Exhibiting Modernism in America

A Look at the People, Places, and Exhibits that brought Modernism to America

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Abstract

At the end of the nineteenth century American art and art exhibits were stuck in a conservative academic aesthetic that dominated the American art scene. Modernism, which had been flourishing in Paris since the 1870s, was still completely alien to the United States. The few progressive artists that were working in the U.S. found it impossible to exhibit or sell their work, since there was no market for American art done outside the National Academy of Design or the Society of American Artists. In order for these artists to succeed the American aesthetic needed to change in favor of a modern art market.

The following study looks at what America needed to accomplish in order to become a part of a modern international art scene. The themes of education and acceptance of Modernism and progressive American work are explored through five figures and/or events that took place during the early twentieth century. The sections included Robert Henri and “The Eight” Exhibition (1908), Alfred Stieglitz and the “291” gallery (1905-1917), the International Exhibition of 1913 known as the Armory Show, Katherine Sophie Dreier and her Société Anonyme (founded 1920), and The Museum of Modern Art (founded 1929). Each section will discuss the historical content of the events and how it related to furthering America’s appreciation of living artists as well as opening up to the ideas and movements from abroad.

This study will conclude by looking at how the success of these events impacted society, both in the past and today.
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Introduction

"Art should never try to be popular; the public should try to be more artistic."

~ Oscar Wilde

It is hard to imagine that only a century ago progressive and modern art was not recognized in this country. In the nineteenth century American art as a whole was rarely collected and was only exhibited by groups affiliated with conservative academies. American collectors at the time were primarily industrialists, who focused all their energies on French painting from the Romantics to the Impressionists.¹ Prior to 1900, few Americans were willing to consider promoting non-academic art. Any artist that was progressive or different had no market where their work could be appreciated.

There were two reasons why Americans were not able to move forward in the art world. The first was that the American artists and public lacked the knowledge and information regarding modern movements and ideas that were taking place in Europe. Paris had been a hub of new ideas, theories and aesthetics since the 1870s and was constantly changing. Whether it was a lack of decent communication or simply the isolationist attitude of the people and the academies, America remained in the dark regarding modernism.

The other flaw was that at the time there were no exhibits given to display or promote progressive, contemporary artists. The only exhibitions that artists could enter were those of the National Academy of Design and the Society of American Artists. Many non-academic artists did not obtain exhibit space in these exhibitions

as a result of the conservative nature and need of self-promotion of the members with in these two organizations. The academic artists worked in a style that reflected classical art, therefore anyone who worked noticeably outside this standard received little, if any, recognition in exhibitions.

These reasons affected America’s ability to compete in an international art market. In order to change the conservative aesthetic that dominated three needs would have to be addressed. One was to recognize progressive contemporary art, both from Europe and the United States, as worthy collecting and exhibiting. The major problem with collecting American Art at this time was that it had not truly come into its own yet. Art historian Constance Schwartz argues in her book, *The Shock of Modernism in America*, that at the turn of the century we had still not truly developed a national art or an American style, and that we would be unlikely to arrive at one with out the growth of ideas.² This argument directly relates to the second need, which was that the American people needed to be educated and aware of the art of their own time. There was not resource for information of this nature. Galleries were not as prolific in cities as they are today, museums were reserved for historic work, and the academies dictated their own agenda. This left no room for the exploration or appreciation of artists, conservative or not, who were alive and working at the time. To educate America would in part address the third need, which was to encourage America’s acceptance of modernism as a recognized artistic movement that was relevant to society.

The following sections are a study of the events, exhibits, and people who would address these issues and change American Art. Five critical figures/events will be discussed regarding the roles they played in the development of modernism. The first will be Robert Henri and “The Eight” and their break away from the academy, followed by Alfred Stieglitz and “291”, his gallery, which tried to educate people and artists about modernism and support a developing American avant-garde. The third is the International Exhibition of 1913 known as the Armory Show, the turning point in American art that shocked the country out of its conservative aesthetic shell, followed by Katherine Sophie Dreier and her Société Anonyme that would actively try to educate the entire country about modern art and theory and its importance to society. All this will culminate in the final section regarding the development of one of the first permanent educational institutions devoted to modern art: The Museum of Modern Art in New York founded in 1929. All these events and people would be the leaders in exhibiting Modernism in America, as well as promoting its development as a dominate force in our culture.

There are others, in addition to those mentioned here, who contributed to modernism but will not be focused on in this study, notably the Stein siblings and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. The Stein siblings; Leo, Gertrude, Michael and Sarah, were Americans who at the beginning of the twentieth century were living in Paris. They were some of the first patrons of the modern movement in Europe and their circle consisted of artists like Matisse and Picasso. Whitney would be one of the first patrons to purchase American art by more progressive artists. She would financially support many of the artists and exhibits that promoted progressive American Art, and
would go on to found the Whitney Museum of American Art. While all of the people played a significant role in modernism, their role in promoting the education of America about the art of its time on an international level was not as strong. For this reason they are not focused on, though they are mentioned periodically.

**Robert Henri and “The Eight”**

Over the course of history, a contributing aspect to the notoriety of the various art movements has been the exhibitions that have accompanied them. Even today where, when, and how are all vital parts of the way the public knows its art. Prior to 1900, major exhibitions for American contemporary artists were sponsored by two groups: the National Academy of Design, who had been holding juried exhibitions as early as 1826, and the Society of American Artists founded in 1877 by a group of young and enthusiastic artists, predominately from Philadelphia. Both groups held meetings in New York and Philadelphia. These two groups engaged in a rivalry that lasted for roughly thirty years. The Society had been founded for the younger, more liberal artists, while the National Academy was much more traditional and conservative. Over the years, however, the Society also grew increasingly conservative, much to the dismay of certain members, among them the outspoken painter Robert Henri.

Henri had attended the Pennsylvania Academy studying under Thomas Anschutz, a protégé of Thomas Eakins. Eakins’ pedagogical ideals, which

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4 Perlman, 110.
encouraged students to study life around them, still dominated the school despite his dismissal in 1866. After schooling Henri traveled to Paris (1888-1891) and upon his return imparted his new-found knowledge to a group of close colleagues. These colleagues, a group of artist-reporters who all worked for the *Philadelphia Press*, were the creators of the urban realist movement. Among them were William Glakens, Everett Shinn, John Sloan, and George Luks (Figures 2-5). Despite having drawings in the papers, and occasionally being selected to show one or two works in the major exhibitions, these men were not widely exhibited. Their subject matter dealt with depression and poverty, and this contrasted with the classical, Renaissance and Baroque inspired paintings being produced by Academy members like Kenyon Cox who would translate American values into paintings that contained images, figures, and symbols of Greek or Roman mythology. The result was that any artist that worked in a new or different style was limited to where they could exhibit.

By 1904 most of these artists had moved to New York, which provided them with more subject matter as well as teaching prospects. Their timing could not have been better. In 1905 the National Academy of Design and Society of American Artists “began negotiating a merger” after both groups started suffering setbacks due to a lack of funds, low membership, and few prospects for space in which to exhibit. The amalgamation was officially legalized on April 7, 1906, after many meetings and constitution drafts between the two. The group would retain the name National Academy of Design and slowly work toward combining its membership.

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6 Ibid., 11.
7 Milroy, 21.
Among the many points outlined in the new constitution was how it regarded its affiliated artists. As art historian Bennard Perlman explains, “Under the plan all artists who belonged to the Society but had no affiliation to the National Academy of Design would automatically become associate members. Similarly, Society members who had previously been associates would be elevated to the rank of Academician.”

This meant that Henri would be on the jury panel for the next exhibition. This was especially important since here Henri could represent and promote the need to include the more contemporary artists. On March 1, 1907 thirty men sat in the Vanderbilt Gallery in New York City to view 1,500 works shown in alphabetical order. Initially the outlook for Henri was bright as two of his students had made it into the exhibition without debate. Yet he slowly became frustrated as he watched the other jury members become more critical; five of his colleagues and two of his students received low ratings, if not outright rejections. Henri became outraged, voicing the opinion that “his fellow jurors were apparently reluctant to set aside their conventional convictions about art in order to yield to innovations.”

He called for the works to be reevaluated.

As Perlman details in his book *Painters of the Ashcan School: the Immortal Eight*, over the next two days Henri watched the jury reject the same paintings as before, as well as ones they had previously let in. Outraged, Henri withdrew his own submissions and stormed out. It did not end there. Henri and his associates had spent years working for newspapers doing illustrations, so they immediately took the issue to the contacts they still had at the press. According to art historian Elizabeth

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8 Perlman, 117.
9 Ibid. 127.
10 Ibid.
Milroy, as of the March 9th edition of the *New York Evening Post* started running consistent articles condemning the exhibit, sparking interest among readers.\(^{11}\) It was after this exposure that the group considered staging a breakaway exhibition. The National Academy and their exhibition methods were inflexible, and it appeared that it would never change. In the minds of these artists, the only way America would ever become part of the international art scene would be for things to change. In April, Henri, Shinn, Glackens, Sloan, Luks, Ernest Lawson (Fig. 7), and Arthur B. Davies (Fig 6.) first met to plan their “secession.” The group found a home for their exhibition in the Macbeth Galleries in New York City.

The Macbeth Galleries, while not their first choice, was ideal in the values it shared with the artists. William Macbeth, an Irish immigrant, got his start as a clerk for a print dealer. In time Macbeth became passionate about promoting American art rather than European. In 1892 he opened his own gallery located at 237 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. In her essay *Art and Commerce: William Macbeth, the Eight and the Popularization of American Art*, Gwendolyn Owens suggests that “He intended the Macbeth Galleries to become known for American art… [and] was equally determined to educate the public, more generally, about contemporary American art.”\(^{12}\) In 1906 Macbeth moved the gallery north to 450 Fifth Avenue, for larger space and better local. Macbeth’s expertise in promoting new art was one of many components in furthering the cause to exhibit living artists. It also foreshadowed the

\(^{11}\) Milroy, 22.
success the gallery would receive after 1913 when the art market would become dominated by the gallery system.

