harry Abrams, Edward G. Robinson, Edsel Ford, John Graham, Margaret Guggenheim, Edgar Kaufman, Henry Miller, J.D. and Nelson Rockefeller, Walter Chrysler, and Joseph Pulitzer sought out Pierre Matisse for guidance in their accumulation of great art. Dynamically designed catalogues for upcoming exhibitions were graced with introductions by leading intellectuals and writers such as Albert Camus, Ernest Hemingway, Jean Paul Sartre, and Nicolas Calas. Major critics such as Henry McBride, Edward Alden Jewell, Robert M. Coates, James Lane, and Clement Greenberg, through their eager attendance at every opening hosted by Matisse, established the importance of the gallery with headlines such as "Pierre Matisse Gallery is first in the arena of Surrealism" (Coates, 1936, p. 18) and statements such as "Pierre Matisse is an adept at bringing together a few important pictures whose rarity value is outstanding . . . He does this time after time with telling success" (Lane, 1941, p. 24). Grand denizens of the art world such as Alfred Barr, Thomas

Munro, and James Thrall Soby would look to Pierre Matisse to establish collections which would later become the mainstay of the great museums in the United States.

In contrast to Julien Levy, who exhibited hundreds of modern works, at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, literally thousands of works, by modern artists such as Miro, Balthus, Siqueiros, Sage, Arp, Tamayo, Dufy, Roualt, Leger, de Chirico, Tanguy, Lam and Matta, were introduced to the American public. Along with such artists, unprecedented shows of exotic cultures such as Peruvian textiles and oceanic sculptures, along with African and Pre-Columbian art further conveyed Matisse's philosophy of the universal importance of the combining of the primitive, the mystic, and the spiritual in art. His ability to attract and manage some of the most well respected artists of the day, as well as the significant new comers, left many of his colleagues and competitors nonplused. Julien Levy articulated this sentiment in his memoirs when he wrote "Pierre opened his gallery in the Fuller building two years after mine . . . Pierre's gallery and mine carried on a friendly rivalry. Our lines never really crossed. He came on the scene with a good stock of his father's paintings and was able to deal with more established figures of the period, men like Picasso and Miro. This I could only envy from a distance" (Levy, 1977, p. 117).

The aesthetic philosophy of Pierre Matisse, expressed through his sponsorship of Modernism, was documented in every major publication of the time. Art work, introduced by Matisse, had been a subject discussed by notable critics since the mid 1920s. Debates, critiques, and attempted interpretations were published by a variety of writers including Henry McBride, Edward Alden Jewell, and Hilton Kramer. With every exhibition,

reviews, both satirical and supportive, appeared in the New York Times, the New York Sun, the New Republic, and Art News. Robert M. Coates, writing for Art Digest, cited Pierre Matisse as the major sponsor of a new style when he wrote:

I found the work (at Pierre Matisse) an unexpectedly moving exhibition, and I think you may find it so too . . . There is a style of painting gaining ground in this country which is neither abstract or surrealist, though it has suggestions of both, while the way the paint is applied - usually in a pretty free-swinging, spatterly fashion, with only vague hints at subject matter- is suggestive of the methods of expressionism. I feel some new name will have to be coined for it . . . I can't say I'm quite up to this school yet; it still feels too aggressively undisciplined to me. But there it is, and it has to be taken into account. (1944, p. 12)

Catalogues acknowledging Matisse's contributions to major museum exhibitions were written by such respected historians and curators as Alfred Barr and James Thrall Soby. In Partisan Review, James Johnson Sweeney documented Matisse's sponsorship of the accidental or unconscious method of starting a painting which was so critical to many of the avant-garde including the Abstract Expressionists. Even Clement Greenberg, the dogmatic self-appointed arbiter of Modernism, saluted Matisse's sponsorship of modern art when he wrote the only monograph of his career concerning Joan Miro.

The best barometer for gauging Matisse's sponsorship of modern art is the documentation of the breadth and frequency of the exhibitions he hosted. During the crucial years, between 1930 and 1950, Matisse hosted dozens of major exhibitions of modern art. His opening show in 1931, designed to coincide with the major retrospective

of his father's work at the Museum of Modern Art, included the work of Braque, Dufy, Picasso, and Matisse. That same season, he presented "Recent Drawings" by Maillol, "Paintings on Paper" by Miro, and concluded with "Fifty Drawings" by Henri Matisse. The following year, Matisse sponsored four solo exhibitions by Masson, Rouault, Lucrat, and Miro, as well as a group show featuring the work of Dufy, Matisse, Picasso, and Severini. He opened the 1934 season with another major exhibition representing his father's work, which was followed by solo installations for Dufy, Blatas, and Miro. During the same season, he also mounted two unprecedented shows. One was a major exhibition of Oceanic art and artifacts. The other was the premier of Alexander Calder's "Mobiles."

The following season, Matisse continued his championship of both the modern and the primitive by giving three one-man exhibitions for Miro, Masson, and de Chirico as well as presenting "African Sculptures" and "Textiles, Pottery, and Sculptures from Ancient Peru." The 1936 season opened with the exhibition "Large Paintings: Eight Moderns" which featured the work of Matisse, Miro, Picasso, Masson, de Chirico, and Modigliani. He also mounted solo exhibitions for Calder, Ferren, and Matisse. To these venues, he added an exhibition of native art work representing America, Oceania, and Africa as well as the first major retrospective for Joan Miro. Matisse began the following season with another large group show entitled "Masterpieces of Modern Painting and Sculpture" in which work by Brancusi, Giacometti, Miro, Picasso Matisse, and de Chirico was featured. In addition, he sponsored four solo exhibits for Dos Passos, Calder, Rouault, and Laurencin. For the next two years, Matisse continued this pattern of mixing themed group shows with solo exhibitions. In the 1938 and 1939 seasons, exhibitions, such as,

“From Matisse to Miro,” “Paintings by French Masters,” and “Summer Exhibitions by French Moderns,” which showcased the new work by Miro, Picasso, Matisse, and Masson, were followed by one-man installations by Malthus, Calder, Arp, and Tanguy.

The decade between 1940 and 1950 witnessed equally stellar presentations of great works of Modernism at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. During the seasons of 1940 and 1941, Matisse hosted “Landmarks in Modern Art,” “Small Pictures by French Painters,” and “French Modern Paintings” which featured his traditional stable of European greats as well as presenting one-man shows for Miro, Derain, Calder, MacIver, and de Chirico. Along with these exhibitions, he featured for the first time at his gallery through solo exhibitions, the work of Siqueiros, Kay Sage, George Platt Lynes, and Marc Chagall.

During the following two seasons of 1942 and 1943, Matisse continued to present group exhibitions such as “Figures in Modern Art,” “Recent Arrivals from Abroad,” “Thirty Years,” and “Modern Watercolors and Drawings” which displayed the established Europeans along with creating venues for lesser known artists such as Lam, Matta, Tanguy, and Tamayo. Along with these presentations, Matisse continued to host one-man shows for artists including Chagall, Lam, Miro, and Calder as well mounting two unprecedented shows which would have a great effect on the patrons of art at that time. The first was “Modern Pictures Under Five Hundred.” In this venue, Matisse offered small works, drawings and original prints by artists such as Miro and Klee at prices ranging from \$35.00 to \$450.00. The second unprecedented show was his landmark exhibition entitled “Artists in Exile.” In the following two years, Matisse mounted solo exhibits for Picasso, Derain, Matta, Lam, MacIver, Chagall, Miro, and Tanguy. Larger

shows such as “Ivory Black in Modern Painting,” “Eleven Nudes by XX Century Artists,” and the “Salon de la Liberation” featured new works by Dufy, Tomayo, Masson, Laurencin, and de Chirico. Matisse also held two more exhibits of “Modern Art Under 500” where works by Dali, Derain, and Dufy, along with examples of African and Pre-Columbian art, were offered for sale.

Between 1946 and 1948, Matisse began to intermix his newer artists with the great masters in group shows. His first attempt showed the work of Picasso, Miro, and Derain along with new pieces by Matta, Lam, and Tamayo. Over the next two years he would hold six similar exhibitions including “First Showings” featuring pieces by Picasso, Balthus, Dubuffet, Matta, Miro, and Rouault and “Summer Exhibition” in which the work of Dali, Carrington, Klee, Ernst, and Giacometti were added to the mix. As well as this new approach to group shows, Matisse continued to host solo exhibits for Chagall, Matisse, Matta, Tanguy, Dubuffet, Lam, Miro, and Carrington. The seasons of 1949 and 1950 saw Matisse continuing with this approach to group shows as witnessed in “Paintings, Gouaches, Drawing and Sculptures,” “Selections,” and “Contemporary Art.” He also continued his sponsorship of one-man exhibits for Balthus, Miro, Dubuffet, Lam, Tanguy, Giacometti, and his father.

During the critical years of 1930 through 1950, in which Matisse mounted more than 140 shows which represented the most avant-garde artists from Europe and many of the most promising artists in America, perhaps the most important show held at his gallery was the “Artists in Exile” exhibition. In his gallery notes, Matisse testified to the significance of the show by stating “for a Frenchman brought up in the midst of that

atmosphere of research and discovery which surrounds the world of all true art, it is a milestone in his career as an art dealer, after eighteen years of showing avant-garde artists, to come to the conclusion that the most significant group exhibition he can assemble is the work of fourteen painters now in exile” (Pierre Matisse Archives).

The artists featured in the show had taken refuge in America during the spread of Fascist oppression in Europe. According to Pierre Matisse, the impetus for the show came from a need to address the future of avant-garde art in the face of such oppression. To Matisse, the situation gave rise to several important questions concerning the displaced modern artists from Europe, the possible interaction of these artists with their American counterparts and the opportunity of hosting a new modern movement in America. Matisse stated “. . . the great questions are whether, during America’s trusteeship Europe’s transplanted culture will flourish here with a vigor of its own or languish for lack of acceptance, or hybridize with American culture or simply perish from this earth” (Pierre Matisse Archives). Next he queried “can we, the real custodians of art, provide painters and sculptors with the cultural citizenship which they need?” (Pierre Matisse Archives). In response, Matisse answered with the affirmative of “all the prerequisites exist for a new assimilation of these intellectual immigrants into American life” (Pierre Matisse Archives). In conclusion, Matisse stated “I believe that artists and art dealers should accept this challenge and that the next step consists in showing the work these artists in exile have done since they came to the United States” (Pierre Matisse Archives).

In March of 1942, Pierre Matisse acted on his conviction and mounted an exhibition of work created by several of the most famous and influential artists of the

Surrealist genre. The momentous gathering of creativity was described, by the art historian Martica Sawin, as “possibly the most impressive assemblage of artists in one room . . . that the twentieth century has ever seen” (1995, p. 201). The fourteen artists included in the show were Matta Echaurren, Ossip Zadkine, Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst, Marc Chagall, Ferdinand Leger, Andre Breton, Piet Mondrian, Andre Masson, Amedee Ozenfant, Jacques Lipchitz, Pavel Tchelitchew, Kurt Seligman, and Eugene Berman. The conceptual theme of the show was displacement and acceptance of the modernist aesthetic and each artist was required to submit new work which demonstrated this by being conceived or completed in America during his period of exile. Included in the exhibition were extraordinary visions of the Surrealist epoque such as Masson’s “Seeded Earth,” Tanguy’s “Time and Again,” Matta’s “Initiation,” and Max Ernst’s “Europe After the Rain.”

The accompanying catalogue was composed of two essays which outlined the dilemma of an avant-garde caught between two shores. The first essay, entitled “Europe” was written by James Thrall Soby and introduced the exiled artist, calling attention to their untenable positions, as well as emphasizing the uncertain future of modern art if it did not find a new home in the United States. The opening paragraph not only implored the viewer to embrace a vision of an international art with its etymology rooted in European traditions and its future nurtured in home soil, it also outlined the resulting consequences to America if she failed to accept this opportunity. Soby wrote:

Here are fourteen artists who have come to America to live and work. They are a disparate group, but all belong to the rare company of those who have brought originality and authority to the art of their period. Their presence can mean much



or little. It can mean the beginning of a period during which the American traditions of freedom and generosity may implement a new internationalism in art, centered in this country. Or it can mean the reverse; it can mean that American artists and patrons may form a xenophobic circle and wait for these men to go away, leaving our art as it was before. (Pierre Matisse Archives)

As an affirmation of his belief that the European artists would find a receptive home in the United States, Soby concluded with the phrase “Welcome, Welcome, Welcome” (Pierre Matisse Archives).

The second essay, entitled “America” was composed by Nicholas Calas. In the essay, Calas discussed the unique opportunity to begin a new art era formed from the interaction between the culturally displaced artists of Europe and the receptive art world in America. As an invective, he wrote “it is necessary for the pioneers in culture of both continents to agree on their outlook on the future” (Pierre Matisse Archives). In reiteration, of Soby’s premise that the only home for this new aesthetic was in the United States, he stated: “If the excellence attained by the painters and sculptors of the Paris School is to have a future, the work of the immigrant artist must be grafted to American life”(Pierre Matisse Archives).

The “Artists in Exile” exhibition demonstrated Pierre Matisse’s commitment to the concept that the future of avant-garde art was in America. The exhibit from inception to culmination represented, according to Matisse, “confidence in the cause I am defending” (Pierre Matisse Archives). He defined his cause as “a nurturing of modern art” in the United States and perceived his role as a “trustee.” Throughout his career, Matisse

advanced this crusade. During the critical years of 1930 through 1950, Matisse mounted more than 140 shows which introduced thousands of works of art by the most avant-garde artists from Europe and many of the most promising artists in America. Through such venues, Matisse fervently supported and promoted the theory that the destiny of great modern art lay in America. As both patron and presenter, Matisse helped to root modern European traditions in American soil thereby facilitating the development of an avant-garde movement in the United States.

### Peggy Guggenheim and Art of This Century

In December of 1942, Peggy Guggenheim opened her gallery, aptly named Art of This Century, at 30 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City. In her memoirs, Out of This Century: Confessions of an Art Addict, Guggenheim declared that her intent was to create a venue which featured both the recognized giants of European avant-garde art and the up and coming artists in America as well. According to Guggenheim “Art of This Century should not only be a museum space that exhibited European masters but also a commercial gallery that sold the paintings of young American artists” (1979, p. 59). From its inception, both Peggy Guggenheim’s incentive for opening her gallery and her choice of artists to showcase had generated great controversy. According to the Martica Sawin, “the question may be legitimately asked whether genuine perspicacity, social reasons, or amorous expectations most strongly guided her collection and her selection of artists” (1995, p. 235). Proponents, such as Alfred Barr, unequivocally supported Guggenheim’s efforts with statements such as “courage and vision, generosity and humility, money and time, a strong sense of historical significance, as well as esthetic quality- these are the factors of

circumstances and character which have made Peggy Guggenheim an extraordinary patron of twentieth-century art” (1979, p. xv). Detractors, such as Hilla Rebay, the director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Non-objective Art, perceived Guggenheim as an “upstart” who merely traded on her uncle Solomon Guggenheim’s reputation as a great benefactor of modern art. In a caustic missive, Rebay wrote “It is extremely distasteful at this moment, when the name of Guggenheim stands for an ideal in art, to see it used for commerce as to give the wrong impression, as if this great philanthropic work was intended to be a useful boost to some small shop” (Guggenheim, 1979, p. 171). In a letter from Hilla Rebay to Yvanhoe Rambosson, dated April 18, 1940, Rebay again dismissed Guggenheim by stating “I think Peggy Guggenheim is simply trying to ride on our fame”(Lukach, 1983, p. 132). Regardless of how Guggenheim was perceived at the time she opened her gallery, it is now recognized that “whether by chance or intention, Guggenheim was, in effect, a constructor of history” (Sawin, 1995, p. 236).

Guggenheim’s desire to open an avant-garde gallery began several years prior to the establishment of Art of This Century. It was in 1937, while Guggenheim was traveling in Europe in an attempt to recover from the simultaneous death of her husband John Holmes and the aftermath of an aborted affair with Douglas Garman, that the idea of becoming a patron of modern art was first broached. According to Guggenheim “when the fact dawned on me that my life with Garman was over I was rather at a loss for an occupation” (1979, p. 159). By chance, a letter from a good friend directed Guggenheim to the auspicious occupation she would choose. Guggenheim’s grand daughter, Karole P. B.

Vail stated:

The turning point for Peggy occurred in May of 1937, when her close friend Peggy Walman wrote to her suggesting she do something serious with her life, such as opening an art gallery or establishing a publishing house . . . Thinking an art gallery would be a less expensive venture than a publishing house, she opted for the former little knowing how much energy and money she would pour into it.

(1998, p. 30)

In her memoirs, Peggy Guggenheim worded it more directly when she wrote “little did I dream of the thousands of dollars I was about to sink into art” (1979, p. 159).

The first problem Guggenheim faced was that she had little or no background in art history or aesthetics. According to Guggenheim, “at that time I couldn’t distinguish one thing in art from another” (1979, p. 161). To resolve this dilemma, Guggenheim began to seek counsel from the most respected and acknowledged advisors of modern art. This was a tactic she would continue throughout her life. The first man to serve in this capacity was Marcel Duchamp. Already established as both an avant-garde artist and purveyor of modern art collections, through his associations with Catherine Drier and Mary Reynolds, Duchamp began to advise Guggenheim. “She turned to Marcel Duchamp . . . for guidance. He introduced her to Jean Arp, Jean Cocteau, and many other artists . . . Duchamp was happy to counsel Peggy on her future purchases. It was to Peggy’s credit that she was wise enough to diligently follow the advice of Duchamp and later advisers” (Vail, 1998, p.31-32). In her memoirs, Guggenheim attested to both her dependence on and her gratitude to Duchamp by stating:

Marcel tried to educate me. I don't know what I would have done without him. To begin with, he taught me the difference between Abstract and Surrealist art. Then he introduced me to all the artists. They all adored him, and I was well received wherever I went. He planned shows for me and gave me lots of advice. I have him to thank for my introduction to the modern art world. (p. 161-162)

Through her association with Duchamp, Peggy Guggenheim developed working friendships with several of the leading abstract and Surrealist artists such as Jean Arp, Vasily Kandinsky, Constantin Brancusi, Jean Cocteau, Humphrey Jennings, Andre Breton, and Yves Tanguy. She promoted their work and began plans to open a gallery to showcase their masterpieces. The result would be the Guggenheim Jeune.

