

In 1947 the Museum of Modern Art agreed to sell all "classical" works to the Metropolitan Museum and concentrate on those that were "still significant in the modern movement". 26 works were sold at the time. The proceeds were "to be used for the purchase of more 'modern' works." The Board of Trustees reversed this enlightened policy in 1953 and decided to establish a permanent collection of "masterworks", a species of works that is impossible to define. We are witnessing the consequences of this decision today, a decision worthy of a stamp collector's mind. The Museum of Modern Art has become an art-historical mausoleum. Most of the space is taken by classical works and the majority of special exhibitions are historical exhibitions. The "masterwork" approach has resulted in timidity, conservatism, arrogance and a systematic mythologization of modern art. Consequently at the rare occasions, when contemporary works are shown, these works receive more attention, prestige and ensuing commercial value than they would have accumulated and deserved, if large contemporary exhibitions were being held continuously. Certain galleries and collectors naturally have an interest in influencing the choice of works, since such rare chances for exposure can yield sizable profits.

If the Museum of Modern Art and for that matter all museums concerned with the art of this century were seriously committed to their stated objectives they would have to do a lot of soulsearching, and <sup>an</sup> adjustment of the traditional list of priorities. This would lead to a type of museum that has little resemblance to what we know today. Artists would participate in the decision making process and be represented on the Board of Trustees. And such an institution could certainly not fulfill its job in a high-rise structure in Midtown-Manhattan, a plan the Modern is considering at present. The very idea of a skyscraper for art shows how much museum officials have lost touch with the present. A radical

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decentralization, a dispersal of the Museum's activities into all areas of the city and the establishment of numerous autonomous branches might be the only viable approach for the future. It is necessary to introduce a highly flexible ~~MIM~~ system, able to adjust to the changing needs and not another plan for further petrification and the greater glory of the Museum's priesthood. Such a decentralization would liberate the arts from their fashionable Midtown ghetto and would open them to the communities. A relocation in cheaper neighborhoods would also contribute to desecrating the temple. As soon as Museum officials are willing to work in the various loft-districts of the city a lot of financial problems are solved.

Following the policy of 1947 the Museum of Modern Art could sell all its "classical" works to the great museums for the history of art in the country. This would provide space, a considerable amount of money and an unfamiliar urge to look out for contemporary work. There is no reason to hang on to a precious painting on 53rd Street, if it could equally be shown on Fifth Avenue and 82nd Street. On its way uptown it would have made a couple of 100 000 dollars. The money is <sup>required</sup> ~~needed~~ to fulfill the needs of the artists and the communities today and in the future. A modern museum with all its resources and political influence has the responsibility to morally and financially encourage the work of living artists, without any claim to grant a dubious stamp of approval. This entails an extensive program of sponsorship of artists, irrespective of gallery connections, as well as the additional recruitment of government and business sponsorship. Hopefully this will relieve the artist from thinking in terms of saleability of his works in the profit-oriented art market.

Modern Museums should be places that make things possible, not impossible!

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