In May the group also invited Maurice Prendergast (Fig. 8) to show with them. While his style was much more Impressionistic than the rest, his values were the same, and was thus welcomed by the rest of the group. By this point the papers started to get wind of the story and deemed them “The Eight,” writing numerous articles and headlines about their opposition to the National Academy. It was at this point that “The Eight” truly made use of the press, asking them to employ specifically rebellious language that would advertise their “explicit agenda of cultural nationalism” and spark the interest of the public. Articles were written and pictures were printed and distributed to the public. Milroy notes that “words like ‘secession’, ‘rebellion’, and ‘revolt’ caught the American newspaper readers’ attention.” As attendance would reflect, “The Eight’s” exploitation of the press would be the largest contributing factor to the success of the exhibition. It would also be the first time a group of artists marketed themselves to the general public, rather than targeting a specific audience. By targeting the general public these artists sought to broaden their support, furthering chances of future success. Following “The Eight” exhibition in 1908, many artists and gallery owners used the press to increase public interest.

On February 1, 1912, all the paintings were delivered to Macbeth’s, a few still wet from being finished only days before. The group dedicated the entire next day to trying to install the work. This did present one major problem: how should the work be hung? They definitely did not want the work hung in tiers as the academy

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13 Milroy, 45.
14 Ibid.
15 Pearlman, 176.
did, as this resulted in some works being not as visible as others. They did however want it to be interesting. Everett Shinn voiced the opinion that “art galleries of the time were more like funeral parlors wherein cadavers were displayed in the sumptuous coffins.”\textsuperscript{16} In the end it was decided that all works would be hung at the same centerline and would not be grouped by artist, allowing for each piece to look different than the one next to it. After a full day of installation, the artists expressed how pleased they were with the overall appearance of the exhibit. However, regarding both the work and the way in which it was presented, Glakens did make one observation: “We are going to get an awful roasting from some of the papers.”\textsuperscript{17}

Never before had a group of artists been so fixated on change. The rules of the Academy had been thrown out, and these men were determined to have a successful exhibit that went beyond the traditional boundaries of style and display that had been so long intact. While their methods were still behind those in Europe, it was still the first attempt at developing a new modern American style both in art and exhibition design.

On February 3\textsuperscript{rd} the Macbeth Gallery opened its doors to find a line of visitors that would number roughly 300 per hour.\textsuperscript{18} In his book Bennard Pearlman gives a description of the exhibit:

Each morning the narrow corridor outside of the gallery’s upper-floor entrance at 450 Fifth Avenue is filled with people before the 9 A.M. opening. A shop-worn elevator operator already wears a harassed expression, the result of the previous day’s labors. Gallery employees elbow their way through the crowd and approach the locked door. As one enters, Henri’s \textit{Laughing Boy} (Fig 1.) faces the unsuspecting gallery-goer, who either laughs along with him or at him. Once inside, the jam

\textsuperscript{16} Everett Shinn, “Recollection of The Eight,” 1943-1944, as quoted in Owens, 65.
\textsuperscript{17} Ira Glakens, \textit{William Glakens and the Ashcan Group}, 1957 as quoted in Perlman, 178.
\textsuperscript{18} Haskell, 91.
continues unabated until 6 P.M.; four or five dozen people are always roving the two small rooms.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite the large crowd, reviews were still mixed. The artists that comprised “The Eight” were in fact drastically different artists with different painting styles. What people saw when they came to Macbeth’s was eight exhibitions blended into one. The common thread that bound the works together was that they all broke with the traditional art that was being produce in the academies.

To some people, and a number of art critics, the show clashed, creating what one critic described as “a feeling of nausea.”\textsuperscript{20} There was also a lot of positive feedback. Some members of the public and the press found the unique styles and the realist subject matter refreshing. James Huneker, a reporter for \textit{The Sun}, wrote two favorable articles regarding the exhibit. He took a particular interest in Davies, who he described as “painting out of time and space.”\textsuperscript{21} Huneker would be one of many reporters whose favorable opinions of Davies’ work would benefit Davies later when trying to publicize The Armory Show.

The tangible success, however, came in the form of the almost $4,000 that the exhibit grossed by its close.\textsuperscript{22} Seven works were sold including two by Henri, two by Davies, and Luks, Shinn, and Lawson each sold one piece.\textsuperscript{23} While the vast majority of the wealthy socialite collectors were unsupportive of the exhibit, Gertrude Whitney Vanderbilt would make the largest purchases. Mrs. Vanderbilt, a wealthy art patron

\textsuperscript{19} Lloyd Goodrich, \textit{Thomas Eakins: His Life and Work}, 1933 as quoted in Perlman, 178.- the title of Henri’s painting is \textit{Laughing Child} not \textit{Laughing Boy}
\textsuperscript{20} “Brooklyn Revives memories of ‘The Eight’,” \textit{ArtDigest}, 1 December 1943 as quoted in Perlman, 178.
\textsuperscript{21} James Huneker, “Eight Painters; First Article,” \textit{The Sun}, 9 February 1908 as quoted in Milroy, 48.
\textsuperscript{22} Haskell, 91.
\textsuperscript{23} Pearlman, 178.
and sculptor herself, purchased four of the seven paintings sold, in addition to a sculpture by one of Macbeths’ other artists.\(^{24}\)

In the course of art history “The Eight” exhibition is not a large one; nevertheless its acclaim and impact cannot be ignored. Following the exhibit, the National Academy became slightly more liberal in its selections, trying to include a number of contemporary artists.\(^{25}\) The largest impact of the show, however, was on contemporary artists as a whole. As art historian William Innes Homer argues, “This exhibition proved for the first time that a strongly antiacademic group of artists could attract wide public notice and substantial income—not just as curiosities but as serious, significant painters.”\(^{26}\) Henri went on to plan another exhibit with other contemporary artists, “The Exhibition of Independent Artists,” held in 1910. While this exhibit was larger in scale, it did not have the publicity that surrounded The Eight exhibition.

Today many of the works of “The Eight” can be seen in museums across the country. While the five members of the eight who were specifically known as “Urban Realists,” Henri, Shinn, Glackens, Sloan, and Luks, are still displayed together, the group as a whole is rarely acknowledged in museum exhibit layouts, since the Macbeth Galleries were the only place they had ever been displayed together. As a result many people outside the art world tend to know very little if anything about “The Eight” and their group exhibit. Their influence on American art and exhibition would also be eventually overshadowed by the Armory Show, which

\(^{24}\) Owens, 62.
\(^{25}\) Perlman, 182.
is considered by many to be the turning point in American art history. While there may be some truth to this, the effort to make changes in American art and exhibition was first implemented by Henri, “The Eight,” and their exhibit at the Macbeth Galleries.

**Alfred Stieglitz and “291”**

While Henri and his group were trying to break with the academy and establish a true American Art, Alfred Stieglitz was trying to make change of his own. Stieglitz would become the promoter of two new trends in American art: photography as art, and the education of the American public regarding the artistic endeavors abroad. Throughout his career Stieglitz (Fig. 9) worked to promote a variety of movements, especially in his gallery, “291.” Born on January 1, 1864 to a well off family in Hoboken, NJ, his parents were highly cultured people who valued education. Because they wanted their children to have the benefit of a European education, they moved to Germany while Stieglitz was in his teens. It was during this time in Europe (1881-1890) he developed a talent for photography as well as a keen interest in art. Photography remained a passion, even during his time as a mechanical engineering student at the Technical University of Berlin.

In 1890 Stieglitz returned to New York. What he quickly discovered upon his return was that the United States was culturally far behind the Europeans. In Europe people could view the newest trends in a variety of small galleries and salons,

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27 Homer, 6.
28 Haskell, 45.
predominately in Paris. Stieglitz immediately looked for a way to connect with the artistic groups of New York that might function in the same capacity. In 1891, Stieglitz joined the Society of Amateur Photographers, which in “1896 merged with the New York Camera Club to form the Camera Club of New York.” Through the Camera Club Stieglitz became the editor of Camera Notes, a quarterly magazine where Stieglitz was able to voice his views about photography as art. Photography was still a fairly new invention at that time and was still not formally recognized as an art. Similar to Henri’s relationship with the National Academy, Stieglitz relationship with the Camera Club became problematic when the members of the Club voiced their disapproval of his views, specifically his high standards for photography. Many of the men affiliated with the organization considered photography to be a hobby, or something to do on the weekends, which contrasted sharply with Stieglitz’s concepts of photography as art.

In 1902 he resigned from his position with Camera Notes, and with the assistance of fellow photographer Edward Steichen (Fig. 10) formed a society which they titled “The Photo-Secession.” The Photo-Secession’s membership included most all of the early art photographers. Stieglitz became the director and held meetings in public restaurants for the first three years of their existence. This new group was determined to push photography into the artistic mainstream, with hopes that someday their work would be collected and purchased the same way as paintings and prints. Having been put in a position of leadership, Stieglitz was able to start a

30 Haskell, 45.
31 Ibid.
32 Homer, 36.
new publication, which he titled *Camera Work* (Fig. 12). *Camera Work* started officially circulating in 1903 and published all information related to what the group was doing, including in 1905 when it contained the announcement that a permanent exhibition space had been rented at 291 Fifth Ave. The opening of a gallery space was incredibly important to these photographers. It was already difficult for contemporary painters to find places to exhibit, which meant that photography, which was not even considered an art, stood almost no chance of being exhibited. Initially known as the “Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession,” the gallery soon became referred to simply as “291.” Due to its mention in *Camera Work*, which was circulated internationally to artists, collectors, and photographers, many European art affiliates quickly came to know of “291.” The gallery, in turn, was willing to display those European artists, mostly sculptors and painters, which they were supported by. Stieglitz was in full support of modernism, and looked to show the same amount of modern art as photography.

It was not until 1907, however, that European art was actually shown in “291.” Displaying modern art would change “291” from being just a photography-based gallery to a well-rounded exhibit space that artists working in a wide variety of media could show in. By this point “291” had already amassed a large number of resident artists who were not photographers. This group included Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove, John Marin, Alfred Maurer, and Max Weber. Most of these artists had studied in Europe and were far more progressive than many other American Artists.