In 1938, Peggy Guggenheim opened her first gallery, located at 30 Cork Street, Piccadilly, with an exhibition of drawings and furniture designed by Jean Cocteau. She followed this show with a solo exhibit for Kandinsky, and an exhibition of contemporary sculpture which featured the work of Arp, Brancusi, Calder, Duchamp-Villon, and Moore. As an ending to her debut season, Guggenheim mounted another group show which displayed the work of Max Ernst, Vasily Kandinsky, and Rene Magritte, as well as a one man exhibition for Yves Tanguy. During the second and final season, Guggenheim continued with such vanguard installations and "Guggenheim Jeune became a catalyst in the growing appreciation for modern art" (Vail, 1998, p. 36). Unfortunately, the combined strain of disastrous love affairs which Guggenheim conducted with several of her artists and clients, as well as economic difficulties, soon led to the closing of the Guggenheim Jeune. In her inimitable fashion, Guggenheim wrote in her memoirs "it seemed stupid of

me to go on with the gallery, which was suffering a loss of about six hundred pounds a year although it appeared to be a successful venture. I felt that if I was losing that money, I might as well lose a lot more and do something worthwhile” (1979, p. 196).

The “something worthwhile” was the vague idea of opening a museum for modern art in London. Guggenheim perceived her museum as a philanthropic institution based on the example set by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. For this cause, she would need a new and different type of advisor from Marcel Duchamp. She turned to Herbert Read. At the time, Read was considered one of the leading proponents and critics of contemporary art. He was a prolific writer concerning modern aesthetics and had published several books including The Meaning of Art (1931), Art Now (1933), Art and Society (1936), and Surrealism (1936). According to Guggenheim, “I approached Herbert Read, who was trying very hard to promote modern art in England. I liked him immensely and felt we could work well together. I made him give up his position as editor of the stuffy Burlington Magazine, and in exchange gave him a five-year contract as director of the new museum which we were to open in the fall”(1979, p. 196). In 1939, Read enthusiastically outlined his vision of the new museum which he foresaw as a venue for multiple media of historical importance in the evolution of modern art. Read stated:

It is quite conceivable that, as it may develop, paintings will play only a part in the scheme. The idea is rather to create a focus for whatever creative activity and critical appreciation there is to be found in this country; to define and defend the modern tradition; to create an atmosphere in which that tradition can develop . . . it will be a historic sequence in which each painting is a necessary link, and historical

significance will be even more important than aesthetic significance. (1939, Getty Research Institute for the Arts and Humanities, Los Angeles, Special Collection, Douglas Cooper Papers)

For several months, Guggenheim and Read worked together to realize their dream. According to Guggenheim, “He soon became a sort of father in my life and behind his back I called him Papa. He treated me the way Disraeli treated Queen Victoria. I suppose I was rather in love with him spiritually” (1979, p. 198). Fortunately for Peggy Guggenheim, Read’s advice was not limited to the spiritual or the fatherly. He composed a list, based on his own extensive connections and knowledge, of modern artists and works of art Guggenheim was to pursue for the opening of the museum. When Guggenheim decided to abandon both the museum project and London, she departed for the continent taking Read’s list with her. According to Guggenheim:

I then had to face a settlement with Mr. Read . . . I had arranged everything by correspondence. Our lawyers broke our contract, and Mr. Read accepted half of five years’ salary, minus what he had already received . . . He was very much disappointed . . . I felt I had rendered him a great service in freeing him from his dull job on the Burlington Magazine and he was two thousand five hundred pounds richer for our brief association . . . I had no qualms. (1979, p. 206)

United again with Marcel Duchamp, as well as a new advisor, Howard Putzel, Guggenheim began to systematically purchase the art works, which had been intended by Read for their museum, for herself. In her memoirs, Guggenheim wrote “When I got to

Paris I started very seriously to buy paintings and sculptures. I had all the museum funds at my disposal and lots of free time and energy on my hands. My motto was Buy a Picture a Day and I lived up to it” (1979, p. 209).

By 1941, Peggy Guggenheim decided to abandon war-torn Europe and return to the United States. In July of that year “eleven people: one husband, two ex-wives, one future husband, and seven children” flew from Lisbon to New York (Guggenheim, 1979, p. 245). In coming to America, Peggy Guggenheim brought two prerequisites for the guaranteed success of her plan to open an avant-garde gallery in New York. One was the unprecedented collection of contemporaneous European art which she accrued from Herbert Read’s list. The other was her new lover, Max Ernst, who was considered to be one of the most important Surrealists of his day. Those two factors, combined with her personal wealth and unwavering desire, would be the foundation upon which Art of This Century would be built.

In 1942, Peggy Guggenheim joined the other preeminent dealers of modern art when she rented space at 30 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street. Hiring the visionary architect Frederick Kiesler to design four exhibition rooms, Guggenheim achieved her desired effect for “a wonderful gallery- very theatrical and extremely original. Nothing like it had ever existed before” (Guggenheim, 1979, p. 274). Kiesler’s design subdivided the space into four separate rooms including a Surrealist gallery, dedicated to current expressions in that idiom, the main gallery which was to display Guggenheim’s personal collection, and two smaller galleries which were dedicated to new work by young American artists. On the night of October 20, Guggenheim opened her gallery as a benefit for the Red Cross. The



artist Rudy Blesh, whom Guggenheim later represented, attended the gala event and described two of the four galleries. Upon entering the Surrealist room, Blesh wrote:

The carnival, peepshow atmosphere, like Peggy Guggenheim herself, was both gay and serious. One saw Marcel Duchamp's "Valise (La Boite), within which was ironically packed with reproductions of a lifework of this calm traveler through life. Glimpsed through a peephole . . . they spiraled up into view: the "Nude Descending a Staircase" and the "Sad Young Man on a Train," the "Bottle Rack" and the privy joke of the fountain . . . and the mustached "Mona Lisa"- all meaningful paraphernalia of a great and playful mind. (1956, p. 220)

Along with Duchamp's work, Guggenheim featured pioneering examples of Surrealistic assemblages by Laurence Vail and Joseph Cornell including "Collage Bottles" and "Fortune Telling Parrot." To enter the main gallery, "one was to awake out of a quiet nightmare into a harmless world. Here floated and jutted and tilted Peggy's personal collection: paintings and sculptures hanging in mid-air on guys of taut cord or cantilevered into space" (Blesh, 1956, p. 219).

Here, indeed on every hand in Peggy Guggenheim's sublimated dollhouse, we saw the noble toys of a whole generation: the cubism of Braque and Picasso; Delaunay's orphism and Leger's earthy poems of the mechanical; the virginal mathematics of Mondrian and Van Doesburg, and the fantastic non-utile constructions of Gabo, Pevsner, and Alexander Calder. In little lighted theaters hung Paul Klee's fantasies of knowing childhood, and with appropriate starkness

on the wall hung Malevich's famous, almost blank canvas "White on White."  
(Blesh, 1956, p. 220)

With the success of her opening exhibit, Art of This Century "became one of the major social venues of the New York art world" (Vail, 1998, p. 51). Offering both the opportunity to view "the most up-to-the-minute collection of European modern art" and the prospect of interacting with Max Ernst and his Surrealist circle, Guggenheim presented an irresistible venue for the supporters of Modernism in America (Sawin, 1995, p. 234). Through the success of Art of This Century, Guggenheim would come in contact with many of the most power denizens of the art and museum world. According to Guggenheim's granddaughter, Karole Vail, "Peggy soon comes to know Alfred Barr, James Thrall Soby, who was to become Barr's successor as director of the Museum of Modern Art, and James Johnson Sweeney, later to be director of the Museum of Non-objective Painting" (1998, p. 51). In time, these men would lend their aegis to Guggenheim's gallery and the artists she represented.

For the second exhibit at Art of This Century, Guggenheim mounted a group show entitled "31 Women." The exhibition was juried by Andre Breton, Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp, James Johnson Sweeney, and James Thrall Soby. Included in the show were works which represented both the Surreal and abstract genre by such artists as Dorothea Tanning, Leonora Carrington, Xenia Cage, Louise Nevelson, Meret Oppenheim, Kay Sage, Hedda Sterne, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, and Guggenheim's daughter Pegeen Vail. To this roster, Guggenheim also mounted a solo exhibition for Helion.

Guggenheim followed these shows with two unprecedented exhibitions. The first

was a group exhibition conceived by Max Ernst's younger brother, Jimmy Ernst. It was entitled "15 Early 15 Late Paintings" and showcased pieces done early in the various artists' careers along side their most recent work. The artists represented included Kandinsky, Braque, Leger, Miro, Mondrian and Dali. Continuing with the comparing and contrasting theme, Guggenheim then mounted the "Exhibition of Collage" which was designed to intermix the work of European masters with the work of young Americans. The show was of monumental importance for two reasons. First, it was the premiere of an international exhibition of abstract collage techniques held in the United States. It showcased the work of Cubists, Dadaists, and Expressionists such as Kurt Schwitters, George Grosz, Picasso, and Braque. Second, the exhibition introduced the work of a group of young Americans who would later be recognized as the New York School. Displayed side by side with the European masters was the work of Ad Reinhardt, William Baziotes, Robert Motherwell, and Jackson Pollock.

To conclude her first season, Guggenheim again featured the American artists in the "Spring Salon for Young Artists." Again, setting a precedent which would have a monumental effect on the development of Modernism in the United States, Guggenheim showed the work of Baziotes, Pollock, Motherwell, and Reinhardt as well as new pieces by Matta and Gordon Onslow-Ford. The exhibition was important to these up and coming artists because it introduced them to the patrons who frequented the avant-garde galleries looking for "a unique opportunity to see the newest American art" (Vail, 1998, p. 62). For the young artists, it was also their first opportunity to interact with many of the most powerful men in the art world. After all, the jury consisted of Alfred Barr, Howard Putzel,

James Johnson Sweeney, and James Thrall Soby. In her memoirs, Guggenheim commented on the role these men played in the advancement of the careers of her young artists, particularly that of Jackson Pollock. She wrote “James Johnson Sweeney helped a lot to further Pollock’s career. In fact, I always referred to Pollock as our spiritual offspring” (1979, p. 315).

Guggenheim opened the 1943- 1944 season with a Surrealist show entitled “Master Works of Early de Chirico” which was designed to illustrate James Thrall Soby’s text entitled The Early de Chirico. She then mounted Jackson Pollock’s first one man exhibition. The solo exhibit’s catalogue, composed by Sweeney, discussed the importance of Pollock’s newest works, including the now famous “She-Wolf.” The exhibition was reviewed by many of the leading critics of the day including Robert Coates of the New Yorker and Clement Greenberg for Partisan Review. The critical reviews, along with praise of Guggenheim and Sweeney, attracted the attention of Alfred Barr who later purchased “She-Wolf” for the Museum of Modern Art. Because of this exhibition, “Pollock became the central point of Art of This Century” (Guggenheim, 1979, p. 315).

The remainder of the season was devoted to three large group shows and two solo exhibitions; one for Jean Arp and one for Hans Hoffman. The first group show, entitled “Natural, Insane, Surrealist Art,” featured works by both European and American artists who explored relationships between petrification, bones, and skeletons. The next show, entitled “First Exhibition in America of Twenty Paintings” not only included the work of Guggenheim’s usual stable of young artists such as Motherwell, Matta, and Pollock, it

introduced the art of Mark Rothko as well. To finish the season, Guggenheim again sponsored a “Spring Salon for Young Artists” which featured Baziotes, Jimmy Ernst, Hare, Pollock, Pousette-Dart, and Sterne.

During the following season of 1944-45, Guggenheim escalated her practice of showcasing young American artists in one man shows. That year she hosted first solo exhibitions for Baziotes, Motherwell, Hare, and Rothko as well as mounting Pollock’s second solo exhibition. Along with her sponsorship of the Americans, she exhibited the work of Giacometti and Wolfgang Paalen.

For the opening of the fourth season of Art of This Century, Guggenheim, with the advice of Mark Rothko, decided to present a venue for young painters in the fall. The “Autumn Salon” included not only her traditional favorites, such as Pollock, Motherwell, and Baziotes, it introduced the art of Willem de Kooning and Clifford Still as well. Along with these newcomers, Guggenheim also added Peter Busa and Arshille Gorky to her roster. The remainder of the season was devoted to solo exhibitions for Charles Seliger, Lee Hersch, David Hare, Janet Sobel, and Jackson Pollock.

During the final season of 1946-1947, Guggenheim mounted one group show and devoted the remaining dates of the gallery’s calendar to eight solo exhibitions. These included shows for Hans Richter, David Hare, Rudi Blesh, Theo van Doesburg, Virginia Admiral and Marjorie McKee. Along with these artists, Guggenheim mounted an exhibition for Pousette-Dart and Jackson Pollock’s fourth one man show. After arranging for these final exhibitions, Guggenheim closed her famous gallery. In her memoirs, which were published during that final season, Guggenheim cited two reasons for her decision to

abandon her project. First, she stated “as much as I loved Art of This Century, I loved Europe more than America, and when the war ended I couldn’t wait to go back” (1979, p. 319). The second reason she gave was “I was exhausted by all my work in the gallery, where I had become a sort of slave . . . I had become a sort of prisoner and could no longer stand the strain” (1979, p. 319).

Although Art of This Century existed for only a brief five years, Peggy Guggenheim’s influence on the modern art world would be felt for decades. During that short, but crucial period, Guggenheim mounted forty-three exhibitions which showcased both singular examples of European modernism and the now recognized masterpieces of America’s first vanguard movement. Clement Greenberg wrote “her departure is in my opinion a serious loss to living American art . . . the fact remains that in the three or four years of her career as a New York gallery director she gave first showings to more serious new artists than anyone else in this country. I am convinced that Peggy Guggenheim’s place in the history of American art will grow larger as time passes and as the artists she encouraged mature” (Vail, 1998, p. 72). Through her concomitant promotion of the established modernists and the fledgling abstract artists, Guggenheim provided the perfect forum for the establishment of an American avant-garde movement. She created “a melting pot of European and American art . . . for it was within the eccentric spaces of Art of This Century that the young Americans began to be shown, first side by side, then in solo exhibitions, and it was at 30 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street that the nucleus of the future New York School might first have been discerned” (Sawin, 1995, p. 235). Through her efforts, Peggy Guggenheim achieved what other supporters of modern art had pursued, the complete

grafting of new American concepts to vanguard European modernism. The result was America's first avant-garde movement; the New York School. According to Peggy Guggenheim "a new art had to be born - Abstract Expressionism. I fostered it. I do not regret it" (1979, p. 364).

### Patrons and Collectors as Champions of Modern Art

By the mid-nineteenth century, Americans had established a preference and pattern for collecting European art. Industrial barons, such as the Mellons, Fricks, Kresses, Carnegies, and Morgans, all amassed significant collections of great art, representing western civilizations perceived high points of the past. In addition to the untold sums spent on their collections, they then poured millions of dollars into the construction of Renaissance palaces and Graeco-Roman temples to house these past masterpieces. These Edwardian trophy hunters, presenting themselves as patrician patrons, thought that "art would conquer the provincialism of America, smooth its frontier beauty, refine its shellback materialism, and take the raw edges off new capital" (Hughes, 1988, p. 391).

According to Rudy Blesh, patronage for modern art sprang from the same source, albeit from a different generation. "Our patronage of modern art came first, mainly from the only aristocracy we recognize: the powerful and wealthy" (Blesh, p. 116). According to Alfred Barr, there was a pronounced distinction between the collectors of the nineteenth century and the modern patron of the twentieth century. Whereas the preceding patrons used their wealth to literally purchase a cultural past, the new patricians used their money to promote modernism for both the contemporaneous culture and a vehicle for the future culture as well. Barr recognized that the collector of modern art needed to have similar

power, both financially and socially, as the past collector, but he believed the new patricians should use their aegis differently. Barr stated, “a patron is not simply a collector who gathers works of art for his own pleasure or a philanthropist who helps artists or founds a public museum, but a person who feels responsibility toward both art and the artists together and has the means and will to act upon this feeling” (1979, p. xv). By the third decade of the twentieth century, Barr’s vision was realized and a modern form of patrician patronage emerged.

As early as 1930, “a handful of seers paved the way for modernism in America” (Weber, 1992, p. x). Advised and educated by the professional dealers, inspired by travels in Europe, and motivated by a personal passion to collect art which reflected living memory, this powerful group of modern art collectors began to “change the cultural landscape of America” (Weber, 1992, p. xi). This group included many of the commercial dealers as well as socialites, such as Mrs. Cornelius (Mary Quinn) Sullivan, Lillie P. Bliss, Mrs. John (Abby Aldrich) Rockefeller, and Mrs. Sadie A. May. Intellectuals and academics, such as Mrs. Murray Crane of the Dalton School, Paul J. Sachs, Sidney Janis, James Johnson Sweeney, and Stephen C. Clark were early collectors as well. Successful business men such as Edgar Kaufmann, Philip Johnson, Walter P. Chrysler, and Edsel Ford as well as Harvardites such as A. Everett Austin, Edward M. Warburg, and James Thrall Soby also belonged to this group. Writers and celebrities such as Ernest Hemingway, Edward G. Robinson, and Henry Miller along with the museum pioneers such as Alfred Barr, Conga Goodyear, Hilla Von Rebay, and Albert Barnes were early collectors as well.