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33 Leavens, 13.
Edward Steichen, Stieglitz’s main associate, sailed to France in 1906 and was responsible for finding European works to exhibit. The first show Steichen planned was an arrangement of fifty-eight drawings by Auguste Rodin, which opened in January of 1908. While Rodin’s work was not nearly as avant-garde as other modern artists working at the time, it was still far more radical than anything that had been shown in America at that point. The drawings were a series of pencil and watercolor works that depicted gestural female nudes, and had a very sexual quality to them which was something the American public had not yet seen. This show established the exhibition policy for the photo-secessionists: “to display works of high quality and to shock the public and leading critics out of their complacent attitude.”

Criticism, both positive and negative, was welcome, especially if it would shock the public so much that they came to the gallery in order to see what the commotion was about. In an effort to emphasize his point Stieglitz documented in *Camera Work* writings of various critics, including remarks about the obscene nature of the figures. While some critics had favorable reactions, some members of the artistic community were outraged, specifically William Merrit Chase, a conservative academic painter. Chase, who had already resigned from the New York Art School due to the popularity of Robert Henri, became angered at the display finding Rodin’s drawings ridiculous and a mockery of truly artistic work, and vowed “never to set foot in ‘291’ again.”

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34 Haskell, 93.
35 “From the Writings and Conversations of Alfred Stiegliz as told to Dorothy Norman” (1943) as quoted in Leavens, 19.
As if this controversy surrounding Rodin’s work was not enough, “291” proceeded to open a Matisse exhibit in April of that same year. Matisse had become well known for the artistic uproar he had created only a few years earlier in Paris with his display of Fauvist paintings. Matisse’s abstract approach to subject matter and his vibrant color use was completely alien to a conservative American audience. The works displayed at “291” showed the evolution of Matisse’s early style and was comparatively tame to most of what he was exhibiting in Paris. This, of course, was not known to the Americans that viewed the work, and who responded even more venomously than they had for Rodin. It was important for Stieglitz to display an array of modern works, so that he could emphasize just how dated American aesthetic taste had become.

What was interesting about Stieglitz’s views regarding the American aesthetic was that they were remarkably similar to Henri’s. Despite this, the minor differences regarding their methods for accomplishing their goals caused Stieglitz and his associates at “291” to not get along with Henri and other members of “The Eight.” Historian Barbra Haskell argues that even though they had comparable ideals in artistic subject matter and both wanted America to be more forward thinking in their art, the divide of European and American art as well as select views on education were breaking points. The differences in the two groups of artists that these men led resulted in an intense rivalry that would continue up till the Armory Show. The fact that these two groups were not close, however, reinforced just how dire the need for

38 Homer, 58
39 Haskell, 94.
change had become. The situation for artists had become so desperate that multiple ideas were formulated from a variety of people on how to fix it.

Five days after the close of the Matisse show, the lease ran out on the gallery space, and Stieglitz, not having the money to pay the raised rent cost, was forced to leave. Thankfully, due to funds raised by friends of the Photo-Secessionists, the group was able to rent out two rooms at 293 Fifth Ave (Figures 13-14), right next door to the previous location.\(^{40}\) Despite the new location the gallery retained its informal title of “291.” Following the move Stieglitz produced a number of lucrative shows at “291.” While all of the exhibits reflected Stieglitz’s desire to shock the public, some of the artists themselves were more important in shaping the gallery and its circle. Specifically there were three men who held some of the first one man exhibits that took place over the next two years. These three men, Marius de Zayas, Marsden Hartley and Max Weber (Figures 16-18), would be lucrative in the success of “291” as a modern art gallery, at a time when there were no others.

The first two artists were important for they would directly impact what exhibits would take place at “291” over the next ten years. In January 1909 Stieglitz displayed a series of caricatures by Mexican artist Marius de Zayas, which was met with mixed reviews.\(^{41}\) That April Stieglitz also met Marsden Hartley, who requested an exhibit at “291” before the end of the season.\(^{42}\) Initially Stieglitz declined, telling the artist he would have to look elsewhere since the schedule was already full. In a letter to Hartley years later, Stieglitz recalled Hartley’s response to the rejection: “you’d have a show at ‘291’ or nowhere, as you liked the spirit of the place and didn’t

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
\(^{41}\) Leavens, 24.
\(^{42}\) A. Stieglitz to M. Hartley, October 26, 1923, as quoted in Whelan, 250
like the spirit elsewhere.” Stieglitz agreed Hartley’s work could occupy the gallery for the ten days in May that fell between two larger exhibits.

These two artists became incredibly important to Stieglitz circle, since they along with Steichen, frequented Europe. Writer and Historian Ileana Leavens in her book *From “291” to Zurich* explains that from 1909 to 1912 these three artists, as well as Stieglitz in the summers, would tour Europe making important contacts and sharing various *Camera Work* publications. Over the three years they forged close ties to various Post-Impressionist and Cubist artists, the members of Der Blau Reiter, as well as Hugo Ball and Jean Arp, who would eventually form the Dadaist movement in Zurich. The contact between a gallery and artistic groups is extremely important to guaranteeing future exhibits. Staying in contact with the foreign modern artists would allow “291” to stay up to date on what artists should be shown and promoted.

The third influential American in Stieglitz’s circle was Max Weber. In 1908 Weber had just returned from a three year stay in Paris, making him the leading informant on the current art and aesthetics in France. While in Paris he had been a student under Matisse, mentored under Rousseau, from whom he had obtained a small collection of works, and had close ties to Picasso, Cézanne, and Guillaume Appolinare. These artists were highly influential on Weber and his aesthetic values. When he returned to New York, he found these artists far superior to any American artists and wanted them to be promoted as such. In 1909 Weber was evicted from his

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43 Whelan, 250.
44 Leavens, 24.
45 Haskell, 95-96.
46 Ibid, 95.
47 Whelan, 258.
New York studio and turned to Stieglitz for help. Stieglitz set Weber up in the decorator’s work room, where he lived for the majority of 1910. The close contact between the two expanded Stieglitz’s knowledge of modern art trends and influenced much of what went on in “291” for the next year.

While these artists all had their own shows and did their own art, their prominent role at “291” was in helping organize shows of the European artists. “291” was at this time the only gallery that showed the modern works from Europe, so despite a lot of overall public disparagement, many American artists looked to “291” as the only source where they could study modernism. In November 1910 the new exhibition season opened with a showing of works by Manet, Cézanne, Toulouse-Lautrec, Renoir, and Rodin, with a display of Weber’s collection of Rousseau’s in a smaller a joining room. This room was set up at Weber’s bidding as a memorial exhibit to the artist, who had died only two month earlier. This was followed by and extensive exhibition of Cézanne watercolors in March 1911, and the drawings and water colors of Picasso in April. Much to Stieglitz delight the critics had much to say about the entire season.

The majority of the American public and press simply did not understand the art that they were looking at. Even today works by Cézanne take some analysis. At that time people had not seen work of his nature before so they did not know what they were looking at. A lot of the articles that were written for issues of Camera Work were dedicated to defending these new and contemporary artists. De Zayas did a series of essays and articles that tried to explain the work of Picasso, who had

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 285.
50 Homer, 135.
discussed his work with de Zayas on multiple occasions.\(^{51}\) Regardless of having to defend their actions, people within the art community were learning a lot from what they saw, even if they didn’t like it. In Stieglitz’s mind that already made the gallery a success.

This success did, however, come with some drawbacks. Weber’s arrogance began to cause conflict at “291” because he consistently complained and belittled the work of many of the artists. He was unable to grasp that American artists, as well as audiences, needed to be slowly introduced to new ideas if they were ever going to embrace them. When Weber’s one-man exhibit went up in 1911, the tensions between Stieglitz and himself rose to the surface. According to biographer Richard Whelan first Weber and Stieglitz got into a large argument regarding the prices of the works in the exhibit that ended with Weber storming out of “291” declaring he would no longer be apart of Stieglitz’s circle.\(^{52}\) Whelan additionally points out that the critics’ response to Weber’s exhibition was quite harsh, describing his work as “brutal”, “vulgar”, and “lacking sanity.”\(^{53}\) Having already witnessed how the critics reacted to the modern works of Europe, it should have come as no surprise that his extremely abstract style was not warmly received. Instead Weber became highly offended at the critic’s ignorance. All of this resulted in Weber’s disaffiliation with “291” and most artists in its circle.

Up until 1913, the “Little Galleries” were one of the only places people could see the contemporary art of Europe. While the gallery received sizable press, it was mostly artists and collectors that came to “291,” not the general public who as a

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 62.
\(^{52}\) Ibid., 135.
\(^{53}\) Whelan, 288.
whole remained fairly oblivious to modern art. This all shifted with the Armory Show. While Stieglitz did not participate directly in the organization of the exhibit, he did make a number of contributions. Listed as an honorary vice-president, Stieglitz encouraged all his artists to submit works for the show in addition to lending out some of “291’s” permanent collection. He also dedicated a special issue of *Camera Work* to contemporary art to be published in conjunction with the exhibition.

What was important about Stieglitz’s relationship to the Armory Show, however, was not what he contributed but how it affected “291.” In the end the Armory Show both helped and hurt the gallery. On the one side Stieglitz was extremely pleased that many more people were finally realizing his belief in the importance of modern art works. Additionally Stieglitz was able to establish close contacts to some of the artists involved in the exhibition, notably Francis Picabia. On the other hand, this exhibition took away the revolutionary status that “291” had enjoyed because it exclusively exhibited European work. Following the Armory Show a surge of interest in modern and contemporary art led to the opening of several new galleries in New York. *Camera Work* faced increased competition as well with a number of new art periodicals being published.

As a result “291” was forced to work toward a number of different directions, aims, and goals. That is not to say that Stieglitz was no longer focused on furthering America’s knowledge of art; quite the contrary, Stieglitz’s main goal would now be to not only promote modern art, but modern ideas and theories as well. Many radical artists and movements would influence “291” in its remaining years. There would be

54 Ibid., 309-310.
55 Homer, 172- The Carroll Galleries, the Folsom Galleries etc.
56 Ibid., 173.
two artists and one movement, however, which would surpass the rest: Kandinsky, Picabia, and the Dadaists would either influence or impact the nature of “291” from 1913 until its close in 1917.