The members of this diverse group, each from their own position of privilege and with courageous catholicity, amassed many of the now recognized landmarks of great modern art. Each individual purchase represented a commitment to the establishment of both the artistic value and the market value of modernist pieces. As both private collectors and representatives of collecting institutions, this group battled to establish modern art as an accepted aesthetic movement. Between 1930 and 1950 works by such diverse artists as Matisse, Miro, de Chirico, Joseph Cornell, Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst, Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, Robert Motherwell, William Baziot, Mark Rothko, and Jackson Pollock were purchased by American collectors. According to Nicholas Fox Weber, “by championing what few people had dared to consider, these adventurers awakened many of their friends, as well as a segment of the general public” (1992, p. x).

The pioneering efforts of these early collectors did effect the public’s perception of the desirability of modernism. Two surveys conducted by Art News in 1944 and 1945 attested to the growth of a new demographic market for modern art. These studies indicate that art works by modern masters were being pursued by both the patrician collector and the general public as well. The first survey, resulting in an article entitled “Who Buys What in the Picture Boom” by Aline Louchheim, announced “the buying of contemporary painting hit a *boom* this season. High prices and frenzied interest in a season marked by an outstanding number of sales of important contemporary masters, red-star studded galleries, and sly, pleased smiles of dealers have been eloquent testimonies” (1944, p. 12). In reiteration, she wrote “galleries handling all varieties of contemporary painting, from conservative canvases to abstract work, report phenomenal acceleration” (1944, p. 12).

The study included:

“Twenty-four galleries, representing a cross-section of those handling primarily contemporary painting, were selected, a cross-range in both ranges of prices and in variety of artists. For purposes of general classification on the basis of the kind of painting handled, they fall into three groups: Group A: Handling painting conservative in character whose roots go back clearly to the nineteenth century. Group B: Handling modern painting, traditional in character, with roots in early twentieth century styles, including expressionist, cubist, romantic fantasy, and primitive painters. Dealing almost entirely with American painting. Group C: Handling the so-called avant-garde group including abstract and surrealist painters. Dealing, in most all cases, in both European and American painting. (Louchheim, 1944, p. 12)

According to Louchheim, the survey of these three groups, denoted modern art buying increased dramatically from the previous year. During the season, between September and June, the total sales recorded were 3,711 pieces making the average sale per gallery about 212. The revenue generated from these sales was conservatively recorded at \$2,250,000.00. In addition to these sales to private individuals, the survey reported a total of \$453,572.00 in sales to “important institutions dominated by contemporary or almost contemporary painting” such as the Museum of Modern Art (1944, p. 13).

In analyzing the data from the survey, Louchheim posited that the sales in modern art had not only reached a new monetary level, the data suggested that the aesthetic value of modernist works was appealing to a new market. She stated “not only have established

collectors been buying more and in higher brackets, but approximately one-third of the purchasing this season has been done by the *new collector*, the man making an initial purchase” (1944, p. 12). The survey had asked the dealers to address this issue by posing questions such as “Who is the new collector? Where does he live? What does he do?” (1944, p. 13). The dealers’ responses not only verified that modern art was being bought by a new demographic, the purchases represented “a definite trend in taste . . . there is unanimous agreement that people are buying what they like” (1944, p. 14). From the dealers responses, the new demographic represented “the upper middle-class stratum” and the individuals fell roughly into three categories; business men, professional men, and service men. Their reasons for buying modern art were listed as “personal” and their recorded responses varied from the pedantic to the emotional. A cotton merchant stated he bought because “my business is doing a little better,” while a young steel executive replied “my wife liked it and I wanted to surprise her for her birthday”(1944, p. 14). An attorney from California stated “I drop in to buy whenever business brings me to New York,” while a young soldier stated “I’m about to go to the Pacific, and I’m told there’s not much to do with your money after you leave Pearl, so I thought I’d buy a painting to have when I get back” (1944, p. 14). Regardless of the reasons the new collectors gave for their purchases, the dealers of contemporary art saw this activity as a definite “trend away from the pretty picture . . . towards a marked increase of interest in emotional and interpretive painting, expressive rather than representational” (1944, p. 14).

In 1945, Art News followed up their initial survey with a similar instrument for

gathering information concerning the sale of contemporary art. The findings were published in the article “Second Season of the Picture Boom: Private Buying of Contemporaries Continues to Climb.” The author, Aline Louchheim, opened her article with the statement “With the books on the 1944-1945 season officially closed and the facts now available, it is clear that last year’s phenomenal picture boom still flourishes and the question of Who Buys What? has renewed pertinence” (1945, p. 9). This second survey, not only reflected that modern art sales had “increased 37% above last year’s record” (Louchheim, 1945, p. 9), it reflected a marked rise in the prices for modern art and the broadening of a geographical demographic as well.

According to the survey, galleries “furnishing exact comparative figures” registered a 10% increase in the price collectors paid for contemporaneous art. Louchheim attributed the rise in the market price of modern art to several factors. First she cited the dedicated purchasing decisions of art institutions to acquire modernistic works instead of traditional art. She stated “the 1945 season was marked by an all-time high in the auction rooms, by purchasing of U.S. museums in the contemporary fields and in the dwindling of the old master market” (1945, p. 9). The second reason Louchheim cited was the willingness of the general public to increase their purchasing power to obtain contemporary art. She stated “simultaneously, the general purchasing public, made up of collectors new and old, has been acquiring in increasing volume and tending to pay higher prices for contemporary art. (1945, p. 9). The dealers, which were surveyed, posited that the spiraling prices for modern works also reflected the artists’ confidence in commanding higher prices, that “the artist feels he can now ask a price nearly commensurate with what

his work is worth” (Louchheim, 1945, p. 9).

As well as higher prices, the survey indicated that the increase in gallery revenues reflected repeat business. According to the survey, the new collector or first time buyer from the previous season had now become the repeating purchaser by 1945:

Last year’s Mr. New Collector, the person who ventured for the first time actually to buy a work of art, accounted for one-third of the total sales of contemporary paintings. This year he makes up only about one-fifth of the whole. But according to the survey, collecting art gets to be a habit, for 38% of last year’s new collectors have joined the ranks of regular buyers . . . the actual number of repeaters is undoubtedly closer to 50%. (Louchheim, 1945, p. 9)

According to the dealers’ statements, much of the repeat business had to do with the growing confidence in and appreciation for modern art. “Dealers agree that once the hurdle of making a mistake has passed, the collector is eager to acquire another painting for the living room . . . and frequently move into higher brackets, their confidence in their judgement bolstered by experience” (Louchheim, 1945, p. 10).

Louchheim summarized that the new demographic supporting modern art was decidedly middle-class and represented a wide geographical range. She reported . . . About 62% of this general buying public are in business (or the wives of businessmen), 28% are in professions, 2% are students, and 7% are at present in the armed forces . . . and that 7% art purchased went to the Far West, 12% to the Middle West, 6% to the South, and 16% East outside New York City”(1945, p.10).

In conclusion, Louchheim documented how modern art was being embraced by the

American public when she wrote:

Into the varied kinds of houses and apartments in which such a public lives - into settings of fluorescent lamps and Aalto plywood, into homes furnished with mohair and Grand Rapid chairs, and into carefully planned period rooms- contemporary art has found its way . . . the repeated and expanding activity this season indicates that Americans have finally gotten the idea of making modern art their own. (1945, p. 10)

### Patronizing Modern Art: Museums and Their Roles as Presenters and Educational Entities

By 1930, institutions in the United States, such as the Museum of Modern Art, were recognized for responding “to the characteristic interests and needs of contemporary society” (Lynes, 1973, p. 161). These institutions, which inaugurated the practice of housing masterpieces on home soil, were charged with determining “in what way the museum could most effectively aid in the development of esthetic values in American life” (Lynes, 1973, p. 160). The battle for the development of a modern aesthetic would be waged on two fronts; exposure through carefully planned exhibitions and appreciation through educational campaigns. Artemis Packard, a trustee of the Museum of Modern Art in 1938, articulated the dual role of the museum in America. “What we are really confronted with is the need for two quite consciously and deliberately different kinds of enterprises; on one hand, the search for what is best in art according to the highest standards of critical discrimination, and, on the other, the provision of facilities for popular instruction in accordance with the public need” (Lynes, 1973, p. 161).

The first path chosen by the MoMA founders in 1928 was to amass a collection of modern art in order to visually inundate the general public with show after show of modernist masterpieces. In the first two decades of its existence, the Museum of Modern Art presented more than four hundred exhibitions of modern art representing multiple fields of endeavor such as painting, drawing, printmaking, photography, sculpture, industrial design, commercial design and illustration, film and architecture. According to James Thrall Soby, “we tried to include works both of fulfillment and of promise: works widely recognized as masterpieces of modern art; and works by younger artists of rising power and authority” (1944, p. 11). During its first decade of existence, the MoMA launched landmark exhibitions such as “A Brief Survey of Modern Painting” (1932), “Modern American Painting and Sculpture” (1932), “American Sources of Modern Art” (1933), “Modern European Art” (1933), “Machine Art” (1934), “Modern Watercolors and Pastels” (1934), “Modern Works of Art” (1934), “African Negro Art” (1935), “Cubism and Abstract Art” (1936), “Modern Painters and Sculptors” (1936), “New Horizons in Modern American Art” (1936), “Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism” (1936), “Prehistoric Art” (1937), “Twelve Modern Paintings” (1937), “Masters of Popular Painting” (1938), “Art in Our Time” (1939), and “Picasso” (1939).

Between 1940 and 1950, the museum hosted “Modern Masters from European and American Collections” (1940), “Visual Expressions in Art” (1940), “Indian Art” (1941), “Paul Klee” (1941), “Picasso” (1941), “Joan Miro” (1941), “Salvador Dali” (1941), “Twentieth Century Sculpture and Constructions” (1942), “Twentieth Century Portraits” (1942), “Alexander Calder” (1942), “Modern Drawings” (1943), “Hayter and Studio 17:

New Directions” (1943), “The War Years: Picasso and Matisse” (1944), “What is Modern Painting” (1945), “Modern Paintings from New York Private Collections” (1946), “Fourteen Modern Americans” (1946), “Forty-six Recent Lithographs by Picasso” (1947), “Large Scale Modern Paintings” (1947), “Miro” (1948), “Timeless Aspects of Modern Art” (1948), “Painting and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art” (1948), “Modern Art in Your Life” (1949), “Paul Klee” (1949), “Picasso” (1950), and “Three Modern Styles” (1950).

Through these extraordinary exhibitions, the American public was introduced to not only the well-known masterpieces of modernism such as Picasso’s “Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. R. M.)”, Matisse’s “Blue Window,” Cezanne’s “Still Life with Apples” or Van Gogh’s “Starry Night,” they were introduced to the fantastic images of Automatism, Surrealism, Non-objective art and the work of the New York School as well. The three most important venues, hosted by the MoMA, which helped acquaint the broad public with these avant-garde movements were the “Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism Exhibition,” “Art in Progress,” and “Painting and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art.”

According to Alfred Barr, the “Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism” exhibition of 1936, “was planned to present in an objective and historical manner the principle movements of modern art” (1936, p. 7). In the forward to the catalogue, Barr articulated the importance of Surrealism when he wrote: “It should be stated that Surrealism as an art movement is a serious affair and that for many it is more than an art movement: it is a philosophy, a way of life, a cause to which some of the most brilliant painters and poets of



our age are giving themselves with consuming devotion” (1936, p. 8). The landmark show introduced many to the concept of art which appealed to the “persistent interest which human beings have in the fantastic, the irrational, the spontaneous, the marvelous, the enigmatic, and the dreamlike” (Barr, 1936, p. 9). The exhibition showcased six works by Salvador Dali including “Illuminated Pleasures” and “The Persistence of Memories,” fourteen works by Max Ernst including “2 Children are Menaced by a Nightingale” and “The Nymph Echo,” nine pieces by Hans Arp including “Objects Arranged According to Chance or Navels” and “Human Concretion,” eleven pieces by Giorgio de Chirico including “Melancholy and Mystery of a Street,” six pieces by Marcel Duchamp including “The Coffee Mill” and “The Bride,” seven pieces by Paul Klee including “Mask of Fear,” three pieces by Rene Magritte including “The Eye,” seven pieces by Miro including “Catalan Landscape,” “Person Throwing a Stone at a Bird,” and “Composition 33,” and five pieces by Yves Tanguy including “Heredity of Acquired Characteristics” and “From the Other Side of the Bridge.”

In 1944, the museum continued its championship of the avant-garde with the “Art in Progress” exhibition. As a celebration of its fifteenth anniversary, the museum presented the exhibition as a gesture of affirmation of “the increasing acceptance of the works by living artist” (Soby, 1944, p. 9). James Thrall Soby wrote that the show was “an assertion of goodwill toward all those who create and enjoy modern art and a plain statement of faith in the free evolution of its ideals and the progression of its esthetics” (1944, p. 10). Along with many of the artists featured in “Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism”, the museum elected to show “The Eternal City” by Peter Blume, “The New

Born” by Constantin Brancusi, “Red Petals” by Alexander Calder, “Echo of a Scream” by David Siqueiros, “The Palace at 4 A.M.” by Alberto Giacometti, “Garden in Sochi” by Arshile Gorky, “Tarantelle” by Stanley Hayter, “Le Vertiged’Eros” by Matta, “The Capital” by Isamu Noguchi, “Horse and Lion” by Rufino Tamayo, and “Hide and Seek” by Pavel Tchelitchew.

Four years later, the MoMA mounted the “Painting and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art” exhibition. In the forward to the catalogue, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, John Hay Whitney, stated that the importance of the show was two-fold. First, he reiterated the museum’s commitment to a modern collection which “is a symbol of freedom, freedom of the artist, and through the artist of every individual, to speak his mind without fear of persecution. And beyond individual freedom, it symbolizes the freedom of nations to cherish not only their own works of art but those of other people as well” (1948, p. 6). Second, Whitney stated that although such an avant-garde show involved the risk of “invective and ridicule,” the trustees believed “that it is only by taking such risks that this living, changing collection can best serve the living present and, with the helpful editing of time, the present yet to come” (1948, p. 6). Along with works by automatist such as Ernst, Arp, Miro, Masson, Matta, and Gorky, the exhibition presented the work by members of the New York School including “Voyagers Return” by Adolph Gottlieb, “Sounds in the Rock” by Theodoros Stamos, “Dwarf” by William Baziotes, “Threading Light” by Mark Tobey, “Poncho Villa, Dead and Alive” by Robert Motherwell, and “The She-wolf” by Jackson Pollock.

Although these exhibitions represented a significant stand in the battle to introduce

modern art to the general public, the denizens of the museum world realized that they must broaden the scope of their attempted acculturation if they were to seriously alter the aesthetic sensibility of the nation. In conjunction with the vanguard exhibitions, the museums adopted a second strategy which dealt with education and dissemination. Directors and curators of the major museums, such as Alfred Barr, Thomas Munro, James Thrall Soby, and Rene D'Harnoncourt, championed new educational methods for the general public. In 1936, the Advisory Board of the Museum of Modern Art stated that "to make converts, it is necessary to open young eyes to the new truth, or at least not shut them off from discovering delights for themselves by interposing between them and the arts, old, academic prejudices and conventional methods of teaching" (Lynes, 1973, p. 168). As a result, the Museum of Modern Art in 1937 secured the services of the esteemed educator Victor D'Amico to "work out an educational project through which the museum's material would become more useful to and more used by secondary schools in New York" (Lynes, 1973, p. 169). As the first director of the newly forged Department of Education of the MoMA, D'Amico formed the National Committee on Art Education with the primary charge to "educate the teachers first" (Lynes, 1973, p. 169). "Its members carried the word into primary and secondary schools and into colleges in all parts of the country, and did it with the zeal of converts and the devotion of missionary priests" (Lynes, 1973, p. 171).

Articles published in the educational journals of the time acknowledged the contributions made by museums and galleries to progressive pedagogy. In 1936, a special edition of School Arts was devoted to "a symposium of the educational programs of the art

museums and shows how this work can supplement that carried on in the public schools” (Pelikan, 1936, p. 67). The editor of this edition, A. G. Pelikan, defined the purpose of this conference by stating “many questions such as the best means of teaching appreciation, of developing creative ability, of making art function more fully in the lives of all people, and other equally important topics have been discussed by art teachers and by members of the educational staffs of the museums”(1936, p. 67). In achievement of these goals, articles such as “Opportunities at the Metropolitan Museum of Art” (1936) by Huger Elliot, “Museum of the City of New York” (1936) by F. G. Barlow, “The Children’s Hour” (1936) by Margaret M. Lee, and “Educational Work of the City Art Museum Work” (1936) by Mary Powell, promoted the interaction of classroom activities with the viewing of art in museum collections. “The purpose is to develop in the child increased sensitivity and bring him into friendly and intimate contact with actual works of art . . . the trip to the museum thus becomes not only a pleasant outing but an informal extension of classroom work and a part of the pupil’s visual training” (Powell, 1936, p. 125).