Kandinsky’s influence was not due so much to his direct contact with the gallery, but was the adoption of his written ideas. Kandinsky, the leader of Der Blau Reiter, was a highly educated individual who was considered one of the great geniuses of his time. His book, On the Spiritual in Art, was considered one of the most profound writings of an artist in decades, and an excerpt of it appeared in July 1912 issue of Camera Work.\(^{57}\) Hartley had been the largest supporter of Kandinsky at 291, having never lost the respect he had gained for the artist during his visit to Europe. The aesthetic theories that Kandinsky explores in his writings, specifically regarding feeling and emotion, quickly became the direction Stieglitz would direct his artists to.\(^{58}\) The main points which “291” would focus on were Kandinsky’s acknowledgement of “the existence of two trends in art: the ‘scientific’ and the ‘mystical.’”\(^{59}\) Historian Ileana Leavens argues that the scientific aspects related specifically to the logical and mathematical approaches that were then being seen in the art of men like Picasso, while the mystical related more to feeling and the relationship of color and emotion seen in the work of artists like Matisse.\(^{60}\)

While these theories of Kandinsky’s became popular amongst the “291” crowd, Francis Picabia’s work exerted a similar impact. In the Armory Show Picabia had submitted four “large and colorful abstractions,” which received almost as much

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\(^{57}\) Haskell, 96.  
\(^{58}\) Homer, 175.  
\(^{59}\) Leavens, 60.  
\(^{60}\) Ibid., 61.
attention as Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912). An energetic individual, Picabia quickly became a favorite among the Stieglitz circle due to his firm beliefs that “the best means of representing emotional and intellectual experiences” was through abstraction. His work was exhibited a few times at “291” and many of his speculations were printed in *Camera Work*. Between Kandinsky’s theories and Picabia’s art work, “291” became one of the most progressive galleries in New York and benefited from having profound theories and philosophies that coincided with their.

The affiliation of “291” with Kandinsky and Picabia made the gallery and group even more appealing to Hugo Ball who would foster a close relationship between Stieglitz’s circle and his own new movement. In February of 1916 the Cabaret Voltaire opened in Zurich, Switzerland under Ball’s guidance. The Cabaret Voltaire, which would be the home and birthplace of the Dadaist movement, was founded on the ideals of “291” as they had been described in the many issues of *Camera Work*. According to Leavens, Dada promoted people who had new ideas and new art and supported experimentation. The movement quickly spread and soon had groups in multiple cities including New York, where Stieglitz himself became a supporter of the movement. While “291” would not be the home of the New York Dada group, it would support and exhibit some of their works before the gallery shut its doors in 1917. All of these affiliations would become an intrinsic part of how “291” was run, as well as how it was remembered.

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61 Whelan, 320.
62 Leavens, 67.
63 Ibid., 105.
While promoting modern art from Europe was a large part of what “291” was about, their largest success rested with a group of American artists. During his final years with “291” Stieglitz supported a group of painters that would become the first American Modernists. Hartley, John Marin, and Arthur Dove, Joseph Stella, and Alfred Maurer, all of whom held regular exhibitions at “291,” would go on to have brilliant careers and become some of the most respected painters of their time. In addition to these men was one more artist who would become the love of Stieglitz’s life, as well as one of the most renowned American painters: Georgia O’Keefe. While O’Keefe would only be a part of “291” in its final year, she would become one of the only female artists affiliated with the gallery to go on to have a successful career.

In the spring of 1917 Georgia O’Keefe’s exhibit would close the 1916-1917 season, and would be the last exhibit ever for “291”. With the impending possibility of prohibition being passed and Stieglitz’s continuing frustration with the attitude of many of the New York artists and dealers, he decided it was finally time to close the doors. By this point “291” had lost most all affiliations with what had been the photo-secessionists and had slowly faded into the background with the opening of so many other galleries. Artists and collectors would remember the impact of “The Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession” prior to 1913 and Stieglitz’s firm belief in trying to educate the American public. His pioneering European exhibits “exposed artists, critics, and connoisseurs to the revolutionary currents in Art emerging in Europe.” Stieglitz’s revolutionary ideas would become the initial model for many

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64 Homer, 258.
65 Ibid., 258.
of the galleries that would open in the years following 1913, making Stieglitz and “291” one of the most important players in early modern exhibition.

The International Exhibition of 1913 (The Armory Show)

The efforts of “The Eight” and Alfred Stieglitz were the primary influences on yet another group of artists determined to bring artistic change and freedom from the academy to the United States. The International Exhibition of 1913, known to most as the Armory Show due to its location at the Armory of the 69th regiment in New York, is considered by most historians as the exhibition that changed American artistic culture, encompassing everything from painting to literature to fashion. It is also considered the last of a series of international exhibitions where artist groups were breaking away from the academies of their own countries. Other examples included exhibitions such as the Salon des Refusés in 1863 and the Salon des Indépendents which started in 1884, both in France. Researcher Shelly Staples argues that these French exhibitions were the first where “works of distinction were found outside the academy” forcing the Ecole des Beaux Arts to take a backseat in the influence of aesthetics and art worth collecting. The same action took place with the Armory Show; however, the break was with the National Academy of Design, rather than the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

Much like the beginnings of “The Eight”, plans for the Armory Show began with a simple meeting of four artists who were opposed to the methods of the

National Academy. In 1911 Jerome Meyers, Elmer McRae, Walt Kuhn, and Henry Fitch Taylor met at the Madison Gallery located at 305 Madison Ave which housed the recent acquisitions of collector Clara Davidge and Gertrude Whitney Vanderbilt, who both had recently taken an interest in the work of new American artists. In December of that year the four decided to invite sixteen artists to join them in “organizing a society for the purpose of exhibiting the works of progressive and live painters, both American and foreign—favoring such work usually neglected by current shows and especially interesting and instructive to the public.” All participants of “The Eight” exhibition were invited, although Everett Shinn did not actually join, as well as many of the additional artists involved in the Independent Exhibition of 1910. Thirteen artists were present at the first meeting in which the name “Association of American Painters and Sculptors” (AAPS) was officially decided.

Their first few meetings were dedicated to establishing their board and their mission.

Following the philosophy of Henri and his associates, the organizers of the Armory Show hoped to establish a change in the consciousness of the American public, making them aware that American art had merit and should be displayed and collected with the same passion that marked the European works. From the onset the exhibition had been calculated to provide a mental jolt in order to stir America out of its long aesthetic complacency.

For years Henri and Stieglitz had been trying to slowly introduce new ideas. While they had made some progress, they had still not affected enough people to

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68 The minutes of the first meeting of the AAPS, Dec. 14, 1911 as quoted in Brown, 30.
69 Schwartz, 63
warrant significant change. The AAPS knew that they would have to hold one giant exhibition to generate mass interest, rather than a series of small ones. Since Henri’s philosophy was the main starting point it would have been safe to assume that the position of leadership would be given to Henri; however the first choice was someone not even directly affiliated with Henri’s group.

J. Alden Weir was initially elected president of the association, however due to his loyalties to the National Academy he not only declined but withdrew all together. Following Weir’s withdrawal the association elected Arthur B. Davies, who threw himself into organizing the exhibition. The elected board of trustees included Gutzon Borglum, Henri, McRae, John Mobray-Clarke, Myers, Taylor, and Kuhn, who would be the board’s most active member. With some pull both from Kuhn and Davies, John Quinn, a lawyer who also was a known art collector, was hired as the AAPS’s legal representative. It would be these individuals who would make the exhibit as prominent as it was.

The groups’ first point of business was to find a location to hold their exhibit. Initially the association had looked into Madison Square Garden, but after seeing the cost it was ruled out. In April of 1912 Kuhn began looking into the possibility of using the Armory of the 69th Regiment, National Guard, located on Lexington Ave in New York City. The AAPS began negotiations with Commanding Officer Colonel Louis D. Conley regarding the terms of use: rent: $5000, janitorial cost: $500, dates: February 1 or 15 to March 1 or 15. At first the cost was still an issue, however this is where Davies became a very large asset to the group. Davies was an artistic

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70 Brown, 37.
71 Ibid., 42.
72 Ibid., 43.
advisor to some of the wealthiest women in New York, including Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr., Lillie P. Bliss, and Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan, all of whom “liked his schoolteacher looks and trusted his refined manners and taste.”

Therefore it was of no surprise that whenever the AAPS needed funds Davies would appear with a check from an undisclosed donor, which allowed him to pretty much underwrite the whole exhibition as well as make the payment to obtain the Armory location. Having the support of the wealthy financial backers, even if they were anonymous, established the willingness of members of the upper-class to accept and display modern art. Many of the wealthy donors would later go on to help fund their own museums, galleries and societies dedicated to modernism.

The next move on the part of the AAPS was to begin acquiring works for the exhibition. The first order of business was to secure works from abroad. This would be the second area in which Davies would become a major asset. Unlike many of the members of the AAPS, Davies was well versed in art developments abroad and was a major supporter of the contemporary and avant-garde works. Haskell stresses that “[Davies] subscribed to various European art journals, was a frequent visitor to ‘291,’” and was the motivator behind pushing the more conservative members for the major inclusion of contemporary European works.74 Art historian Constance Schwartz additionally argues that Davies envisioned an exhibition that was a historical presentation of art, beginning with nineteenth-century French painting leading up to contemporary pieces by both Americans and Europeans.75 Davies

74 Haskell, 105.
75 Schwartz, 63.
promptly sent Kuhn to Europe to secure a number of works for the exhibition as well as to view some exhibits that were going on at the time.

In September Kuhn arrived in Cologne to view the 1912 Cologne-
Sonderbund, an international exhibition put on by the Germans. The Cologne-
Sonderbund exhibit would be influential on most of the Americans who saw it. Many viewers, like Katherine Sophie Dreier, became impassioned by what they saw, and were soon dedicated to helping support the creative genius’ behind the modern movements. Davies had already viewed the catalog to the exhibition, and following Kuhns’ visit, the exhibit became a model for the Armory Show.\textsuperscript{76} The German exhibition contained different artists and movements, including Van Gogh, Cezanne, and artists associated with Cubism, Fauvism, and German Expressionism. From this exhibit Kuhn managed to obtain works by Munch, Van Gogh, and “the lone painting by Kandinsky.”\textsuperscript{77}

Following Cologne, Kuhn traveled on to The Hague in the Netherlands, Munich, and Berlin. There he met with dealers such as Artz & deBois, Hans Goltz, and Heinrich Thannhauser, who represented some of the best Dutch, German and European Artists.\textsuperscript{78} The dealers would be the most important people Kuhn would work with while abroad, not only because they contributed the work of their own artists in the show but also because they circulated news of the show throughout the European art community. To this extent the AAPS had the full support of many of the German Expressionists. Through the connections he made with the various

\textsuperscript{76} Brown, 47.
\textsuperscript{77} Staples, “As Avant-Garde as the Rest of Them.”
\textsuperscript{78} Brown, 48.
dealers, Kuhn was able to secure a number of Van Goghs and a room full of Redons.  

Following his time in Germany, Kuhn traveled on to Paris. Once there he looked to American artists residing in the city to provide him with help and guidance in finding the works he needed. Painter and critic Walter Pach proved to be Kuhns’ largest resource, introducing him to many local dealers and collectors. By this point it was mid October and Kuhns was becoming overwhelmed by the undertaking. He called in Davies for help, who arrived in Paris on November 6, full of enthusiasm.

Davies and Kuhn, led by Pach began scouring Paris for artists and artwork befitting their show. Pach was a godsend because he brought the two from studio to studio, introducing them to an array of people, including the Steins, who Davies himself acknowledged as pioneer collectors. After ten rigorous days of introductions and searching, the three men had found the majority of the works they would end up displaying. The feat was overwhelming, yet everything seemed to be slowly falling into place. Kuhn, while in Paris, had been introduced to a highly influential patron of the Chicago Art Institute. Arthur T. Aldis, a lawyer, took a great interest in the exhibit and made a verbal pact with Kuhn, assuring the show would travel to Chicago after it closed in New York. The ability for the show to travel was how it was able to affect as many people as it did. Exhibiting only in New York would only expose New Yorkers and those who had the money to travel to this work, while the possibility of traveling would broaden the influence to a larger audience.

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79 Ibid.
80 Haskell, 105.
81 Brown, 49.
82 Ibid.
83 Brown, 51.
Meanwhile, Davies appointed Pach the official European Representative of the AAPS. Pach took on the responsibility of overseeing the gathering of all the works that would be shipped to New York for the exhibit. Now that a large part of the workload had been given to Pach, Davies and Kuhn were free to continue to search for more work in England. On November 16, 1912, the pair arrived in London and immediately headed to the second Grafton Show. Curated by art critic Roger Fry, the Grafton Gallery Exhibition (commonly called the Grafton Show) would become a second model for the Armory Show. While not as good as its display the year before, the Grafton show exhibited primarily Post-Impressionist works. Among those artists displayed, Matisse had a dynamic arrangement of works that made a grand impression on Kuhn and Davies. Pach was immediately ordered to contact the Steins and Matisse himself, and to procure whatever he could.

On November 30, Kuhn and Davies returned to America to continue work on their plans, entrusting Pach to take care of things on the other side of the ocean. During the time they spent in Europe they had amassed four hundred some works, pre-dominantly French, ranging from the romantic period to the present. The foreign works would comprise only about one third of the exhibit, yet it would be the section that would have the most impact on American audiences. Despite their achievements abroad, Kuhn and Davies found a number of problems upon their return, due to factions developing in the AAPS.

84 Schwartz, 64.
85 Brown, 52.
86 Schwartz, 64.
87 Brown, 53.
88 Ibid., 55.
89 Haskell, 106.
Davies had appointed a group of more progressive members to what he titled “The Domestic Committee.” This committee was responsible for the procurement of American works for the exhibition. Historian Milton Brown explains that the committee, as well as the rest of the association, had a growing concern regarding the possibility that the European works would take the focus away from the American Art.\footnote{Brown, 65.} Henri especially had voiced the opinion that the focus of the show should be “the progressive aspects of American Art.”\footnote{Ibid.} To that end Davies emphasized the committee’s need to stick with artists that were outside academic aesthetics. He believed that predominately including progressive artists would allow for at least some visual comparison between the American and the European works.\footnote{Schwartz, 65.} Unfortunately this plan would cause even more problems amongst the more academic members of the AAPS.

The more conservative members loudly protested that academic work was what Americans understood, and more of it needed to be shown. When the committee had first started this debate was not an issue, since the exhibition had been conceived as non-juried. Having a non-juried exhibit meant that any artist could submit whatever work they wanted. Due to the number and variety of submissions in addition to Davies awareness of the need for specific representation, the non-juried format was dropped. Once the idea of non-jury had been dropped, it became problematic because the domestic committee, now responsible for the selection of works, was comprised of contemporary artists with little to no affiliation with the
This debate in the end resulted with the resignation of Vice-president Gutzom Borglum, a known academic sculptor, shortly before the opening of the exhibit. In the end the committee tried to balance a certain number of academic works with the work of the AAPS members followed by a few somewhat more progressive artists.

Despite these problems the AAPS pushed on, now having to deal with publicity and the conversion of the Armory into a gallery. Publicity would actually become one of the keys to the success of the Armory Show. Having seen the great effect the press had on “The Eight’s” exhibition, the AAPS knew that they needed to create a buzz about the show before it opened. Additionally, Kuhn was working tirelessly to make sure the entire country knew of the exhibition. Posters were printed up, displaying the emblem of the exhibit (Fig. 26); a flag with a pine tree on it, “taken from the Massachusetts flag carried into battle during the revolutionary war.” Postcards and flyers were sent to museums, libraries, colleges and art schools across the United States. Multiple stories and pictures, laced with intriguing details, found their way to the newspapers and magazines to provide plenty of time for publicity before the show even opened.

Meanwhile scaffolding was being erected in the Armory to create the walls for the exhibition space. The floor space consisted of eighteen octagonal rooms that spanned the entire floor of the Armory. The design of the exhibit tried to reflect the modern work which it displayed. Mable Dodge, helped raise money and support for

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93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Staples, “As Avant-Garde as the Rest of Them.”
96 Brown, 67.
the exhibit, contributed $200 of her own money for decorations, as did Mrs. Vanderbilt Whitney, who gave $1000.97 This money would especially help to cover the cost of fire proofing the burlap that would cover the walls.

On top of that, the first shipments of artwork were beginning to arrive from Europe. Most all of the works, however, ended up getting held in customs due to debates regarding the tariff for art and the definition of what art is. The definition of what art is became extremely important when bringing in contemporary abstract sculptures that did not fit the traditional description. This is where having Quinn as their legal representative came in very handy. Quinn, who had already gotten the legal definition of art altered slightly before, was able to ensure that all the pieces would not be taxed as objects of utility or manufacturable metal.98 Unfortunately the laws still stated that artwork less than one hundred years old was subject to duty, which impacted all the pieces being shipped.99 The AAPS had to post a bond to cover the charges, which would then be paid off as the works were sold: This caused accounting problems that would drag on with customs until 1916.100

By February 13, 1913, all the works, both European and American, had arrived and the installation process began. The design layout of the Armory was extensive and complex to install. It would take roughly one hundred and fifty men to construct the space and hang the show. A movable partition had to be assembled to temporarily hang the works in order to test lighting before they were officially hung

97 Ibid., 72.
98 Saarinen, 210.
99 Brown, 72.
100 Ibid., 73.
on the twenty-four running feet of wall space.\textsuperscript{101} The space itself consisted of eighteen octagonal rooms labeled A through R (Fig. 25). Originally Davies plan was to show things in chronological order, yet due to the layout of the rooms, this was no longer completely feasible. Instead the paintings were put into groupings, with the American works occupying the majority of the eleven rooms toward the front and sides of the space, while the European works were in the seven middle and back rooms.\textsuperscript{102}

Decorations were also put up, including a canopy made of strips of cloth and two standing pine trees that flanked the main entrance (Fig. 27).\textsuperscript{103} The entire installation, which included 1,300 works, was executed in two days, which is almost impossible to imagine. During the installation process chaos filled the Armory, with artists both trying to get the job done as well as standing in awe of the European works. It was obvious that despite the attempts of the domestic committee, the foreign works stood out more than the American works. On one of the days Henri walked through the mayhem, viewing the paintings that were strewn about the gallery. Schwartz argues that “as he viewed one painting after another, he was emotionally shaken by the extraordinary panorama of modern art.”\textsuperscript{104}

On February 17, 1913, 11,000 people attended the opening reception, which included a series of lectures and live music.\textsuperscript{105} While the AAPS was pleased with the turnout at the reception, the first few days showed somewhat disappointing

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 86.
\textsuperscript{103} Homer, 92.
\textsuperscript{104} Schwartz, 66.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
attendance. However, this would quickly change once the press released their rather vitriolic reviews of the show. One by one the European works were torn to shreds by the press, critics, and academic artists. Kenyon Cox and William Merrit Chase, both well-known academians, launched a bitter attack against Cézanne calling him an “idiot” who “lacked talent.”\textsuperscript{106} Poet Harriet Monroe described Matisse’s works as “hideous monstrosities.”\textsuperscript{107} All of these reviews however were tame compared to the criticism of gallery room I (Fig. 28), which contained the work of Braque, Picasso, Derian, Picabia, Duchamp, and other cubist painters and sculptors. It came to be known as the “chamber of horrors.”\textsuperscript{108} Picabia, being one of the only foreign artists there for the exhibit, was swamped with interviews asking him to provide an explanation for the works. As the American audience had no prior experience with cubism, he was taken as one of the leaders of the movement. Picabia and Duchamp were the cubists who received the most comments, overshadowing Braque and Picasso.\textsuperscript{109}