The College Art Journal also published entreaties to teachers and professors to join forces with museums and galleries. An article, entitled “Education Activities of the Museum of Modern Art” by Agnes Rindge, discussed not only the importance of students visiting museums and galleries, it detailed the MOMA’s educational philosophy as well. Rindge stated:

We share the anxiety of many educators in art that a new wave of vocationalism, of practical training, may once more discourage and retard the teaching of art in our schools. We know more than ever about the value of it for the participant, and we

know too that future artists need early access to the tools of their craft and opportunities for imaginative creation . . . The Museum was founded, of course, upon the idea that people want to know the art of their own time, since it is the current phase of our whole cultural tradition . . . Our concern is to make the art of our time available to those who want to learn and to emphasize its role in contemporary life. If that is education, we are engaged in it, without distinction of age or previous condition of servitude. (1944, pp. 136-137)

Other articles extolling the convergence of museums, galleries, and traditional educational forums followed in a rapid sequence. Articles such as “Of Education in Art Museums” (1944), “Educational Activities at the National Gallery of Art” (1944), “Relation of Graduate School Training to Work in Museum Education” (1944), “The Winthrop Collection and its Use in Teaching” (1944), “The Museums Responsibility to the Future” (1947), “Aesthetic Theory for Museum Curators” (1947), “The New Art Collection at Washington University” (1947), and “The Place of Aesthetics in the Art Museum” (1947), all encouraged experimental and exploratory pedagogical practices and suggested that “perhaps the College Art Association can help to bolster the position of the teacher in the schools, and all of us can increase our opportunities to study and advance in our own professions” (Rindge, 1944, p. 136).

Visits to museums were not the only means of encountering great works of modern art for appreciation. Acknowledging the need to share the visual images housed in these collections with an ever expanding, appreciative American culture, several museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art instituted educational programs which would make art

more accessible to the general public. The MoMA's director Alfred Barr stated "to create public opinion favorable to art, the only hope lay in educating young people who can still be influenced by bringing them and their teachers in constant contact with the best art of our time in museums and in the community (Lynes, 1973, p. 168). In October of 1932, Barr created an educational package from the permanent collection entitled "A Brief Summary of Modern Painting in Color Reproduction" to be circulated throughout the New York City high school art departments. "It was in such demand, not only in New York but in colleges and schools elsewhere, that duplicates were assembled and sent traveling" (Lynes, 1973, p. 168). Barr's show circulated for ten years and inspired other exhibitions designed by the Educational Program for Public Schools. These exhibitions included "Modern Art in Everyday Things" (1938), "The Modern Poster" (1938-42), "Modern Painters" (1938-41), "Modern Artists" (1938-40), "Modern Pictorials" (1939-43), "Abstract Painting" (1938-44), "Modern Sculpture" (1939), "Drawings by Matisse" (1940-44), "Introduction of Modern Painting" (1941-44), "Modern American Painting" (1941-44), "How Modern Artists Paint" (1942-44), "Introduction to Modern Sculpture" (1942-44), "American Artists of Our Time" (1942-44), and "Four Modern Painters" (1942-44).

The interest in this type of extramural exhibition led the MOMA to establish the Department of Traveling Exhibitions in 1933. The director of this department, Elodie Courter stated "Since the inception of the Museum of Modern Art it has been the desire of the trustees that it should not remain a strictly metropolitan exhibition center but should extend its services and influence throughout the nation by the means of out-of-town memberships and circulating exhibitions" (1944, p. 210). Under her directorship, the

department composed a precept which decreed:

The most characteristic phase of the Museum's activities is probably the traveling exhibition program. Apart from the material assembled periodically in the Museum's own galleries, exhibitions from the permanent collection or brought together from outside sources have been circulated outside New York to museums and colleges all over the country. One reason for developing the circulating exhibitions was the general reluctance of most schools and colleges to include contemporary art in their studies. And for many museums, the field of contemporary art, other than their own local artists, has been relatively inaccessible . . . At present the Museum of Modern Art maintains a program of one hundred and thirty traveling exhibitions of modern art for circulation, which are shown over five hundred and fifty times annually. (Rindge, 1944, p. 133)

By 1944, the museum had circulated 2655 exhibitions of modern art throughout the nation. Traveling shows such as "A Brief Survey of Modern Painting" (1931-44), "Painting, Drawings, and Prints: Paintings and Drawings from the Lillie P. Bliss Collection" (1935), "Paintings by Twelve Americans" (1935-37), "Derain, Matisse, Roualt (1935-36), "African Negro Art" (1935-36), "Drawings and Prints from the Museum's Collection" (1936-37), "Six Modern Sculptors" (1936-38), "Fantastic art, Dada and Surrealism" (1938), "Modern Painting and Sculpture by Children" (1938-39), "Traditions in Abstract Painting" (1939-40), "Art in Our Time" (1939-40), "20<sup>th</sup> Century Paintings" (1940), "Picasso: Forty Years of His Art" (1940-43), "An Introduction to Modern Painting" (1940-44), "Emotional Design In Modern Painting" (1940-44), "Paul Klee"

(1941), “20<sup>th</sup> Century Sculpture and Constructions” (1941-43) “Leading Modern Painters” (1941-42), “Rivera, Orozco, Siquieros” (1942-44), “What is Modern Painting” (1944), and “12 Contemporary Painters” (1944), introduced modern art to millions of Americans at small museums, rural community centers, Army camps, Naval bases, hospitals, libraries, and community clubs such as Y.M..C. A’s and Y.W.C.A’s.

Other institutions as well, gave their approval for the reproduction of their modern art masterpieces for educational purposes. In response, several companies began to manufacture art curriculum materials as integral resources for course development and teaching practices for the schools. The values propagated through these collections “were blown through the American educational system from high school level upwards. They also filtered down to the kindergartens, considerably raising the status of creativity and self-expression in primary education” (Hughes, 1980, p. 394). For example, as early as 1945, Shorewood Art Visuals, offered to “Bring the rich cultural heritage of the world’s greatest museums to your students through the Shorewood Masterpiece Series. Full-color, large size prints are easily displayed in classrooms, hallways, and libraries. Use as teaching aids to enhance lessons in humanities, social studies, language arts, and art appreciation at all grade levels.”(Triarco Arts and Crafts Inc. Fall Catalogue, 1997, p. 344). Competing companies such as Nasco Arts and Crafts promised “You can count on us to offer the newest, most innovative art products . . . every artist and art student needs to succeed” (Nasco Arts and Crafts Catalogue 1999, p. 2). Packets entitled “20<sup>th</sup> Century Art Masterpieces,” “How Does an Artist See” and “Major Styles in Modern Art,” helped familiarize thousands of American school children and college students with the work of



avant-garde European artists such as Miro, Giacometti, Matisse, Leger, Masson, Arp, Dali, and de Chirico as well as the contemporaneous artists of the United States. Advertisements for these reproductions and traveling exhibitions appeared frequently in the School Arts Magazine, Art Education, and the College Art Journal. By 1936, “75,000 lantern slides, 25,000 photographs and color prints” from museum and gallery collections made masterpieces of art available to teachers and students everywhere (Elliot, 1936, p. 12-a).

### Mainstreaming Modern Art Through Expressive Education

The history of art education denotes the twenty-year period from 1930 through 1950 as the turning point in the pedagogical methods of teaching art. By 1930, progressive educators began examining the concept of art education as a means of encouraging students to see art as a forum of personal growth through creative expression. As early as 1930, a course of study entitled Art in the Junior and Senior High Schools, published by the Department of Education of Washington State, listed as a main objective “the development of creative self-expression . . . for the few who may become producers . . . and for all as means of individual growth” (p. 579). Similar objectives were proposed in New Mexico (1930), Hawaii (1930), Connecticut (1932), Arkansas and Ohio (1937), and Louisiana (1947). Each course of study maintained “every child is born with the power to create; that power, if released early and developed wisely, may become for him the key to joy and wisdom and, possibly, self-realization” (Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction, 1933, p. 11). The commitment to this principle was stated in the precept of the National Art Education Association as well. The creed stated “art experiences are essential to the fullest development of all people at all levels of growth because they promote a self-

realization of the whole individual by integrating his imaginative, creative, intellectual, emotional and expressive capacities” (The National Art Education Association, 1948, p. 2).

Prior to this period, educational practices had placed art outside of the traditional fields of liberal studies. Studio arts existed within the confines of vocational training. Art appreciation was practiced as a tool of social and moral edification, while art history was rigidly constricted within the classics curricula. By virtually exiling the artistic disciplines from the general education curriculum, the importance of art was devalued in the intellectual arenas of the university systems and public schools of the United States. The progressive education movement of expressionism effectively shattered this practice.

The expressive approach to art pedagogy insisted “that education in a democratic society presupposes some purpose other than mere socialization and that this presupposed purpose is to cultivate the capacity of future citizens to think for themselves: to deliberate, judge, and choose on the basis of their own reflections” (Carr, 1995, p. 75). These tenets of the expressive philosophy would find their visual correspondents in modern art. The creative manifestoes of the avant-garde, in which the exalting of individual and artistic freedom represented freedom in society, suggested new directions for educational practices. The uniting of artists and educators under the banner of the vanguard, at the forefront of society, became a call to action and the redefined studio artist became a model for educational reform. According to Arthur Efland in A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts (1990), “the avant-garde artist was to become a new form of a cultural hero, and under the banner of creative self-

expression, the fortunes of art education rose again” (p. 186). In this revolutionary époque, the artists became the oracle of society and the responsibility of education would be the mentoring of this oracle. In the expressionist approach, the making of art would be taught as creative self expression, art appreciation would be taught as a means of inciting creativity, and art history would include the study of modernism.

Prior to this period, art education responded to and reflected the changing nature of modern work in an industrial society and the ever fluctuating conception of a social hierarchy. Surging industrialism called for a practical or "Vocational" education versus a literary or "Professional" education. This shift in types of education corresponded with a change in labor habits and directions. The industrial society of the United States needed more emphasis placed on manual training to compete with the skilled labor classes in Great Britain and Europe. Manual training meant the introduction of a "Vocational Track" and a different type of education for different social classes became an institutional reality for public schools. With the passing of the Smith Hughes Act of 1917, the vocationalism of American public schools became an official reality. Early progressive educators such as Jane Adams and Ellen Gates Starr had responded to the demands of the industrial society by introducing the philosophical concepts of the Arts and Crafts movement in social settlements. This response called for the teaching of art in schools as a means of sharing the moral benefits of art education with the emerging working class. They believed that this would make the workers see themselves as an important and integral part of modern society. Problems arose when art was taught as a "moral" issue, for the theories and principles promoted by the Arts and Crafts movement were fundamentally at odds with the

changing face of industrialism. As the use of the assembly line increasingly isolated the worker from the ideal of Worker as Artisan, the concept of Art as a Moral Issue became a divisive theory because the exploitive nature of labor practices could not bear moral scrutiny. The industrial workplace had little use for critical thinking such as applying judgements or making aesthetic decisions. The efficient laborer only needed to follow orders and perform specific tasks. This bias in labor practices demanded a change in education, and art education moved away from linking morals and industrial practices.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, progressive educators moved away from the idea of "The Worker's Paradise," and began examining the concept of art education as a means of encouraging students to see art as a forum of personal expression as opposed to industrial artistry. Francis Parker became an important figure in the transition from art education as a handmaiden of industry to the more current concept of encouraging individual expression. Although he introduced the philosophy of child centered education and many modern teaching practices, Parker still kept one foot in the Nineteenth century by continuing to believe "that every child is born a worker" (Amburgy, 1984) and that art education still should serve the needs of a productive society. During the initial decades of the Twentieth century innovative educators such as John Dewey and Sir Herbert Read called into question the early attempts towards modern progressive education. They questioned not only the conflict between art and work, "the need for individual self expression versus the moral needs of society " (Dewey, 1943, p. 43), but also the role of art education in modern society. As educators and philosophers, Dewey and Read worked from an unalterable conviction that the survival and growth of a genuine democracy could

not be conducted apart from an educational system in which art curriculum was linked to creative self-expression. According to Arthur Efland, “artistic freedom was the metaphor for the freeing of other social institutions from the weight of tradition, especially the school . . . Art education had come to mean creative self-expression and was closely identified with progressive education” (1990, p. 222).

Treatises such as John Dewey’s Art As Experience, published in 1934, and Herbert Read’s Education Through Art, published in 1943, opened the flood gates of educational reform and helped to redefine the role of art in a democratic society by linking art curriculum with creative self-expression. To Dewey, the function of aesthetic theory and the task of art education were to recognize works of art as highly individualistic and refined forms of the events that are universally symbolized as the human experience (Dewey, 1934, p. 3). In a similar vein, Read promoted an educational platform wherein art was recognized as an instinctive, aesthetic manifestation of the universal human experience. To Read, “the aim of education is the creation of artists” (1943, p. 1). As important arbiters of both aesthetic theory and art educational practices, Dewey and Read were instrumental in establishing the idea that art must be viewed as an expressive tendency inherent in all humanity. They posited that art was “an attitude of spirit, a state of mind -one which demands for its satisfaction and fulfilling a shaping of matter to new and more significant form” (Dewey, 1934, p. 36). To Dewey and Read, such an attitude could only be nurtured in a democratic society and many of their followers, such as Victor D’Amico and Artemas Packard, believed that the new and more significant form was best realized by modern artists. Through these well-known educators of the expressive stream,

modern art became an integral part of the intellectual discourse concerning democracy, educational reform, independence, and artistic freedom. Nor was it only the recognized and influential members of the art educational systems who participated in this engagement. College professors, elementary teachers and high school art specialists across the United States valiantly broke down the aesthetic barriers by introducing modern art into the art curricula throughout the nation.

In this revolutionary venue, Modernism, children's art, primitivism, the art of ancient cultures, Freudian and Jungian theory, and the fight for intellectual and expressive freedom became inextricably bound together. The educational philosophy of the expressive stream embraced the concept of a continuum of humanity, linking the past, the present, and the future together through artistic creation. In this schema, modern art and modern artists became the exemplars to be studied and emulated. As such, for the first time in history, the studio artist who practiced modernist techniques became a model for educational reform. As the fourth prong in the advocacy of Modernism, the educational system of the United States became the most *crucial* voice in the proselytizing of modern art in America. The result was not merely an educational revolution, but a cultural revolution as well.

CHAPTER IV  
THE DISSEMINATION OF MODERNISM THROUGH ART EDUCATIONAL  
PRACTICES

The years between 1930 and 1950 witnessed unprecedented shifts in pedagogical philosophies and innovations in the methods of teaching art in the University and Public School systems in the United States. During these two decades, as America assumed the mantle of host for international modern art, educators became crucial participants in the intellectual discourse concerning the future of avant-garde practices. As crusaders in the campaign to establish modern art and an expressive philosophy in education, the vanguard educators viewed the evolutionary cycles of modernism as both a source and stimulus for new methods of teaching and critiquing art.

An examination of germane curriculum models, education periodicals, and professional publications such as Parnassus, its antecedent the College Art Journal, the School Arts Magazine, and Art Education during the period of 1930 through 1950, illustrates the influence of the vanguard artists on the transition from the practical education in the manual arts to the concept of encouraging an expressive individuality through the arts. These publications, by featuring essays concerning modern movements such as Abstraction, Automatism, Surrealism and Nonobjective Art, impassioned treatises embracing avant-garde art, curriculum advice and exchanges of pedagogical philosophies,

opened exciting avenues into the art world for educators everywhere. The articles published in Parnassus, the College Art Journal, School Arts and Art Education, not only reflected a growing awareness of the educator to the ascendancy of modern art in the galleries and museums, they reflected a commitment of educators to bring modernist art practices into the classrooms, studios, and lecture halls as well. For inspiration, the contemporaneous art educator could look to these professional journals to view the latest avant-garde tendencies in art. As well as reviews of exhibitions at such vanguard galleries as Pierre Matisse, Julien Levy, and Art of This Century, many reproductions, in both color and black and white, by the great modern artists appeared within their pages between 1930 and 1950. Works by the artists Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Paul Klee, Joan Miro, and Alexander Calder were reproduced to inspire both teachers and students to embrace modernism as a creative practice. Works by such divergent artists as Juan Gris, Andre Breton, Theodore Stamos, Adolph Gottlieb, Jackson Pollock, and Roberto Echaurren Matta were discussed in a receptive, appreciative manner. Distinguished artists, including George Grosz, Anni Albers and Isamu Noguchi, suggested creative art ideas. These publications reflected the prevalence of a confluent pedagogy in which Modernism, including Automatism, Surrealism, Abstraction, and Nonobjective Art, and revolutionary didactic theories were combined in the expressive educational stream.

The effect of these movements on the academic discipline of art history and the applied studio courses, at the university level, can be documented through an examination of the College Art Journal and its predecessor Parnassus. These journals documented the growing influence of modernism on critical scholarship and how the philosophy of



expressive education affected the studio practices. According to Arthur Efland, modernism “richly infused the intellectual scene”(Efland, 1990, p. 223).

### Parnassus

As early as 1931, Parnassus, the publication of the College Art Association which served as a forum for artistic scholarship, began to publish articles which reflected the emerging concerns of the modernist cause. The central issues addressed in the articles were the perceived importance and value of the modern artist as a representative of the modern world, the defining of appropriate techniques for the scholarly teaching and studying of modern art, the possibility of an equal dialogue between the established avant-garde of Europe and the emerging vanguard in the United States and America’s role in the ultimate evolution of Modernism.