Duchamp’s \textit{Nude Descending a Staircase} (Fig. 30) became the star of this scandalous show, being described in the papers as “an explosion in a shingle factory” or “a Staircase Descending a Nude.”\textsuperscript{110} \textit{American Art News} offered ten dollars to the person who could find the nude.\textsuperscript{111} The best commentary however came in the form of a cartoon that was printed in the \textit{New York Evening Sun} on March 20\textsuperscript{th}, titled \textit{The Rude Descending the Staircase (Rush Hour at the Subway)} (Fig. 31).\textsuperscript{112} This cartoon

\textsuperscript{106} Perlman, 210.
\textsuperscript{107} Staples, “Tour the Armory.”
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Brown, 123.
\textsuperscript{110} Haskell, 106.
\textsuperscript{111} Perlman, 208.
\textsuperscript{112} Haskell, 107.
is now almost as famous as Duchamp’s work itself. The painting would become the main attraction of the exhibit. Hordes of people stood for hours trying to get into Gallery I, just to get a glimpse of the infamous work. By the time the show closed on March 15, it was calculated that roughly 75,000 people had viewed the work.\footnote{Ibid.}

Despite the American works being vastly overlooked, the show was considered a complete success. In celebration the AAPS “threw a beefsteak party for its ‘friends and enemies’ at Healy’s Restaurant.”\footnote{Brown, 123.} The artists treated even those critics who had criticized the show and its works, since most of the exhibit’s attendance could be attributed to them. The night was topped off by everyone reading off jokes and insults, dancing with the waitresses, and drinking entirely too much.\footnote{Ibid., 125.}

On March 15\textsuperscript{th} the Armory Show closed with the same amount of commotion it had endured upon its opening. The attendance on closing day filled the Armory to capacity. Jerome Meyers commented that the “millionaires, art collectors, and society people were packed in like sardines,” most all of them trying to get their last glimpses at the ‘Chamber of Horrors.’”\footnote{Ibid., 161.} The work was packed and shipped to Chicago for its opening on March 24. The exhibit, which now only included those American artists that were members of the AAPS, totaled 634 works and received an even more scandalous response.\footnote{Haskell, 107.} Most of this was due to the exhibit’s timing to as it fell during what was already considered a moral crisis in Chicago:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{Ibid.}
  \item \footnote{Brown, 123.}
  \item \footnote{Ibid., 125.}
  \item \footnote{Ibid., 161.}
  \item \footnote{Haskell, 107.}
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The moral binge in Chicago was compounded by a sequence of events. Shortly before the arrival of the Show, defenders of public morals had forced the removal from a dealer’s window of a reproduction of Paul Chabas’ *September morn*, a typical French academic example of simpering nudity, and a Fraestad barnyard scene from the Art Institute. The situation was ripe for a crusade. “A clergyman,” according to Walter Pach, “wrote to the newspapers that he had been obliged to turn back his flock of Sunday school children at the head of the stairs . . . [when] he saw from the door that the rooms were filled with the degeneracies of Paris; he demanded that the public be protected from them as he had protected his children.”

Many religious people expressed ideas such as: “The body is the temple of God, and the cubists have profaned the temple.” Interestingly, these theories of immorality and lewdness only seemed to attract a larger audience. The students at the Art Institute became crazed over the works, angrily holding a mock lynching of Matisse, Brancusi, and Pach. Following the insanity that had ensued in Chicago the show then traveled on to Boston. The Boston exhibition was drastically smaller than the previous two, containing only 244 works with little, if any, American representation. Boston however did not prove to be as riotous, with little commentary, low attendance, and most of all, no scandal.

Despite the disappointment in Boston however, the overall impact of the Armory Show in the United States was unforgettable. The sales and overall attendance record were the highest that any American exhibit had seen. Over the course of the three cities roughly 225,000 people attended, with sales amounting to $44,148.75; $30,491.25 for foreign works and $13,657.50 for American. The largest buyer at the show was Quinn, who spent $5,808.75 for the work of eleven

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118 Brown, 173-174.
119 Ibid., 174.
120 Schwartz, 74.
121 Brown, 97.
some artists. One of the most interesting purchases was the infamous *Nude Descending a Staircase*, which was purchased by California collector Fredric Torrey, who had not even seen it, yet due to its press coverage wanted it for his collection.

The impact of the Armory Show would forever change art in America. People were no longer ignorant about the modern movements and as a result multiple aspects of the art world shifted. To say that art itself changed would be incorrect, as when the show closed there were only a few Americans whose works remained truly innovative, most of them belonging to Stieglitz circle. What was truly gained by the exhibition, however, was the interest of the public in modern art. This manifested itself in two ways.

First was the direct impact it had on collectors and gallery owners. According to Fredrick James Gregg, the publicity chairman for the exhibition, the “relocation of the art market outside the National Academy of Design” was the Armory Shows most significant accomplishment. Following the Show, small galleries began opening and some older ones converted to the idea of modern art as a profitable market. The Carroll Galleries, the Daniel Gallery, the Madison Gallery, “291”, the Folsom Gallery, the Macbeth Gallery, and the People’s Art Guild were just a few places in New York where modernist work was being shown and sold. A number of important female collectors also emerged from this show. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney had been supporting the AAPS from the start by contributing vast amounts

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122 Ibid., 99.
123 Staples, “Tour the Armory.”
125 Haskell, 107.
of money and by letting them use the Madison Gallery, which she ran with Clara Davidge.  

Following the Armory show she became one of the foremost collectors of modern art, followed by Katherine Sophie Dreier, Mable Dodge and her salons, and probably even Peggy Guggenheim. This was to be the beginnings of the gallery-dominated art market, which remains today.

In addition, however, to changing the art market itself, the Armory changed how art was marketed. Specifically, the decades following 1913 would be ones in which fashion and art would go hand in hand. Department stores would actually become major sponsors of Cubism, with Gimball Brother’s department store holding Cubist exhibits, while Wanamaker’s, Macy’s, and Lord & Taylor would display work as well as create window displays inspired by the movement. Cubist Fashion would become all the rage in the twenties with Condé Nast, publisher of *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, printing articles both on modern art as well as artistic fashion trends. Today *Vogue* still does feature articles on contemporary artists and fashion as art.

Today, many people outside the artistic community know little if anything about the Armory Show. Yet many of the works that they see in museums such as the Chicago Art Institute, the Philadelphia Art Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, were purchased at the Armory Show. The show also closed what was a vast gap between American and European art standards in the early twentieth century. Despite the initial unfriendly sentiments, American museums and collectors gradually began investing more time and money into European art. Barbara Haskell explains that “while the American public might not rush to embrace abstract

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126 Staples, “Marketing Modern Art in America.”
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
art… a foothold had been established, and America would never again be ignorant of its existence.”

Katherine Sophie Dreier and The Société Anonyme

Following the International Exhibition of 1913 many patrons of the arts began working to help nurture modernism into a major aspect of American culture. Katherine Sophie Dreier would become not just a patron but an activist for the cause of Modern Art. She was born in 1877, the youngest of five, to a family who had fled from Bremen, Germany, following the 1848 revolution. Her father earned a good living in New York working for a British iron firm, which allowed the family to live in a nicer area of Brooklyn. The Dreier’s would be one of the few immigrated families that would lead a lifestyle that permitted the luxuries of a good education and the ability to travel back to Europe each year.

The Dreier children studied all of the arts, each one finding their own niche; Katherine’s was painting. The family as a whole, probably due to being immigrants themselves, also became very passionate about helping those who were not as fortunate as they were. All five children would go on to do a combination of “intellectual enterprises” and “good works” throughout their careers. The Dreier’s dedication to multiple humanitarian groups allied many of the siblings with the social reforms being established by the Progressive Movement. According to historian

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129 Haskell, 107.
131 Ibid.
132 Saarinen, 240.
Ruth L. Bohan, the Progressive Movement “sought to combat the poverty, injustice and corruption brought on by industrialization and the resulting rapid growth of the nation’s cities.”133 Dreier’s involvement would be one of the major influences in her life. Modern art would become yet another part of the social reform that she would dedicate herself to throughout her life.

One of the main influences she would have regarding her commitment to the arts would be her private art instructor, Walter Shirlaw. Shirlaw played a major role in the formation of the Art Institute of Chicago, and had a life long devotion to “advancing the cause of art.”134 It was partly at his encouragement that she, with her sister Dorthea would frequent Europe often between 1902 and 1913, to receive better painting instruction and become familiar with different artistic cultures. Bohan argues that “these repeated trips abroad greatly increased Dreier’s knowledge of art and strengthened her commitment to European art.”135 Of the many trips she made to a variety of countries, her time in Munich during 1912 would be a turning point in her relationship with modern art. While in Munich she visited the Cologne-Sonderbund exhibition where she viewed 125 Van Gogh’s that would inspire her to purchase one soon after.136 Additionally she sought out Van Gogh’s sister who had just finished a book of recollections about her brother. Dreier immediately worked to have the book, *Personal Recollections of Vincent Van Gogh*, translated into English for which she would write a “vivid introduction,” sealing her loyalty to the avant-garde.137

133 Bohan, 2.
134 Ibid., 5.
135 Bohan, 6.
136 Saarinen, 241.
Her new love for avant-garde and modern works would be furthered even more when she returned to New York in 1913. After viewing The Armory Show, which actually included two of her own paintings, she began creating her own philosophies regarding “the legitimacy of modern art.” The irony was that for a long time her own artwork did not reflect her passion for the modern aesthetics. Bohan makes the argument that “Dreier’s emotional and intellectual commitment to modernism far outstripped her artistic capabilities…[until] she came under the sway of Marcel Duchamp.” Duchamp, who had been the star of the Armory Show, would develop a close friendship with Dreier and would assist with her championing of modern art over the next few decades, as well as help her develop a more modern painting style (Fig. 32). His convictions that “art should arouse human intellect” appealed to the woman who had been raised to try and improve all aspects of life for others.