An editorial, which appeared in the December 1931 edition, entitled “Exhibition of Living Artists at Pennsylvania Museum” recognized the aesthetic debate concerning the relationship between the avant-garde artists in Europe and the United States. The editor praised the exhibition for being “as comprehensive of a show as probably ever given in America which displays to the public the essence of the technique and the approach of the modern artist as these processes have evolved” (editorial, 1931, p. 31). In conclusion, the readers were encouraged to attend such exhibits “to discover each for himself whether American art in the making is breaking away from the continental . . . whether American artists are setting out upon their own ventures in modern art or whether they are following foreign paths” (editorial, 1931, p. 31).

Two months later, Parnassus revisited the argument concerning which path the emerging modernist in America should take in an article entitled “American Versus European Photography.” The author, Katherine Grant Sterne, began the article by posing the questions “What is American art- How does it differ from the art of Europe?” (1932, p. 16). For answers, Sterne suggested that the readers should “view several photo exhibits recently opened to the public in New York: a Stieglitz retrospective at An American Place, Modern European Photography at Julien Levy’s, and the International Show at the Brooklyn Museum” (1932, p. 16). In reviewing these exhibitions, Sterne posited that there was a huge chasm between American modern artists and the European avant-garde, a chasm which she perceived would never be bridged. She stated “American photographers, like American painters are set apart from their European colleagues by their dominating reverence for the external fact” (1932, p. 16). The revering of external reality versus the examination of internal reality was one of the central concerns facing the art world participants at the crossroads of Nationalism and Internationalism. Whereas American art of the period was predominantly informed by an ingrained realist disposition based on nineteenth century empiricism, European Modernism explored both physical and emotional experiences, the internal reality as opposed to the mere external observation of an object and mimetic reproduction.

Favoring the work of Stieglitz, Sterne described him as a “nationalist,” “the lyric celebrant of old New York, evolving, with no radical mutation in artistic character, into an epic recorder” (1932, p. 17). In contrast, Sterne dismissed the Surrealist work by George Platt Lynes and Man Ray as “a bag of tricks” where the artist “sits down after

breakfast and cuts out a few cubes, cones and cylinders, tastefully interspersed with clippings from yesterday's newspaper and a swatch of a checked table cloth"(1932, p. 20)

In conclusion,

Sterne posited that European modernism "has never been very popular in America and the photomontages of Moholy-Nagy lead one to hope that it never will be" (1932, p. 20).

In rebuttal to Sterne's plea to uphold "Nationalism and Americanism"(1932, p. 16) in the modern arts, Parnassus published the article "Toga Virilis: The Coming of Age of American Art" by Edward Alden Jewell, the art critic of the New York Times. In the article, Jewell refuted Sterne's belief that American art and European art were separate entities by stating "America has certainly not burst into being out of thin air any more than American art. Those who would minimize or ignore altogether America's relationship to Europe (a relationship really of child and parent) are blind to historical perspective" (1932, p. 2). In designating the art and artists of America as the children and the European vanguard as the parent, Jewell not only defined the accepted roles of the past, in which America was cast as the cultural offspring of Europe, he implied the possibility of growth and maturation through guidance and evolution. He then addressed his desire to witness a balanced cultural exchange between European and American modernists, a correlative exchange between the grown-up child and the mature parent, "an equal relationship . . . a conversation; a mutual give-and-take" (1932, p. 2). Jewell posited that the only impediments to achieving this equilibrium were the threats of isolationism, regionalism, and nationalism. He wrote "the guillotine *nationalism* can run up an appalling death count when it comes to losing one's head in the presence of the

flag. Enthusiasm so easily softens into fetish. When it does, you may be sure that the pendulum has swung to the calamitous end of its arc and must presently resume the flight toward equilibrium”(1932, p. 1). In conclusion, Jewell reiterated his belief that the future of both the American and European avant-garde depended on an exchange of ideas and warned against “erecting a Chinese Wall and fostering a cultural insularity that in the end must yield only stagnation” (1932, p. 2).

In the same issue, an article, by the Russian emigre artist John Graham, suggested that the presence of European modernists was already being accepted in America. Graham, like many of the other displaced avant-garde of Europe such as Hans Hofmann, Walter Gropius, and Gabor Peterdi, accepted teaching positions at the universities, art academies and colleges throughout America. Graham, who has been credited by art historians such as Polcari and Anfam as a major influence concerning Surrealism and American artists such as Jackson Pollock, David Smith and Adolph Gottlieb, discussed his completion of a series of seventeen wall murals for Wells College in New York. Graham described the work as “abstract in subject matter and are done in a Surrealist manner . . . they function as a unit of music, mathematics and the bizarre dreams of the subconscious are given existence in space, color, and texture” (1932, p. 34). Graham posited that his Surrealistic approaches “not only provide a series of decorations significant of present day tendencies but serve as well to stimulate the students’ enjoyment of his environment by revealing the plastic beauty of the human scene when creatively abstracted and organized” (1932, p. 34).

The following year, Parnassus published an article by Edward Alden Jewell which

called for the end of the debate concerning the preference for the traditional art of the past over modern abstract art. The essay, entitled “The Art of 1893 and 1933- Two World’s Fairs,” compared “the sentimental wind-up of the Victorian Age” with “modern art which is the sincere, reasoned, and worthy creative work of our time” (Jewell, 1933, p. 6). To Jewell, as well as the other advocates for Modernism, the vanguard movements reflected the humanistic experiences of the day. As opposed to the traditional art of the past, modern art represented the concept of innovative genius and the response of the individual to what was encountered in the contemporaneous world. With his opening sentence, Jewell called attention to the acceptance of modern art by both American artists and the American public as well:

Two World’s Fairs, two eras, and between these eras, as we arrange them side by side, appears the extraordinary drama of changing taste . . . Generally speaking, in the course of forty years the artist’s approach and the tenor of public appreciation have alike undergone significant change. The vast and multi-visaged modern movement itself- so far, at any rate, as this country is concerned- has come to recognition in the period with which we now have to deal. (1933, p. 6)

In comparing the two exhibitions, Jewell suggested that “both exhibitions should be thought of as representing the prevailing taste of their respective epochs” (1933, p. 7). In his review, Jewell articulated the differing evaluative criteria for art between the two eras. In describing the showcase of 1893 he stated:

In the ‘90s, as for a long time previously, the public’s first demand upon an artist was that he furnish his spectators with a substantial piece of story-telling, though

perhaps equally popular was the quiet landscape with grazing sheep and cudgiting cows. Subject, then, realistically and romantically approached, was held to be of utmost importance . . . An artist, if he wanted to enjoy wide public approbation, must make his appeal solely to the emotions. (1933, p. 6)

In juxtaposition, Jewell wrote “when we come to the 1933 exhibition, however, we are immediately confronted by a reversal”(1933, p. 7). Jewell recognized the modern artist as a paradigm of a new art form, conceived in formal abstraction and aesthetic autonomy, forged by the force of the individual’s genius and originality. Citing examples of Surrealism and Nonobjective art Jewell stated “Abstraction, now outright, now subtly suggested, competes with the simple romantic, realistic and photographic principles of earlier days . . . the modern movement, taken as a unit, has come essentially to stand for concept, for *pure* painting in the technical sense; for the sheerer aspects of Aesthetic Idea”(1933, p. 7). In his summation, Jewell saluted the organizers of the show for “not quailing before such difficult trouble makers and mystifiers as Miro’s “Dog Barking at the Moon”and Picasso’s “Seated Woman”(1933, p. 10).

Over the next three years, Parnassus continued to publish articles, reviews, and editorials which asserted that modernism was “the art language of the era” (Jewell, 1933, p. 8). Articles, such as “Day Dreams and Art” by Walter Isaacs and “The Outlook for Modern Art” by Walter Pach, argued that “the constant gains which have been made by the movement have now turned the flow of criticism into the channel of explaining why it has succeeded and endured” (Isaacs, 1934, p. 28). The concept that modern art’s acceptance demanded new critical evaluation had been addressed by various supporters

including Sir Herbert Read in his 1933 publication of Art Now: An Introduction to the Theory of Modern Painting and Sculpture. To Read, criticism of modern art “begins as an impulse to defend one’s instinctive preferences” but should then evolve both systematically and pragmatically to “reach beyond the personal standpoint to one which is universal- that is to say, philosophical and scientific”(1933, p. 11). According to Isaacs, the pronounced rise in the popularity of modernism stemmed from modern art’s unique ability to visually articulate the difference between reality and the illusion of reality; the difference between “truth and fancy” (Isaacs, 1934, p. 28). Isaacs believed that such a distinction was not only evidenced by the creative artist, but by the quality of response of the viewer as well. He stated that in viewing traditional art, the appreciator became intrigued by only an illusion of reality which he termed “wool-gathering,” that “realism is in effect an invitation to revery” (1934, p. 28). To Isaacs, “wool-gathering” or “revery” in critical evaluation resulted in what Read had defined as “habitual complacency” (1933, p. 11). Further eschewing the act of thoughtless appreciation, which he believed frequently occurred while viewing representational work, Isaacs wrote “it is important to distinguish between the contemplation of the real thing and that of an illusion . . . It is the very existence of things in actuality that is of first importance” (1934, p. 29).

Isaacs continued by stating that in modern works “the *real* part of the painting is the material element itself, the canvas, the pigment, the forms and the colors in abstract; while the *unreal* is the representation or the subject” (1934, p. 28). He posited that this distinction, in turn, demanded an equally new type of response from the viewer. “On the whole, modern art seems to arouse a distinctly different kind of mental state . . . There is

a vast difference between being confronted by actual things and that of living in a world of reverie” (Isaacs, 1934, p. 28). Isaacs distinguished the difference as “day dreaming versus an aggressive state of mind” (1934, p. 29). Reiterating that modernism called for a developed, intellectual critical response as opposed to an undeveloped or “sentimental” critique, he wrote “modern art recognizes the necessity of being at once both like and unlike nature, and it is against day dreaming, in that it acts more like a stimulant than a sedative” (1934, p. 29). Isaacs concluded his article by stating “the extreme simplification of modern painting serves as a check on wool-gathering and arouses a consciousness of the here-and-now of things, as opposed to a sense of being wafted away into the land of dreams. The observer retains his presence of mind. Such a mental state should be cultivated” (1934, p. 29).

In concurrence with Isaacs, Walter Pach, the art collector and patron of Pierre Matisse, composed an article in 1936 which called for the celebration of modern art and the critical denouncement of the copying of old masters and the regurgitation of subject and form. Pach stated that “while modern art is creative . . . Copies or imitative works are merely a matter of craft, and original paintings and sculptures that do no more than repeat old forms are soon to be felt to be lifeless things” (1936, p. 5). The essay, entitled “The Outlook for Modern Art,” not only argued that modernism was more highly charged with creativity, it queried why society felt compelled to use the qualifying term “modern” when discussing contemporaneous art. Pach suggested that modern art, as in all eras of art, should only be qualified by adjectives such as original, great, mediocre and genius. Citing the work of Marcel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Raoul Dufy as



exemplars, Pach stated “it is the content and not the form that counts . . . it is that which tells of the genius of a period” (1936, p. 5). To Pach, these contemporary artists were important for they were “engaged in work that permits the expression of our deeper thoughts and impulses” and they stood “against the kind of looking backward which blinds men to the achievement around them” (1936, p. 5). In conclusion, Pach suggested that a continued debate over the merits of modernism was superfluous for modern art represented modern life. He wrote “it would not be more illogical to ask if we are in favor of modern life than to ask if we approve of modern art. We just have no other art . . .” (1936, p. 6).

By the end of 1936, the articles published in Parnassus ceased to primarily debate whether or not modern art would survive as a valid movement. As Walter Pach stated “prophesy is nowhere more hazardous than as to art and the future opinion of it. So we must content ourselves with what men are making as the bravest attempt of our day” (1936, p. 43). Over the next four years, the articles, editorials, and reviews which appeared in Parnassus had a decidedly different tenor. Whereas previous articles promoted the modernist cause through general reviews of exhibitions and debates designed to enhance appreciation of the movement, the articles which appeared between 1936 and 1940 reflected a more substantive approach to the championship of Modernism. During this period, the discourse devoted to modern art involved issues of history and scholarship, the investigation of modernists’ processes, the scholastic interpretation of modernist content, and the critical evaluation of individual artists and works.

In December of 1936, John G. Frey published an article entitled “From Dada to

Surrealism.” Similar to Julien Levy’s text entitled Surrealism, which was published in the same year, Frey defined the conceptual tenets of the movement and documented the efforts of the individual participating artists who attempted to achieve those tenets. Unlike many of the preceding articles concerning Modernism which addressed the movement in very general terms, Frey chose to analyze in depth one school of Modernism in an academic and scholarly fashion. The resulting article traced the evolution and transition from Dadaism to Surrealism from both the historical and philosophical perspective. Comparing the works of Kurt Schwitters and Hans Arp to the works of Andre Breton, Joan Miro, Max Ernst, Salvador Dali and Yves Tanguy, Frey traced the shift from the anti-art of the Dadaists to the advent of Surrealism. Quoting from original sources, such as Andre Breton’s manifestoes, Frey defined many of the Surrealist techniques such as automatism, the creation of dream related imagery through collage, and the methods of constructing Surrealist objects. In his summation, Frey explained to achieve Breton’s desired effect of “a poetic shock which satisfies the imagination with that quality of the marvelous” the Surrealist must embrace “a deliberate disorientation of the mind in which the imagination is consciously set in a definite direction and a particular kind of irrational flow of images is produced” (1936, p. 15).

In the November of 1937 edition of Parnassus, John A. Thwaites published an essay entitled “Paul Klee and the Object.” In the article, Thwaites quoted a variety of experts on contemporaneous art including Sir Herbert Read, Forbes Watson, Roger Fry and Alfred Barr. Thwaites’ article addressed the need for a new form of scholarship in which the historical analysis of modern art reflected a broad field of investigation

concerning iconographical content and the development of the artist as an individual.

Thwaites' thesis was that scholarly enlightenment of modern masters could only be achieved through in-depth study and required an analysis of their life's work. To treat the modern masters in this way critically represented an analytical respect that had only been afforded the traditional "giants" of art history. For the first time, scholars were seriously studying modern painting and sculpture.

For the article, Thwaites, using a critical method similar to that proposed by Read in 1933 in Art Now, analyzed thirty-four pieces of Klee's work which were produced between 1919 and 1936. By analyzing each of the works for the presence of abstract form and symbolic form, Thwaites posited that "Klee's imagery is neither representational nor non-figurative. It is conceptual" (1937, p. 10). By studying the body of work collectively, Thwaites concluded that Klee's art "had not a visual but an essential truth . . . He makes a visual symbol of a complete object, in its anatomy, physiology, biology, and relativity to its environment . . . To us subjectively, it becomes the object itself" (1937, p. 10).

Thwaites' assertions reflected many of the principle concerns addressed by John Dewey in Art as Experience. In the early years of the Depression, Dewey, the father of American pragmatism, proposed a type of aesthetic critique which perfectly suited the needs of modernist scholars and critics. His analytical and synthetical approach provided a perfect means for unraveling the complexities of abstraction and effectively translating the new art to the general public. Previous American criticism rarely considered individual

works of art in depth. Instead, whole exhibitions were described in vague and whimsical

generalities. The new criticism engaged the art viewing public as never before and brought new audiences into the avant-garde galleries (Squires, 2000, p. 24).

In 1941, the art historian Robert Myers concurred with Thwaites that the historical study of modern artists required a new and different approach. In an editorial, entitled “Modern Art,” Myers discussed the problems facing scholars of modernism in terms of historical perspective and methodology. Myers stated:

It is generally agreed that the development of the average modern master is by no means parallel with that of a typical Renaissance artist. We are able to follow the gradual evolution of a Donatello or a Michelangelo in a way that would be utterly impossible with a Derain or a Matisse . . . The dislocation of the modern artist naturally brings about an individualistic and capricious development that is most difficult to follow with the relatively exact art-historical methods employed with older artists. (1941, p. 7)

To Myers, the issue was that the traditional criteria for studying works of art were too linear, too restricted in scientific approach to address the contemporaneous evolution of Modernism. Art history, as a scholarly field of inquiry, had been developed as an outgrowth of the academic fields of history and archaeology. As such, the methods traditionally employed by art historians of the time reflected the empiricism of their scientific predecessors.

Continuing to develop his premise that modern research called for a mediated standard of methodology in which a work of art is analyzed as a symbol of an evolving society and less as an artifact in situ, Myers wrote “to be sure, biographical and

documentary evidence are still most important in the determination of the artist's style, but these tools are by no means as easily applied to the modern master as they would be in the case of the Renaissance master"(1941, p. 7). In reiteration, that the phenomena of dislocation and individuality of the modern artist in a constantly changing world called for differing criteria, Myers stated "the study of the modern masters can no longer be pursued with that fine and logical sense of inevitable development by means of which the history of even an unknown fifteenth artist can be worked out. With the moderns, we shall have to know all of the facts" (1941, p. 7).

In the same year, Parnassus published another article which addressed the issue of historical research of modern art. Written by Wolfgang Stechow, the article, entitled "Subject Matter and Form," discussed the need for new methods of scholarship in understanding the evolution of modern art compared to the art of the past. In the essay, Stechow stated that Modernism, as it reflected many of the central issues of the contemporaneous society, should be evaluated differently from the art of another age and a different society. Stechow wrote that Modernism, especially Surrealism, frequently combined the concept of subject-matter and form in new and creative ways and suggested that "as far as art history is concerned, a very similar tendency toward reevaluation of subject matter cannot be overlooked" (1941, p. 105). Encouraging scholarship of modernistic movements such as Surrealism, Stechow wrote "I cannot see how research in art history can possibly fail to reflect the main movements of living art" (1941, p. 104).