In 1916 Dreier would start her first campaign to support modern artists. The Society of Independent Artists was more or less a “free for all organization which would give any artist a chance to exhibit in a huge, nonjuried annual exhibition.” The intellectual foundation behind this society was that it would be a society that would counterbalance the groups graduating from the conservative art schools. Unfortunately the Society did not have the impact that Dreier was hoping for. Following the refusal of Duchamp’s urinal piece, Fountain (Fig. 34), in the 1917

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138 Bohan, 7.  
139 Ibid., 8.  
140 Ibid., 10.  
141 Saarinen, 242.
exhibit, Dreier would lose interest in the Society and turned its direction over to Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney.¹⁴²

The inability of the Society of Independent Artists to function in the capacity she wanted would cause her to greatly reflect upon her ideals. In 1918, she would take a five-month break from focusing on art to go visit Argentina, which was undergoing major social reforms.¹⁴³ Duchamp would join her on this trip, and his presence further influenced her convictions about modern art. Upon her return she would establish a set of values that would influence her later work.

She would first be influenced by theosophy, a religious type movement that was centered in the art world, primarily focusing on the spirit and its place in art.¹⁴⁴ Like many others, the most profound inspiration on this subject would come from the writings and work of Wassily Kandinsky. The relationship established with this artist lead her not only to promote his career, but also to support the new art school in Germany where he taught, The Bauhaus.¹⁴⁵ Her own philosophy that she distilled from these influences was that part of art’s purpose was to “impart spiritual knowledge” and that since the new century was “profoundly spiritual in nature,” modern art would be able to reach everyone.¹⁴⁶ These new spiritual convictions applied not only to her work for the cause of modern art, but also for the other causes to which she would occasionally lend her support which included women’s suffrage and labor legislation.

¹⁴² Bohan, 12.
¹⁴³ Saarinen, 241-242.
¹⁴⁴ Bohan, 16.
¹⁴⁵ Saarinen, 245.
¹⁴⁶ Bohan, 19 & 23.
Understanding the different aspects of Dreier’s life during this time extremely important when trying to understand her mission during the 1920s and to understand the social climate into which modern art was being introduced. In 1920 Dreier would join in a venture by Man Ray and Duchamp to try and form a new organization that would promote progressive art. The Société Anonyme Inc., as it was called was formed specifically to “exhibit, publish, and propagandize modern art.”

This new group allowed for Dreier to use her passions for both modern art and social reform. Bohan argues that “the Société Anonyme now provided the synthesis of these two constituent aspects of her thinking in a singular, though not always consistent, philosophy of art.”

The group opened an office and gallery at building at 19 East Forty-seventh Street (Fig. 36), though the office area was set up more like an office that did good works than one that simply ran art exhibitions. Through this organization Dreier would turn modern art into a cause rather than just a movement. Over the next twenty years the Société would assist in the opening of a number of New York galleries, organize roughly eighty-four traveling exhibitions and lectures, support multiple artists in the development and sale of their work, as well as become the first true museum dedicated to modern art in 1920.

This type of organization had been exactly what modernism in America needed. While interest in the new art had been strong immediately after the Armory Show, the onset of World War I caused a surge of conservatism that directly affected

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147 Saarinen, 243.
148 Bohan, 15.
149 Sarrinen, 244.
150 Gere and Vaisey, 176.
the arts and education. Additionally the American public, conservative or not, still did not view avant-garde art in the same respect that they did the classical movements. Bohan argues that Dreier “wanted Americans to realize that the art of their own time was just as worthy of careful, considered attention that it was just as pertinent to their cultural development, as were many older works sanctioned by the museums.”

Dreier and the other members of the Société knew that by running their organization as a museum would give the artwork they exhibited museum credibility. Additionally, the group would emphasize that the relationship between modern art and society was an important one.

What made the Société a success was its dedication to making every exhibit or lecture an educational experience that would, regardless of personal opinions, inform the public. The group directed numerous programs that appealed to many different types of people, making it one of the few truly diverse organizations. Organizing traveling exhibitions aided programs. Bohan argues that “by not waiting for people to come to it, rather taking its programs directly to the people,… this self-styled museum forcefully underscored its belief in the social value of modern art.”

Of the many exhibitions that the Société would put together, the Brooklyn Exhibition (Fig. 37) would be one of their landmarks. Held on November 18, 1926, the exhibition would be the first major international art display since the Armory Show. Hosted at the Brooklyn Art Museum, one of the most progressive museums in the country, the exhibit would contain works by one hundred and six artists from

151 Bohan, 29.
152 Ibid., 30.
153 Ibid., 37.
nineteen different countries.\textsuperscript{154} The work in the exhibit would include Surrealists such as Arp, Picabia, Giorgio de Chirico, Man Ray and Ducamp; De Stijl artists such as Mondrian; American Modernists including Dove, Demuth, O’Keefe, Marin and Stieglitz; and Dreier’s favorites, the Bauhaus artists which included Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Lazlo Maholy-Nagy.\textsuperscript{155} While traveling to obtain the works for the show she had spent a great deal of time at the Bauhaus and was greatly inspired by the work being done there. In the exhibition catalog she would include an advertisement for the Bauhaus, furthering international publicity for the school.\textsuperscript{156}

The catalog, titled \textit{Modern Art}, would be one of the most important aspects of the exhibit. Because the exhibit contained so many artists from so many countries, Dreier’s main focus became to emphasize the unity that could be found in an art movement that had become so international.\textsuperscript{157} Bohan gives a detailed description as to how the catalogue was to function:

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As conceived by Dreier, \textit{Modern Art} was to serve three primary functions. Like the exhibition it was to record the depth and breadth of the modern movement as it existed world wide in the 1920s, something no previous Société Anonyme publication had ever attempted. At the same time it was to advance the cause of international brotherhood and understanding among the many participating artists by “introducing the modern men to each other throughout the world.” In the third place the volume was to serve as a showcase of modern book design.\textsuperscript{158}

\textit{Modern Art} would be one of the first American books published with modern typography and book design which was being produced at the Bauhaus. The book contained one page layouts of each artists group by their nationalities, exhibiting the
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\textsuperscript{154} Margret Kentgens-Craig, \textit{The Bauhaus and America: First Contacts 1919-1936} (Cambridge, MS: MIT Press, 2001) 70.
\textsuperscript{155} Bohan, 47-50.
\textsuperscript{156} Kentgens-Craig, 70.
\textsuperscript{157} Bohan, 58.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 67-68.
vast international appeal of the work. The catalogue would be remembered as one of the most stimulating books produced in the 1920s as well as “one of the most adventurous catalogues ever attempted in this country.”\textsuperscript{159}

This exhibit would be one of the major catalysts for the resurgence of modern art in the late twenties in America. Unlike the Armory Show, most of the work presented was on equal footing, showing that American artists were finally capable of functioning in the international modern art market. Additionally, the press was very kind in their critiques of the exhibition. The era of vitriolic reviews to gain an audience had somewhat passed, and slowly many people were beginning to develop an appreciation for Modern art.

In the last years of Dreier’s career and life she would go on to be one of the foremost collectors of works by living artists.\textsuperscript{160} She constantly promoted any artist that she felt was a part of the modern movement, no matter how new they were to the scene. Over the years her vision would be adopted with the opening of numerous modern art museums, as well as any of the major museums opening their own modern art collections. Even upon her death in 1952 her mission to educate people about modernism would be reflected by the majority of her collection being given to the Yale University Art Gallery (Fig. 38).\textsuperscript{161} While there would be many people over the years who would continue her mission, she would always be known as the first major propagandist for the modern cause.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{160} Gere and Vaizey, 176.
\textsuperscript{161} Saarinen, 248.
The Founding of the Museum of Modern Art

Following Dreier’s major exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, many museums began to be developed specifically for modern art. Many of them also followed Dreier’s example in wanting to educate people on the art of their time. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) was founded (1929) on many of the same principles that drove Dreier as well as those artists that founded the Armory Show. This comes at no great surprise since one of the individuals behind the Armory Show would also initially conceive of the idea.

The initial idea for the Museum of Modern Art would come from Arthur B. Davies. Davies’ drive to continue informing the American public about the most modern and avant-garde movements would continue long after the Armory show. Most of his influence, however, was exerted on a group of wealthy women who had a passion for collecting modern art and would go on to be the “founding mothers of the museum.” Lillie Bliss, Mary Quinn Sullivan, and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, had all supported Davies when he had been looking for donors to the Armory Show and he, in turn, provided sound advice about their art collections.

Of the three women, Davies bond with Bliss was the strongest. Daughter of a wealthy senator who never herself married, Lillie P. Bliss (Fig. 40) was a pianist who loved collecting work to the point of indulgence. Upon its opening, Bliss would attend the Armory Show on multiple occasions where she would become close friends with Davies, who soon advised her to buy the works that would begin her

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163 Gere and Vaizey, 172.
modern collection. Bliss’ collection would become even more profound when, following the death of her conservative mother, she no longer had to hide her collection and proceeded, at Davies suggestion, to purchase a larger apartment where she could display her work.

Mary Quinn Sullivan (Fig. 41) had been a close friend of Bliss’ since before the Armory Show, which she would also contribute too. Married to a prominent New York Lawyer, Sullivan had been raised on a farm near Indianapolis before coming to New York to study art. She went on to become a well-known teacher at the Pratt Institute and frequently traveled to England and France, where a large part of her private collection came from. Sullivan and Bliss would introduce Davies to yet another woman who would be the dominant force behind the Museum of Modern Art.

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (Fig. 39) was the daughter of Rhode Island senator Nelson Aldrich, and sister of Winthrop Aldrich of Chase Manhattan Bank. She married billionaire John Rockefeller Jr. and had five sons who would become the famous, Rockefeller brothers, all of whom would be collectors of art. While her husband had a profound love for the old masters she, under the advisement of Davies, would become a serious collector of modern art. Her beliefs regarding the art were remarkably similar to Dreier’s, in that art had a spiritual aspect and that in order for people to learn and understand it, modern art had to be shown frequently.