In conclusion, Stechow suggested that historians should approach the study of modernism "from a new point of view" (1941, p. 105). For this new type of historical

study, Stechow suggested that the correlative relationships between visual content, cultural context and scholarly methods of inquiry should address “the understanding of the most varied currents and aspects of the cultural milieu of the artist” . . . the artist’s predilections in matters other than the merely formal . . . and an investigation into all aspects of the artist’s life including non-artistic matters” (1941, p. 105).

As the publication of the College Art Association of America, Parnassus functioned as a forum for academic and philosophical discussions concerning all the important aspects of art. Between 1930 and 1941, the publication offered its members myriad opportunities to debate the central issue of the moment, the fate of modern art and the destiny of the United States as the trustee of the movement. As such, Parnassus became an instrument for the championing of Modernism in America. In the last decade of its publication, the journal published dozens of articles, editorials, and reviews which all bore witness to both the emergence and the acceptance of modern art in academia. Compelling evidence that Parnassus became a voice for Modernism is found not only in the eloquent words of its contributing scholars. The clearest testimonial, to the commitment of the journal to avant-garde art, occurred in 1940 when the members of the association voted to change the mast head of the journal to read Parnassus: A Publication of the College Art Association of America Devoted to Modern Art, Art Criticism, Art Education and Art News.

#### The College Art Journal

The advocacy of modernism in academia did not end with the transition from Parnassus to its antecedent, The College Art Journal. The College Art Association would

continue the fight to establish and advance modern art in the colleges and universities of America. From its inception in 1941, the Journal championed both the modernist cause and the necessity of including this contemporaneous art in educational curricula and historical research. The dedication to include the art of the day in research and educational inquiry was reflected in the purpose statement composed by the president of the College Art Association of America, Sumner M. Crosby. Crosby wrote that the new periodical, which began as a quarterly, would function “. . . to provide information about innovations in education and to present theories and criticisms of the various methods involved in interpreting the art of the past and the art of the present” (1941, p. 2).

In the introductory edition, the first article was composed by Alfred H. Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art. The article, entitled “Modern Art Makes History Too” argued that scholarly attention and pedagogical practices should include current movements, such as Abstractionism, Automatism, and Surrealism. Barr opened his article by stating:

In the history of art there are many periods worthy of careful attention, but for most graduates, many undergraduates, and at least a few teachers, the period for most thorough study should be the last hundred years, and particularly the twentieth century . . . My belief in the cogent importance of twentieth century art lies not so much in its greatness of achievement as in this one simple, obvious, and overwhelming fact- the twentieth century happens to be the period in which we are living. It is our century: we have made it and we've got to study it, get some joy out of it, *master* it. (1941, p. 3)

Further championing the avant-garde crusade and the modern artist as an exemplar of modern life, Barr stated “that for us today . . . Matisse, Miro, and Breton are all significant historic figures fully worthy of the considered attention of the college art historian . . . their work may prove more valuable because they are living men with experiences and feelings which translated into art may help us understand or endure our complex modern world (1941, p. 5).

Barr’s passionate challenge to art educators sparked the publication of other articles in the Journal which attested to the cognizance of the vanguard artists and the recognition of their influence on pedagogical practices. Statements such as “The issue is not whether contemporary art should be taught- we all agree it should be taught- but rather what is its place in a balanced curriculum” (Mather, 1942, p. 33) inspired responses such as “Give them a start with the problems of the modern artist . . . conditions make it imperative that modern art be faced first” (Schmeckebier, 1942, p. 62).

In January of 1942, Frank J. Mather, responded to Barr’s suggestions, by arguing that the recognized epoques of the past were the only areas which proved accountable in historical scholarship. In his essay, “Old Art or New,” Mather stated:

I have much sympathy with my friend Alfred Barr’s opinion that we should begin the study of the history of art with the art of our own time . . . but art itself is largely a recovery of the memory of the ages from threatened oblivion, and the short and confused memory of the present is not sufficiently consolidated to be a major field of study . . . what I am getting at is that there is no sure way of being right or wrong on the painting of Matisse, Picasso, Dali and Miro. (p. 31)



In rebuttal to Mather's essay, James Thrall Soby composed "In Defense of Modern Art as a Field of Research." In his article, which both supported Alfred Barr and advocated modernism, Soby stated "contemporary art has a particular importance to us because it is being created in the era to which we belong. It affects our thought, emotion, and vision with a directness which past art cannot possibly have for us" (1942, p. 64). In conclusion, Soby wrote "if each century neglects its own art in favor of that of earlier centuries, when is art history to catch-up with its self? Or is it to circle endlessly, like a dog with its tail in its mouth, oblivious to the sound and the light of its own hour? (1942, p. 64).

Over the next ten years, papers and studies reflected the growing acceptance of the avant-garde and modernism in the arena of higher education. Articles, such as, "Modern Art in the College Curriculum" (1943), "What is Modern Painting" (1946), and "Contemporary Art in Historical Perspective"(1948), all addressed "the question of what place the study of contemporary art should be given in the curricula of college art departments, and more recently the nature and the value of *modern art* itself" (Alford, 1943, p. 42). These articles not only addressed the scope of modernism and its impact, but reflected new scholarly access to the art movements through phenomenological criteria. Evaluative methodologies, such as Read's theory of abstract form, Fry's theory of the universality of formal elements and Soby's manifesto of modern iconography concerning symbols and images, provided a foundation upon which modern scholars could construct an aesthetic gauge. These new evaluative processes compared and contrasted the aesthetic values of the art of the past and the art of the present and

addressed Modernism's

capability to evoke human emotion in response to contemporary life through its creation of new symbols and its investigation of formal structure.

The aesthetic nature of Modernism and how it was to be evaluated was addressed in articles such as "The Great Moderns: A Reappraisal" by Samuel Caumen and "Historical and Contemporary Art" by Jesse Garrison. In "The Great Moderns," Caumen first commented on the formalistic concerns of modern art by stating "the virtuosity in design by such modern masters as Braque and Picasso, Arp and Klee, Gabo and Mondrian, has never been surpassed" (1943, p. 108). He then addressed modern art's ability to elicit a profound emotional response in the contemporary viewer through formal structure by stating "The forms they have given us have nurtured in us a new kind of vision . . . Their work rings a bell in us; it belongs to our generation; it strikes a kindred note that the art of the past cannot" (1943, p. 108). In a similar vein, Garrison's article, "Historical and Contemporary Art" stated:

Modernism has become a new type of art, set off from descriptive art . . . The vitality of the new art is its passport of recognition even for those unable to understand or sympathize with the new pictorial structures. Its vitality is its profundity. It is of course incalculably superior in energy to the jaded naturalistic craft-art which it displaced. (1949, p. 163)

Other articles and editorials addressed and defined the superiority of modern art in relation to formal elements and structure. "Time and the Fourth Dimension in Painting" by Walter Isaacs discussed the theory of relativity in relation to the modernists' concern

of capturing space and time as principle forces which obey universal laws. For Isaacs,

Modernism successfully symbolized the simultaneous appreciation of space and time. “It is not enough that a picture expresses space and also time. The two must be merged” (1942, p. 3).

The aesthetic theory of simultaneity, in which the artist examines a dynamic interchange in time and space, was articulated and analyzed by several artists and aestheticians in the first half of the twentieth century. Antoine Pevsner and Naum Gabo included the phenomena as a primary declaration in their manifesto of 1920, Piet Mondrian cited it as a major principle in the modern artist’s search for reality in Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art of 1945, and Sir Herbert Read discussed it theoretically in The History of Modern Painting published in 1945. Simultaneity was practiced by many of the early schools of modern art such as Futurism, Suprematism and Constructivism as a method of achieving concrete realism on the two-dimensional picture plane through new laws of composition. Beginning in the 1930's, European automatists and Surrealists, such as Miro, Dali, Tanguy and Matta, had attempted to manipulate the formal elements to symbolize, simultaneously on the design plane, the observed object and the successive stages of the object’s motion in terms of force and velocity. Many of the emerging vanguard artists in America, including Pollock, Baziot, Rothko and DeKooning, assimilated into their practices the Surrealist theme of rendering space and time

simultaneously. To the members of the New York School, the merging of the kinetic and dynamic elements of space and time represented the perpetual changing of nature through vitalism and metamorphosis.

According to Isaacs, in “Time and the Fourth Dimension in Painting,” the concept of relativity and dynamic expansion “has been better understood since the coming of the modern movements with its emphasis on the formal aspects of art and its deprecation of the sentimental and the illustrative”(1942, p. 6). To Isaacs, the modern artist investigating simultaneity, through the mediation of the formal elements, no longer merely recorded external realities, but transcended the outward to explore the internal core of the artwork itself; the pictorial dynamics. Isaacs posited “the contribution of modern art which bears on the question of the fourth dimension has been due to the closer integration of forms, and of forms with the material used, and a better understanding of the problems of composition” (1942, p. 6). In conclusion, Isaacs stated “Modern artists have not created or discovered this relationship but they have caused it to function more fully in painting, sculpture and architecture than it has done in the past” (1942, p. 6).

Along with articles which addressed evaluative criteria, debates over academic curricula or the structure of pictorial space, the Journal also featured articles which concomitantly articulated the various idioms of the modern movement and defined their aesthetic value to society. In the article, “What Kind of Surrealism,” Walter Isaacs traced the evolution of the Surrealist genre from the early influences of Bosch and Breughel to the contemporaneous work by Chagall, de Chirico, Roy, and Miro. In comparing the work

of these artists, Isaacs posited that they all shared a common philosophy and approach for creating art. He defined their collective concept as “the commitment to the rule of the dream world or more particularly the integration of the unconscious with the conscious” (1943, p. 47). According to Isaacs, the aesthetic value of Surrealism, particularly Automatism, lay in its ability to combine the marvelous with the objective; “the strong vein of the uncanny coupled with the traditional elements of good painting” (1943, p. 49). To Isaacs, this unique approach allowed Surrealism in its purest form to “supplant all other isms in the public consciousness”(1943, p. 46).

Robert Enggass in his article “Aesthetic Limitations of Non- Objective Painting” traced the development of this oeuvre and stated that “widespread and continuous acceptance of such forms usually from all levels of society, demonstrate that these forms give pleasure and have . . . aesthetic value”(1950, p. 30). Citing the work of Kandinsky, Marc, Miro, Pollock, Stamos, and Gottlieb, as exemplars of the nonobjective style, Enggass explained that “the purpose of most non-objective easel painting is primarily to evoke emotions through visual designs and color, in the same way that *pure* or *absolute* music, such as Bach, evokes emotion through audible design and tone” (1950, p. 31). In conclusion, he posits that as this style of art is so well established “it thus becomes pertinent to ask seriously and without mockery not whether non-objective painting is worthless and a fraud - for only the most intransigent or artistically illiterate hold this view - but whether these artists, capable and intelligent, have increased or diminished the scope of their art by the removal of all representational elements (Enggass, 1950, p. 31).

## The School Arts Magazine

The effort to make Modernism an integral part of the art curriculum was not made exclusively on the university level alone. With the advent of the expressive movement in general education, modern art and modern artists became major foci in the development of new pedagogical practices. An examination of the School Arts Magazine during the period of 1930 through 1950, illustrates both the primary and secondary educators' intellectual awareness of Modernism and the transition from practical education involving manual arts to the concept of an expressive individuality in the arts.

Although, articles concerning moral principles and vocational aptitude for the applied and decorative arts were still predominant under the leadership of its editor Pedro Lemos, the School Arts Magazine would also reflect the growing influence of Modernism on the expressive movement in art education. The expressive approach to art pedagogy insisted that the contemporaneous educator should reevaluate their approaches, their methods and their goals for "the artist of tomorrow will express their ideas with methods now unknown. Though these forms remain for the future, their seeds now exist, dormant in the minds of our young. The nourishing of these ideas must be the prime role of the art programs in the elementary and high schools of our nation" (Schinneller, 1965, p. 34).

The articles published in the School Arts Magazine paralleled this mode of thought. They reflected both the growing awareness of the educator to the ascendancy of modern art and the commitment of educators to bring modernists' art practices into the classrooms of the primary and secondary schools. Between 1930 and 1950, dozens of articles and lesson plans concerning the expressive potential of modern art appeared.

Essays and commentaries encouraged art educators to embrace modern art for the sake of creative innovation and educational reformation.

As early as 1935, School Arts included an article entitled “Methods of Art Expression which Develop Self Expression.” The author, Katherine Tyler, stated that “modern art educators are agreed that the chief goal for teaching of art in the elementary school, the junior and senior high school, and the college, should be the enjoyment and understanding of art through active creation and appreciation (p. 451). To achieve this goal, Tyler suggested that art educators should eschew traditional objective drawing practices in favor of the joyous freedom of automatist methods of creativity in which the formal elements are manipulated in an unpremeditated and unconscious fashion. Whereas, traditionally, the art educator had insisted that their students manipulate the formal elements and structure to create illusions or representations of reality, vanguard educators such as Tyler suggested that “the development of the expressive side must be emphasized” (1935, p. 452). To Tyler, the concept of individual expression inherent in automatist practices encouraged personal revelations of reality as opposed to mimetic illusions of reality. This distinction between illusion and revelation was the very heart of the automatist sensibility. In conclusion, Tyler extolled the practice of automatic surrealism as a vital part of advancing modern creativity and self expression in the classroom.

In 1938, a curricula model, authored by Lawson P. Cooper entitled “Creative Line Designs” also showed the influence of modern art movements, such as automatism and Surrealism, on pedagogical practices. Inspired by the automatists’ method of

scribbling random marks to begin a work of art, Cooper suggested that “it is possible to tap into the unconscious mind of American pupils a wealth of visual material” (1938, p. 234). Linking Surrealism, modernist practice, and Freudian psychology together, Cooper began his art exercise by explaining to his eighth and ninth grade students “that beneath the conscious mind they have another mind, which is a storehouse for all kinds of figures and forms” (1938, p. 234). Cooper encouraged his students to exalt chance and accident, for this not only freed the artist from preconceived ideas concerning the content and the context of visual imagery engraved in the conscious mind, it allowed for creative discovery inherent in the various artistic media.

In conclusion, Cooper reiterated his commitment to abstraction and modernism by asserting “It was learned that the source of artistic creation is within. With such an experience of creativity to go on it was not difficult to show that art is not merely a matter of making pictures of external objects, and that mere photographic representations, lacking in personal interpretation, are not art” (1938, p. 235).

Other articles and curricula which explained and advocated automatists and Surrealists practices appeared in rapid succession. In 1940, an article by Bernice M. King entitled “A First Venture Into Surrealism” outlined a creative project and an art historical study posed to the students enrolled in the Itasca Junior College. According to King, “an attempt to understand Surrealism through discussion, appreciation, and application gave us all something we could not afford to miss” (1940, p. 222). In 1942, Alice Stowell Bishop opened her article entitled “Young Modern Artists” with the emphatic statement “we are all interested in modern art”(1942, p. 312). Bishop promoted an expressive



pedagogy which denounced teacher influence and traditional copying and encouraged students to produce modern art works which reflected individuality and self expression.

Bishop ended her article in praising the young artists and their modernist work and compared their work to the leading Surrealists of the day. Jane Allen, in “Scribble Designs in the Grades,” encouraged her students to use accidental markings to create

works of art. She stated “ the idea appealed to their spirit of adventure . . . The children’s interest grows as they work. They are amazed at the design that emerges as they continue the coloring” (Allen, 1942, p. 97).

The epiphanies of the modern art world concerning completely abstract or Nonobjective art were also reflected in School Arts. In an article entitled “Non-Objective Art in the Public School,” M. B. Mize (1942) encouraged the creation and the historical study of this contemporary style of art which celebrated pure geometry through architectonic construction. She stated “America is considered to be the leading country in the creative art of Non-Objective painting. If this be true, then some thought and consideration should be given to it in the public schools” (p. 99). Elsie Reid Boylston continued the championship of completely abstract work in an article entitled “Non-objective and Abstract Design.” Arguing the significance of this movement, Boylston stated “since abstract and nonobjective designs are exerting such a powerful influence on the art of today, it behooves us as art educators to see that an understanding and appreciation of it is laid in the elementary schools” (1949, p. 32). Commenting on the acceptance and the important results of Modernist’s practices, she posited that pure

abstraction encouraged students “to explore the intriguing realm of pure fantasy and imagination” (1949, p. 32).

Along with the articles extolling the expressive freedom of Automatism, Surrealism, and Nonobjective Art, professional periodicals for teachers also mirrored the growing interest in an aesthetic philosophy which embraced the concept of a continuum of humanity, linking the past, the present, and the future together through artistic creation. Scholars proposed that through children’s art, primitive art, and modern art, society might garner fresh insights and understanding of the evolution of humanity. Diverse fields such as anthropology, philosophy, museology, and education were united under the common banner of seeing children’s art, modern art, and “the primitive or archaic as representing the fundamental, elemental, and ancestral nature of humanity, its very origins and beginnings, as well as its heritage and legacy” (Polcari, 1994, p. 37).

Between 1930 and 1950, dozens of articles illustrated the receptiveness of educators to unite modern art, children’s art, and the art of primitive cultures under the banner of the vanguard. Creative lesson plans and theoretical essays such as “African Art and Life: Drawing for Fun”(1936), “Animal Symbols in Northwest Coast Indian Design”(1939), “American Indian Art”(1942), “Primitive Stone Sculpture”(1942), “Mexican Pottery Design”(1943), “Black Magic and Modern Art” (1947), “Haitian Artists at Work”(1950), “Zuni and African Handicrafts”(1950), and “Mexican Children’s Art”(1950), illustrated the belief that child art and primitive art were seen as examples of true expression unburdened by classical traditions and untethered to western aesthetic prescriptions. According to Christopher Green (1998), in Discovering Child Art: Essays

on Childhood, Primitivism, and Modernism, modernist avant-garde practices such as Automatism, Surrealism, and Primitivism, along with children's art, were embraced as important cultural phenomena. The art work, produced by each of these demographics, was valued as free expressions of the human endeavor which challenged and ultimately nullified oppressive artistic tenets. Perceived as visual symbols of an instinctive, vitalistic

search for individuality and freedom, the art began to attract enormous attention from the practitioners of educational theory, aesthetics and psychology.

Nicolas Calas, in "Iconolatry and Iconoclasm," suggested that modernism was influenced by child art and primitivism in that it emulated animistic thinking and non-figurative patterns inherent in their art objects. "There is no reason why a modern artist should not use pictorial expressions borrowed from the language of children and primitives. Picasso and Miro have shown how effectively this can be done" (Calas, 1949, p. 140). In a similar vein, Lillian Hastings linked abstract art, children's art, and primitive expression in her article entitled "Arts and Crafts of Congo Natives." In this lesson plan the author stated:

The importance of the aesthetic contribution which the African art offers to the world has only been realized during the last fifteen or twenty years. It has much in common with modern art in its simplicity, abstract design- like quality as contrasted to a realistic, representational type of expression. It also has much in common with child art and so can be enjoyed and understood by young children.

Its naivete, spontaneity, and direct sincerity is like that of a child. (1937, p. 58)

The years between 1930 and 1950 witnessed historic innovations in art teaching methods. During these two decades, progressive educators observed and participated in the evolutionary cycle of art as it evolved from Automatic Surrealism, through the development of Nonobjective Art, to the culmination of Abstract Expressionism. As adherents of the expressive philosophy in education, educators viewed these movements as exemplars for the teaching of studio art, art appreciation, and art history in the public schools and universities of this country. Through their advocacy, the educators became major champions in the battle to establish avant-garde art in the United States.

Publications such as the School Arts Magazine, Parnassus, the College Art Journal, and Art Education reflected the parallel destinies of modernism and the expressive movement in education. Within twenty years, more than one hundred articles, essays, and curriculum models, relating modernism and expressive educational practices, were published in these periodicals. The articles affirmed not only the educators' and scholars' awareness and knowledge of avant-garde practices, but they also attested to their commitment to bring modernism into the class room. For that vanguard generation of educators, the making of art should be taught as creative self expression, art appreciation should be taught as a means of inciting creativity, and art history should include the scholarly study of modern art.

These publications documented how forward thinking educators influenced subsequent generations of artists, critics, collectors, and teachers to embrace modernism.

The relevant articles, essays, editorials, and reviews which appeared in Parnassus, the College Art Journal, and the School Arts Magazine during those critical years between 1930 and 1950, all confirmed that “The art of the last hundred years necessarily sets the stage for the student’s own activity. Whatever his reaction to it, whatever the degree of his own *modernism*, he can only profit by an understanding of recent art” (Goldwater, 1942, p. 92).

As the primary force in the mainstreaming of avant-garde art through the educational systems of our universities and schools, the expressive educator became one of the strongest and most influential advocates for Modernism. These educators championed modern art by debating many of the crucial issues central to Modernism. The issues addressed were the perceived importance of modern art as a visual representative of the modern world, the defining of pedagogical techniques which could best elicit and nurture the creative genius of the individual, the recasting of scholarly and analytical techniques for the understanding of Modernism, the goal of achieving an equal dialogue between the established vanguard of Europe and the fledgling avant-garde in America and the ascension of the United States to the position of trustee of modern art. Their dialogues and debates reflected America’s polemic dilemma approaching the crossroads of her aesthetic future. In classrooms across this country, advanced educators helped new generations of students choose a conceptual abstraction over routine representation, personal expression over academic mime, internationalism over isolationism and ultimately, socially relevant, autonomous art over the art of the past.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This study began in an attempt to answer several questions concerning America's position in the international arena of Modern art at the midpoint of the twentieth century. Like many studies in art, the starting point appeared to be the consideration of the artists and their work at the apex of an historical moment. Starting with the New York School, as the vertex of inquiry, I began to investigate the common assumption that this movement had sprung somehow, heroically, full grown to eclipse the preexisting pantheon of modern masters. My investigation into this Big Bang theory led to the formulation of two questions. How did Abstract Expressionism develop? How did New York become the art capital of the world? Perceiving these questions as art historical issues, I began looking at the work of the Abstract Expressionists in an attempt to trace the etymologies of their images, their processes and their philosophies. Through the

examination of early works, statements by the artists and the critical voices of the coterie which surrounded their mercurial rise, I theorized that the formation of Abstract Expressionism and the recognition of New York as the art capital of the world were not cataclysmic events. Instead, these events were merely the culminations of an evolutionary process, reacting to various stimuli and moving through stages of growth. Looking at the work through the eyes of an artist as well as the scholar's lens, it became clear that much of the artists' mature work had been heavily influenced by the great European modernists. Therefore, neither the New York School nor the monumental appreciation for the movement had been created in a given moment. Instead, both the work and respect for the art were stages in a process that had been going on in this country for two decades. Just as an American modern art could not have been created in a vacuum, isolated from outside influences and inspirations, the appreciation for modern art could not have been created in a vacuum either. Modern art in America and the love for modern art in America were not isolated phenomena associated only with the New York School.

Ultimately, instead of two questions, relating to four years and ten artists, I began to broaden my field of inquiry for now there was a series of questions to be addressed concerning, not a *culmination*, but the *genesis* of avant-garde art in America. These questions were how did America ascend to the role of leader of avant-garde art practices? How did the mantle pass from the hands of the European elite in art to the art world participants in the United States? How did Modernism find a new home in New York? Who facilitated this monumental shift? To answer these questions, this study, which began as a narrowly focused art history investigation, had to grow into a broad

interdisciplinary study which examined the art of the period, the culture which produced it, the individuals who promoted it and the society which embraced it.

The acceptance of modern art and the recognition of New York as the art capital of the world occurred, largely, through the efforts of a four-pronged art collective which used its influential powers to create accessible forums for Modernism. This collective promoted not only a body of art work but also a body of institutions and a matrix of practices which were dispersed into and absorbed by the American public. In other words, these agents not only advocated modernism, they mainstreamed it by creating a system of patronage for the work. This patronage, far reaching and multidimensional, was achieved through education and dissemination.

The core, of the expanding and frequently overlapping concentric circles of patronage for modern art, was the new breed of commercial art dealers such as Julien Levy, Peggy Guggenheim and Pierre Matisse. Prior to their practices, the role of the art dealer was virtually defined as a mercantile extension of the French Salon system of the nineteenth century (Jensen, 1994, p. 8). The job of the dealer was to accrue multiple art products and to build a clientele for those multiple products. New dealers in the twentieth century like Matisse, Levy and Guggenheim, realized that their role could be much greater than that of procurer and supplier of art. They redefined the role of the dealer and refined their practices to promote a patronage for not only individual paintings but individual artists, entire careers and ultimately, the entire modernist movement.

Matisse's, Levy's and Guggenheim's legacies were multidimensional. First, they contributed to the formation of a vanguard in America by establishing forums through



which they could introduce first the work of mature European artists, and later the artists themselves, to the fledgling art world of the United States. As Levy stated “What a desperate need there was in America for an oasis where our fledgling culture could crossbreed and find nourishment and where the rarer avis, the genius, could now and then find his peer. But how sadly few such catalysts for cathexis were”(1977, p. 100). In their establishments, these dealers served as pivotal links between the European vanguard and the American avant-garde and their galleries were both the physical and metaphysical meeting places for these converging forces.

During the critical years between 1930 and 1950 these dealers became leaders of the vanguard in the battle for a true modern art in the United States. Their landmark exhibitions facilitated a synthesis between the avant-garde of Europe and the pioneering American artists who embraced surrealism, abstraction, and gestural expressiveness. At their galleries, many of the now recognized crucial masterpieces of Modernism were first shown. Through highly publicized and critical exhibitions, these dealers introduced thousands of works of art by the most respected modern artists from Europe and many of the most promising artists in America. Through unprecedented venues such as solo exhibitions, retrospectives, the pairing of greats with unknowns and conceptual theme-based shows, these dealers fervently supported and promoted their theory and conviction that the destiny of great modern art lay in America.

At the Julian Levy Gallery, Americans had their first opportunity to see the fantastic images of the dream state realized in plastic media by Surrealists such as Dali,

Ernst, DeChirico, Paalen, Khalo, Man Ray and Magritte. Levy was the first to exhibit Surrealist works which illustrated the movement's heretical desire to reveal the subconscious through the juxtaposition of fantastic dream imagery. Here the American public was introduced to Dali's hallucinatory "Persistence of Memory," DeChirico's blending of the physical and the metaphysical in "The Melancholy and Mystery of A Street" and the enigmatic and private universes found in Cornell's chimerical boxes. At Pierre Matisse's gallery thousands of works by Miro, Balthus, Siqueiros, Tamayo, Dufy, Leger, Tanguy, Lam, Arp, Giocommetti, Calder and Matta were introduced to the American public. It would be at Matisse's gallery where pivotal works by his famous father and Henri Matisse's equally famous colleagues were first exhibited. Here young artists, as well as the general public, saw paintings of unprecedented imagery and heretical handling of media which constituted the School of Paris. Matisse did not merely promote the achievements of groups or schools but the heroic endeavors of individuals as well. In a daring act of artistic espionage, Matisse spirited out of Fascist Spain twenty-two small gouaches which had been completed by Miro in his hidden studio. When Matisse introduced Miro's "Constellations" to the American public, the gouaches were the first great European vanguard works seen in America since the outset of World War II. At Art of This Century, Guggenheim showed side by side the work of Ernst, Duchamp, Tanning, Oppenheim, Kandinsky and Schwitters with the canvases covered with stained fields, passionate slashings and drips of the emerging New York School. At Art of This Century, the American public was introduced to the monumental work of the Abstract Expressionists where the cycles of life, the relationships between humans and their

environments, and the unfolding of the cosmos were all enacted on the massive picture planes of Pollock, Rothko, Motherwell, de Kooning, Kline, Still, Gottlieb and Baziotes.

To support the augmentation of an aesthetic philosophy of modernism, these dealers had to educate the patrons and encourage them to collect this work. According to Germain Seligman, in Merchants of Art: 1800-1960, “the art dealer, no less than the teaching institution and the museum, undertakes a program of public education when he plans an exhibition of a new artist or a new movement” (1961, p. 181). To Julien Levy, educating his clients on Surrealism involved “awakening everyone’s curiosity and suggesting the spirit if not the complete alphabet of this new tendency in poetry and art” (1977, p. 81). According to Karole P. B. Vail, Peggy Guggenheim’s pedagogical practices in introducing modernism at her gallery “played an important role in the diffusion and understanding of Modern and contemporary art in New York” (1998, p. 54). To Pierre Matisse, a well-educated client or patron could help establish the great moderns of the day. “Discerning clients were fundamental to the long term plans that Pierre had for his gallery. This was not simply because of the financial support for which they could be counted upon. It was because through them the work of Joan Miro, Alberto Giacometti, and Jean Dubuffet would become part of the imaginative climate of the United States” (Russell, 1999, p. 84). These dealers’ dedication to educate the American public affected both the avant-garde and mainstream alike.

The impact of the European moderns, introduced by Pierre Matisse, Julien Levy and Peggy Guggenheim, on the emerging American vanguard was documented in the artist-run periodicals such as The Tiger's Eye and Possibilities. The art work and aesthetic

issues which appeared in these publications "occupied a pivotal position in the periodical literature of Abstract Expressionism" (Gibson, 1990, p. 33). Statements by the now recognized leaders of the New York School, which frequently appeared in these journals, can be seen as barometers for gauging the impact of the art introduced by dealers on the members of the avant-garde. In 1944, Jackson Pollock articulated the importance of the new stimulus brought by the European moderns, when he stated "I am particularly impressed with their concept of the source of art in the unconscious" (Rose, 1982, p. 5). Willem de Kooning described Modernism as a "wonderful unsure atmosphere of reflection-a poetic frame where something could be possible, where an artist could practice his intuition" (Gibson, 1990, p. 35). Robert Motherwell testified to his sustained admiration for Modernism by stating "my basic point of view for my entire adult life has been that modernism is the general aesthetic of which all the arts are a subdivision" (Gibson, 1990, p. 34). In 1946, Ad Reinhardt visually articulated his indebtedness to the modernists by showing the path the young American artists intended to take. In his now famous cartoon, "How to Look at Modern Art in America," a large tree, with its roots growing in the ancient soil of European, primitive, and children's art, presides over America. A rotted limb, weighted down by the influence of regionalism and traditional epochs, breaks while the limbs growing from the influence of European Modernism bear the young leaves of the Abstract Expressionists.

Along with the arcane art periodicals, major newspapers and more mainstream magazines included coverage of Matisse's, Levy's and Guggenheim's exhibitions as well. Through these venues, the critical debate represented by new work at their galleries was

not known to the avant-garde alone. Reviews, interviews, and critical interpretations which appeared in the New York Times Sunday Magazine, the New Yorker, News Week, Time Magazine, Architectural Digest and House and Garden served to introduce this new art to the general public as well. As glossy productions such as Town and Country, Look, Life and Harper's Bazaar, covering the openings at these galleries, appeared in America's living-rooms, a new demographic was added to the art market. Through color reproductions of major modern masterworks, interviews with artists and collectors, and the inclusion of now famous photographs such as the "Irascibles" and Jackson Pollock in action, Modernism was reaching a new target audience. This demographic, numbering in the millions and rooted firmly in middle-class soil would, in time, embrace this new art. According to the surveys conducted by Art News in 1944 and 1945, dealers such as Matisse, Levy and Guggenheim substantially increased the pool of patronage for modern art through advertising campaigns which educated the general public to the desirability of the art. As a result of their efforts to publicize Modernism, a new demographic began to assimilate Matisse's, Levy's and Guggenheim's once radical concept of promoting a vocabulary of visual imagery which represented modern life. Archival material and gallery notes from their establishments attest to a broad clientele ranging from middle-class individuals to millionaire philanthropists. With each purchase, the collectors who patronized their galleries helped to establish the market value as well as the aesthetic value of modern art.

Matisse, Levy and Guggenheim also contributed to the building of key institutional structures, such as museums and foundations. By placing the work of the

avant-garde artists in public institutions, they not only “jogged the museums away from their exclusive preoccupation with art of the past and interested them in the contemporary” (Levy, 1977, p. 136), they helped to establish modern art as the preferred movement of the general public. Dealers like Pierre Matisse “wanted American museums to have the works of art in which he most believed. Once there, they would gradually enter the national awareness and make the United States a better place in which to live” (Russell, 1999, p. 399). By mainstreaming contemporary art through the museums, they helped mediate the chasm of modernism between popular culture and the elite. In time, visionary trustees and directors such as Chick Austin, Dr. Albert Barnes, Alfred Barr, Joseph Hirshhorn, and James Thrall Soby came to rely on Levy’s, Matisse’s, and Guggenheim’s advice in building their treasuries of modern art. Institutions such as The Museum of Modern Art, the Carnegie Institute, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Hartford Antheneum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim, and the Hirshhorn Museum looked to these galleries as the genesis of their contemporary collections. Through the efforts of these dealers, major museums throughout the United States began to collect and exhibit masterpieces of Modernism including works by Matta, Matisse, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Miro, Chagall, Dali, Gorky, Rothko and Pollock. In turn, these institutions would promote modern art through ambitious campaigns and define the major visual ideologies of our culture.

By 1930, the museum became an important cultural mechanism for the advancement of Modernism. Stimulated by the desire to reflect progress in society and affect improvement of culture through public service, many public museums embraced

modern art as a paradigm of contemporaneous life. Using their aegis as patrons, presenters and arbiters of advanced taste, the museums which promoted modern art, were instrumental in establishing the prestige of modern artists and modernists' works. The collective goal of these institutions was the diversion of public taste away from the traditional art of the past and the conversion of that taste to a modern aesthetic. These institutions launched their aesthetic revolution on two fronts which included exposure to and familiarization with Modernism through carefully planned exhibitions and the appreciation of modern art through exhaustive educational campaigns.

Between 1930 and 1950, American museums hosted thousands of pivotal exhibitions of modern art. Landmark exhibitions such as "Surrealism" at the Wadsworth Antenaemum, "Living Art" at the Toledo Museum, and "Art in Progress" and "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism" at the MoMA served to introduce Modernism to the American public. Such shows were merely the first in an overwhelming stream of exhibitions in which the general public and the American avant-garde became the passionate audience of modern art. These exhibitions were constructed to both establish the artistic legitimacy of the modern movement and to explore the evolutionary aspects of the movement in relation to the evolving patterns of modern life. Alfred Barr stated that such exhibitions represented "the more original and advanced art of our time . . . the kinds of art which most clearly distinguish our period from the past" (1948, p. 10) and Dianne Waldman stated that they served to "convert many in the forefront of New York's avant garde" (1994, p. 19). Through such exhibitions, Modernism became part of the everyday lexicon of art.

Along with these exhibitions, museums found other ways to promote Modernism outside the walls of their institutions and the parameters of the metropolitan centers they inhabited. To reach the American public, many museums began to follow the lead established by the Museum of Modern Art and circulated traveling exhibitions of their most prestigious modern works. During a twenty-year span, over three thousand traveling exhibits introduced modern art to viewers at military bases, community colleges, public and private schools, churches, hospitals, libraries and civic organizations throughout America. Along with these exhibits, catalogues of the various shows, posters and high quality reproductions featuring modern masterworks were available for purchase at the museums and traveling exhibition sites. Elodie Courter, the director of educational programs at the MoMA, even promoted the sales of the lowly picture postcard to reach “the constantly growing audience for contemporary art” (Courter, 1944, p.210). Through such efforts, modern art found its way onto the coffee tables of middle America and appeared on the walls and shelves of private and educational libraries throughout the country.

The most pervasive and successful educational strategy devised by the museums to promote Modernism was their partnering with art educators. According to Victor D’Amico, the alliance between museums and educators evolved to address a substantial void in teacher education at the college level. “It was found that many teachers’ colleges slighted the modern period in the development of the art education of perspective teachers” (D’Amico, 1944, p. 216). To rectify the deficiency in education concerning Modernism, the Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with Columbia University,



began to offer in-service and introductory courses in modern art to public school teachers throughout the northeast. Eight semester-long courses, including “Techniques of Teaching Modern Art Appreciation” and “Fundamental Design of Today,” were taught by respected educators such as Victor D’Amico and Agnes Rindge and by renowned artists such as Josef Albers. In conjunction with this course work, multiple teaching portfolios, slide presentations, art kits, booklets and educational exhibitions were made available “to average rural and small town schools all over the country” (D’Amico, 1944, p. 216). In the museum’s campaign to introduce modern art to America, their tenet to “educate the teacher first” became a call to action which was answered by thousands of art educators across America (Lynes, 1973, p. 169). Both the amazing immediacy of their response and the depth of their commitment to promote vanguard art precipitated the acculturation of Modernism in America.

The educational system of the United States became the most crucial prong in the collective which promoted modern art. Between 1930 and 1950, progressive educators advanced expressive pedagogical practices which advocated individual creativity and intellectual freedom. To the adherents of the expressive education philosophy, great art, great artists, and great educators had a profound responsibility to improve society through courageous innovation. They maintained that the individuals who influenced the language of art affected cultural thought and by changing thought, they changed life. To the participating educators, avant-garde art represented the visual realization of these ideals. The modern aesthetic was embraced by progressive educators for it was perceived as being inextricably bound to the hope of liberation and illumination through creative self-

expression. The art, artists, and artistic practices these educators chose to champion celebrated life, articulated universal human dilemmas and represented democracy in modern society. The result of their advocacy was the widespread dissemination of Modernism through the classrooms, studios and lecture halls of America's schools and colleges.

Prior to this period, art educational practices and art historical scholarship focused on art which depicted the external world realistically. Proficiency in art was judged by the student's ability to mimic old masters and art history was taught as an addendum in the classics department and therefore ceased any examination of art after the eighteenth century. Both disciplines viewed learning as a process of memorizing, copying, and repeating what others had learned or established and neither discipline acknowledged individual exploration nor creative self-expression. The expressive stream of pedagogy effectively shattered those practices. In this new approach, the individual became paramount and the educator's role was to facilitate discovery. These premises of the expressive philosophy would be visually realized in modern art and embodied in the modern artist.

As early as 1931, art educators began to actively promote modern art in debates and discussions concerning both aesthetic principles and pragmatic pedagogy. The philosophical issues they addressed concerned the recognition of the modern artist as the oracle of the modern world, the fate of European Modernism and the possibility of establishing an American aesthetic by grafting fledgling American artistic sensibilities to the established vanguard of Europe. The practical issues concerned the defining of

appropriate techniques for the scholarly teaching and creation of modern art and the advancement of pedagogical practices which encouraged appreciation, self-expression and creativity.

Germane curricula studies, educational periodicals and professional publications, which served as the scholastic forums for art teachers and art historical scholars of the time, reflected the vanguard educators' crusade to situate Modernism within the scholarly curriculum. On the collegiate level, the articles, editorials and reviews which appeared in Parnassus and The College Art Journal, encouraged appreciation of the movement, addressed issues concerning history and scholarship, proposed methods for the analysis of modernists' processes, interpreted modern iconography and established critical evaluative criteria for individual artists and works.

Over a twenty-year span, the papers, studies and debates, which appeared in these journals reflected the advancement of avant-garde Modernism in the curricula of higher education. In 1943, the Journal published a study, conducted by the critic and art professor Robert Goldwater from Queens College, which documented the increased frequency and scope of modern art courses offered at colleges and universities in America. Proposed by the editor of the Art Bulletin, Dr. Millard Meiss, and funded by a grant from the Carnegie Institute, the study was to ascertain the number and type of art courses which were offered by American institutes of higher learning. Goldwater studied the growth and change of art courses taught in fifty representative liberal arts colleges distributed throughout the country. His study addressed the development and implementation of art courses, course content and the "relation of the courses in the

history of art to those teaching the practice of the arts . . . and the relation of pictorial arts to the entire liberal arts program” between 1900 and 1940 (Goldwater, 1943, p. 3).

Goldwater found that by 1940, eight hundred courses in art were being offered at the college level and that fifty-five of those courses “were specialized” to categorically address modern art (1943, p. 27). The statistical tables, included in the project, showed a growth in modern art courses offered from less than 1% in the overall curriculum of 1900 to 15% of the art curriculum by 1940. Goldwater attributed the growth in modern art courses in academia to two factors. First, “the courses responded to contemporary taste” and second, they offered “an opportunity to open new fields of investigation” (1943, p. 27). Major college textbooks, published during this period, reflected Goldwater’s findings that both the popular and scholastic acceptance of Modernism in higher education was on the rise. Introductory texts for art appreciation and art history, such as 5000 Years of Art in Western Civilization by Aline Loucheim, not only offered a broad overview of western society’s past artistic accomplishments, they introduced college students to Modernism in dedicated chapters such as “Art in Our Own Time.” In the second edition of Helen Gardner’s seminal text for survey courses, Art Through the Ages, the author stated that one of the most important improvements of content was the addition of “an entire, new chapter on modern art” (Gardner, 1936, p. iii). For more advanced and specific courses in art history, Sheldon Cheney authored two texts “written especially for students of modern art” (Cheney, 1941, p. vi). Expressionism in Art published in 1934 and The Story of Modern Art, published in 1941 traced the development of modern art in Europe and America and included hundreds of reproductions of Modernism from the collections of

Yale and Harvard Universities and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Goldwater's report not only documented the increase of scholastic courses in Modernism, it examined the evolving art curriculum in terms of geography and professional majors. Goldwater found that the largest expansion in modern art courses occurred in the curricula of the state universities in the south and the west which shouldered "the greatest burden of training primary and secondary school teachers" (1943, p. 30). The graduates of these programs would, expeditiously, take modern art beyond the

bounds of the college and university curricula and make it an integral part of the art curriculum in the private and public school systems across the United States.

The escalating frequency and breadth of the essays, editorials and articles which appeared in educational journals, such as the School Arts Magazine and the Journal of Art Education, reflected the educators' intellectual interest and involvement in Modernism. The lesson plans, model curricula and the reproductions of modern art exemplars which appeared within their pages testified to the educators' willingness to become active participants in the modernist movement. During the crucial years between 1930 and 1950, the paralleled destinies of modern art and the expressive movement in education converged to help form an American artistic identity. In this cultural revolution, the vanguard educator became the most powerful and effective proponent in the four-pronged advocacy to establish Modernism in America. Whereas, the commercial dealers used their aegis as mentors and merchants to reach thousands and the museums as

educational institutions converted hundreds of thousands to the patronage of Modernism, the art teachers used their unique position as sponsors and preceptors to reach millions in the campaign to promote modern art.

#### Shared Philosophies, Synchronicity of Actions and Symbiotic Relationships

Through an examination of information from multiple sources, concerning the four prongs of the art collective, a dynamic interaction in the promotion of Modernism became manifest. By placing fragments of information side by side, I discovered a congruency of concerns, overlapping patterns of advocacy, simultaneous actions and the development of symbiotic relationships. What emerged, from this interdisciplinary research, was evidence of an extraordinary interactional awareness of the immediacy and reciprocity of each other's activities, a similarity in the language used to describe their activities, and the comparative depth of their shared philosophies.

A four-pronged advance guard, comprised of commercial art dealers, collectors and patrons, museums and educators, mainstreamed Modernism into the aesthetic culture of the United States. As individual advocates, each prong functioned as an influential agent which proselytized modern art. By joining forces, a powerful art collective was formed which worked to promote Modernism as a common visual language for their shared philosophies. Through their efforts, modern art became an integral part of American democratic culture.

The geniuses of the avant-garde, such as Miro, Dali, Matta, Picasso, Rothko, and Pollock were seen as champions in a war for societal reformation through the expressive

potential of the arts. Intellectuals, curators of museums and gallery owners, such as Alfred Barr, James Thrall Soby, Julien Levy, Peggy Guggenheim and Pierre Matisse were perceived as warriors fighting for the modernist cause. Educators, such as Sir Herbert Read, Thomas Munro, and Victor D'Amico, fought to promote modern art as a major part of the intellectual discourse concerning independence and intellectual freedom. Also, it was not only the recognized and influential members of the artworld who participated in this campaign. Elementary and high school teachers across the United States valiantly broke down the nineteenth century barriers between art and vocational concerns by introducing modern art into the curricula of the expressive stream of pedagogy. Art historians throughout the nation insisted that modern art be analyzed and taught in a scholarly fashion and wealthy and middle class Americans alike became substantial patrons through their individual purchases and philanthropic support.

Whether celebrated or relatively anonymous, all became leaders of a vanguard at a crucial crossroad. They battled, both separately and collectively, for a way out of the artistic dilemmas facing America. The issues were whether American artists should continue with the hackneyed imagery of the 1930s, whether educators should continue with regimented pedagogical philosophies rooted in nineteenth century practices, and whether America should remain a cultural dependent of Europe. By looking bravely to the future, they called for what had been divergent components of the artworld, the artists, the educators, the dealers, the patrons, the scholars and the champions, to unite in a shared quest for a uniquely American aesthetic. The results, which we recognize today,

were a grafting of American art sensibilities to vanguard European practices, the establishment of valid educational mechanisms for introducing a modern aesthetic, the recognition of New York as the capital of art and culture, and the formation of an American artistic psyche.

### Synthesis and Implications

The passage of nearly seventy-five years provides the scholar with the clarity of vision to glimpse many, if not all of the essential components which have determined the great progression of the plastic arts and aesthetic values of our culture. The components I chose to study represented both a literal and figurative interstice between the past and the future of our artistic culture. It was within this concept of an interstice that I conducted my research. As a scholar, creator and teacher of art, it was imperative that I employ an interdisciplinary method of historical inquiry which was both rigorously objective and receptive to individual interpretation. This interdisciplinary research method afforded the possibility of discovery and rediscovery, and allowed for both scholarly analysis and personal synthesis.

My research approach was inspired by the art historian Stephen Polcari and the artist and aesthete William Squires. Both suggested, by example, that contemporary research should result in a synthesis which reflects the art of the period, the culture which produced it, and the society which embraced it. It was also tempered by Karen Hamblen's admonishment to scholars that "on the pages of history, battles are refought, victories are debated, and reputations are made or lost. As such, a written history is not a representation of the past, but an abstract work whereby the historian's selections and



interpretations create meaning and significance” (1985, p.1). I have tried to mediate my research between these two modes of interpretation and assessment to create a balanced and objective understanding of the contributions of the individuals and collectives which helped to form our aesthetic culture.

This study is an interwoven narrative drawn from information found in unpublished essays and documents, catalogues from museums and galleries, archival letters and memoirs, interviews with firsthand witnesses and the analysis of critical writings in the aesthetic and educational journals of the period. What emerged, from this research, is an amazing story of individuals and agencies who used their aegis to proselytize modern art and establish America as the guardian of the avant-garde through the dynamics of their interactions and shared philosophies. By identifying and describing the four prongs of advocacy and documenting often simultaneous activities in the promotion of modern art, I have attempted to bring what had been largely overlooked and undervalued into prominence, to make cohesive what had seemed unrelated, and above all, to articulate hitherto unrecognized voices of the Modernist advocates in the United States. The resulting synthesis corroborates existing knowledge, infuses new art historical learning, examines artistic and creative practices, and substantiates art educational history.

I do not claim to have answered all questions relating to the affirmation of Modernism in this country, nor have I made irrefutable claims. I have endeavored to construct from pivotal, but little researched, documents of the period an intriguing chapter in the annals of our culture. I offer this study as a springboard for future inquiries

concerning the important advocates who formed and transformed the art world by mainstreaming Modernism throughout the United States. Hopefully, new inquiries will be provoked for “new questions can lead to new interpretations and more research can lead to more valid assumptions” (Soucy, 1985, p. 13).

The crucial need for future research in three areas has emerged from this study. In depth, categorical research of the modernist advocacy is imperative to extensively explore the historical, educational and aesthetic development of our culture. Additional studies of the dynamic forces which shaped a chapter in our history are critical. These studies could not only encourage the reframing of past cultural aspirations and illuminate our present condition, they could direct us toward future practices as well. As culture is neither static in momentum nor disconnected from past concerns, a future analysis of our current circumstances must include consideration of our antecedents and suggested projections as well.

First, specific studies should be conducted concerning commercial dealers such as Pierre Matisse. My work, at the Pierpont Morgan Library, revealed a quantity of primary source documents which manifest the art dealer’s wide ranging, yet unappreciated contributions to the establishment of Modernism in America. The Pierre Matisse Archives, which is comprised of 270 cubic-feet of crated materials spanning nearly nine decades, contains invaluable, but thus far little researched documentation of the figures and forces which shaped one of the most momentous periods in western art history. An extensive, scholarly analysis of these unpublished materials could corroborate existing knowledge or profoundly challenge many of the accepted tenets of our cultural history.

Second, the impact of the various manifestations of Modernism, including automatism, expressionism, formalism and primitivism, on art educational theory and pedagogical methods bears further study. The modern art movement and the expressive stream of art education in this country were paradigm shifts. The occurrence of these monumental alterations of patterns and practices suggests that a paradigm shift in the scholastic analysis of the moment is called for. Inquiries into germane educational documents reveal a symbiotic relationship between the avant-garde artists and vanguard educators in the formation of a national visual ideology. Whereas, the importance of art history in the evolution of contemporary education is recognized, further in depth scholarship is needed to acknowledge and define the reciprocal role of the educator in the evolution of modern art. It is essential that future research draws correlations between the genesis and the influence of the major art movements in the United States and the catalytic shifts in art educational practices.

Third, it is imperative that more scholarly research be conducted concerning the artistic influence of European Modernism on the emerging New York School. Although leading historians such as Stephen Polcari acknowledge the movements of Surrealism and Automatism as “primary artistic influences” on the explosion of a truly American aesthetic, there is little research which documents the chronology of the European artists’ introduction to the New York artists or the impact of their exchanges (1988, p. 175). Further studies are needed to examine the influence of the European artists’ bequest to the young Americans of Automatism as a practice to begin a work of art through the unconscious, Biomorphism as recognition of the continual change occurring in all living

forces and the exalting of the primitive as the source of spirituality and magic in art.

### Summation

Seventy years ago, powerful members of an art collective employed martial terms such as “avant-garde” and “advanced art” as synonyms for Modernism. The militaristic etymology of their phrases suggested heroic participation at the forefront of a battle. They perceived modern artists as combatants who attacked accepted and well-entrenched standards concerning subject matter, appropriate techniques and personal style through the profundity of their insights and the originality of their individual genius. To the advocates of modern art, the battle to establish Modernism in America was not to be waged by the artist alone. The phraseology describing the actions of the coalition suggests that they perceived the teachers, the patrons, the promoters and dealers as members of the vanguard, fighting along side the artists on the front line.

The principle, unifying belief shared by the advocates of Modernism was that contemporaneous art visually articulated freedom. To the collective, the phrase “art of the day” and the term “Modernism” became synonyms for democracy and the exercise of free will. To the collective, modern art had to be championed for it celebrated personal exploration, freedom of expression and individual genius over suppression, repression and regimentation. Curators stated that modern art addressed the crucial issues facing contemporaneous civilization. These issues were articulated as “the character of democracy and tyranny . . . and the survival of liberty” (Barr, 1943, p. 5). Members of the Museum Alliance designated Modernism as a symbol of individual freedom which could

facilitate a democratic “understanding between men” (Whitney, 1948, p. 6). Highschool art teachers encouraged their students to create modernist work for it reflected the freedom found in the democratic culture of America (Mize, 1942, p. 99). College professors stated that the expressive freedom inherent in modernist art “is proof of democracy” (McCausland, 1939, p. 17). Collective statements, issued by museologists, declared that the humanistic diversity represented in modern art “is a sign of vitality and freedom inherent in a democratic society” (1950, p. 6). Critics and educators stated that the modern artist served to blaze society’s path to emancipation and that “we are without courage and freedom if we refuse to follow where he leads” (Read, 1933, p. 134).

The words and philosophical principles these vanguard warriors communicated are as valid and pertinent today as they were when they were first expressed. To thoroughly interpret their meanings, interdisciplinary scholarship is needed. The modernist, Marcel Duchamp developed a concept he termed *Inframince* or *Infrathin* which should be applied to the study of this period. He suggested that a form of alchemy occurs when separate forces or entities combine, that transfiguration is possible when independent substances overlap and become stronger by commingling.

Earlier in our nation’s history, a group of artists, educators, historians, and champions found that fertile ground, that “Inframince” where the reformative power of modern art was celebrated and the individual became finer through the influence of the collective. Pierre Matisse stated that modern art was less a language than a powerful voice. Through this interdisciplinary study, I have tried to articulate the persuasive voice of the movement and the insightful messages communicated by its

champions.

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