164 Ibid.
166 Lynes, 7.
167 Gere and Vaizey, 172.
168 Ibid., 170.
169 Ibid.
It is important to understand who these women were because their varying personalities and passions would be a solid combination when it came to founding, funding, and running the museum. Their initial plans would be strongly influenced by Davies who had become the chief artistic advisor for all three women’s collections. His dreams of a museum for modern art were deeply expressed following the death of well known collector John Quinn in 1924, whose vast collection of modern art was dispersed to a number of different museums and collectors, rather than remaining intact.\textsuperscript{170} In Davies’ mind the development of museums dedicated to modern would provide institutions for people who collected modern art to donate their collections, rather than have them split up amongst a number of different art institutions. Keeping collections intact would in reinforce to the public that modern art was a movement worthy of their attention, since it had been worthy enough for people to collect with such passion. These were all a part of Davies’ reasoning behind wanting a museum. Unfortunately Davies himself would pass away in 1928, which supposedly inspired the three women to execute his wishes.\textsuperscript{171}

The first discussions on implementing a modern art museum happened as a result of an unplanned meeting. In December of 1928 both Rockefeller and Bliss took vacations to Egypt.\textsuperscript{172} The two met there unexpectedly, and discussed plans to begin work on implementing a museum. Even more ironically, Rockefeller would run into Sullivan on the boat back to New York where the two would discuss the plans that had been formed in Egypt.\textsuperscript{173} Through these two discussions the decision

\textsuperscript{170} Kantor, 191
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{172} Lynnes, 4.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
was made to begin work on the museum immediately. In her book *Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*, Sybil Gordon Kantor writes, “This course of events, which might appear casual or serendipitous, was, in fact, the result of actions by three ambitious, socially aware women who were conscious of the gap in American museology resulting from the lack of readily available modern European Art.”\(^{174}\)

While all three women would devote a lot of time energy and money to the establishment of the museum, Rockefeller would take the lead. Her ambition, similar to Dreier’s, was to provide more opportunities to more artists, while also providing the community with something that was significant to the developing culture of the day. With Rockefeller’s influence the underlying mission of the new institution would be to provide a “public face” for art of the time that reinforced the spiritual and educational power that modernism contained.\(^{175}\) Due to the fact that education was a primary focus, the women derived large amounts of inspiration from the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art.

Founded by Lincoln Kirstein in 1928, the Harvard Society focused on the display of a variety of international modernism.\(^{176}\) The society worked in conjunction with two other men: Paul Sachs, the associate director of the Fogg museum as well as professor at Harvard; and Alfred H. Barr Jr. (Fig. 42) who, having just returned from Europe, served as an unofficial advisor.\(^{177}\) The exhibitions put on by the Harvard Society had a tremendous amount of impact, especially on Rockefeller. Among its

\(^{174}\) Kantor, 193

\(^{175}\) Gere and Vaizey, 169.

\(^{176}\) Kantor, 202.

\(^{177}\) Ibid., 203.
many accomplishments the society would be the first to hold a one man show by sculptor Alexander Calder. In addition to providing an organizational model, two of the men affiliated with the society would go on to work for the Museum of Modern Art.

After attending the first exhibitions of the Harvard Society, Rockefeller would dedicate herself to making the initial preparations for a museum. In May of 1929, former Colonel A. Conger Goodyear received an invitation to have lunch with Mrs. Rockefeller. Goodyear, a man who thoroughly enjoyed modern art, had recently “been asked to leave the board of trustees of the Albright Knox Museum in Buffalo because he had acquired Picasso’s La Toilette, a painting considered too radical for the Buffalo gallery.” It was largely due to this incident that Rockefeller had chosen him as her guest for lunch that day, despite the fact that he had no inkling as to the nature of the invitation. In reality the luncheon was a staged ambush organized by Rockefeller. When Goodyear arrived at the Rockefeller home he was received by all three women who, over the course of lunch, asked if he would be willing to serve as the president on the board of trustees of their new venture.

After accepting the position Goodyear would appoint three more people to the board: Paul Sachs, Josephine Boardman Crane, a close friend of the Rockefellers, and Vanity Fair editor Frank Crowningshield. The appointment of Sachs would prove to be one of the best decisions made in the founding months. Due to his alternate commitments with the Fogg museum, he requested to be left off fundraising ventures

178 Ibid., 207.
179 Lynnes, 8-9.
180 Kantor, 210.
181 Lynnes, 9.
182 Kantor, 211.
for the Museum of Modern Art. For most museums this would be a rather large request, as one of the main jobs of a board of trustees is to acquire usable funds. In return for not helping monetarily he requested to be placed in charge of various management related duties, including the appointment of a director of the museum. Barr would be immediately pulled in for the job.

This group, in addition to a small number of financial backers would prove their dedication to the mission of the three women by quickly creating a long-term plan for the museum. Drafted by Barr, the “1929 Plan” outlined the type of work that the museum looked to display and acquire, in addition to describing plans to eventually expand and add different curatorial departments that would host exhibitions of different media. The “1929 Plan” emphasized the group’s inclination to educate people about a vast array of arts and derived many of their departments after witnessing the departments of art schools, such as the Bauhaus. Over the years the museum would come to exhibit typography, photography, film, architecture, industrial design, theatrical set design, furniture, textiles and a variety of decorative arts. Even today the Museum of Modern Art has one of the most diverse collections of modern art in the United States.

Following the creation of the plan two important decisions had to be made: specifically what would be the name of their museum and what would initially be exhibited? The question of the name would actually remain a problem for many years. Initially the trustees had decided on “The Modern Gallery of Art,” however

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183 Lynes, 13.
184 Kantor, 211.
185 Ibid. 212.
186 Ibid.
some members of the board felt like the word “gallery” would not encompass everything they stood for. They made the decision that they would use the word “museum” rather than “gallery”, as it better signified that it had a permanent collection at its core. The name was supposed to read as “The Museum of Modern Art”, however there were problems with some of the documents when they went to legalize the name. There were a number of transcription errors on some of the forms, so the museum, for a number of years, would be referred to as “The Modern Museum” or even just “The Modern.”

Regarding what would be shown in the first exhibits, there was a debate amongst the board as to whether European or American work should be displayed. The executive decision of Bliss, Sullivan, and Rockefeller would triumph in the end, which meant that the museum would open with an exhibit on the “fathers” of Modernism. The exhibit contained works by Van Gogh, Cézanne, Seurat, and Gaugin, and was followed by and exhibit titled “Paintings by Nineteen Living Americans.”

On Friday, November 8, 1929, the Museum’s first exhibit, shown in six rooms on the twelfth floor of the Heckscher Building, opened to visitors (Fig. 43). Several thousand people over the course of that first day crowded into the elevators and made their way through the exhibit. While the numbers showed the success of the exhibit in those first few weeks, the staff also could not help noticing the unsettled look of their audience. These looks were, for the most part, not a result of the art but

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187 Lynes, 15.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
190 Kantor, 213.
191 Ibid. 214.
rather a reaction to what was happening in the country. The morning of the opening the *New York Times* headline “reported that stocks on the New York Exchange had dropped from 5 to 66 points and U.S. Steel had hit a new low,”\(^\text{192}\) signaling the onset of the Great Depression (1929-1942). While many of the people involved with the museum did not lose much financially, the majority of America was hit hard.

Despite the bad economy the museum fared well through the depression. Many people attended the museum during those years to try and find something positive they could look to during hard times. Art historian Russel Lynes explains the Museum’s survival at the time was due to its “beginnings in an era when the young, especially, were seeking forms of diversion and uplift, of new experience and discovery which cost them little or nothing.”\(^\text{193}\) Many museums as well as theatres, movies, and other artistic institutions would become one of the few positive things the American people could turn to during this hard time.

Over the years the museum would continue expanding, as well as moving, all the while remaining focused on its educational purposes. It would receive its fair share of controversy and disapproval as its predecessors had, but Barr and the directors that would follow him always managed to pull through. In 1934 a permanent collection would be established following the death of Lillie Bliss in 1931 (Fig. 44).\(^\text{194}\) Davies’ original hopes of establishing an institution where entire collections of modern art could be kept had been realized. Additionally the goals and aims of all those individuals who fought for the modern cause would find its solution.

\(^{192}\) Lynes, 57.
\(^{193}\) Lynes, 58.
\(^{194}\) Kantor, 240.
Conclusion

Following the opening of the MoMA in 1929, many other museums dedicated to modern art would begin to open their doors in the United States like the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1935). The establishment of the modern movement had caught hold of America and would continue to profoundly affect the arts. There were others who helped in this movement not discussed in detail here. While they did play roles in the advent of modernism in America, their contributions were very specific and did not largely focus on educating America about modernism in all its forms, or play as significant role in the introduction of the movement. The Stein siblings were some of the most prominent collectors and supporters of the modern movement, and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney would found a museum of her own dedicated specifically to modern American art. Later Peggy Guggenheim would finance the careers of some of America’s most famous artists as well as collect some of the most unique work of the twentieth century. All of the people discussed in this study made it possible for the artists of today to be able to exhibit their works, and have the respect of the American public, curators, collectors, and educational institutions.

What is ironic about modernism’s place today is that it is now regarded in a historical sense. What defined modern art when the MoMA was founded is no longer the definition we give it today. Art historian Russel Lynes makes the argument that “Modern was an attitude, a frame of mind, a conception of art characteristic of an era, and it was what it was because the Museum of Modern Art said that it was. That is
why Modern today means yesterday.” Today the focus is on post-modern and contemporary art, which has a rather broad definition and encompasses most everything, specifically art being created at the present time. There are now Museums of Contemporary Art like the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (1962) and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (1986).

Interestingly, this does not mean that the general public understands the art that they are looking at any more than the people did at the Armory Show. Many people today still lack a coherent understanding of the art being produced around them. The art that was produced throughout the rest of the twentieth century caused many people to begin to question what art was. Jackson Pollack and his “drip paintings” (1948-1956) and Josef Albers “Homage to squares” series (1950s) are two examples of work that many people do not understand due to its lack of subject matter. The inability to understand still lingers in people’s minds today when looking at any combination of modern, post-modern, or contemporary art.

While Modernism might be a thing of the past, the ideas it instilled in people regarding education and the support of current artists still drive the institutions today. There is still a great need for people to be educated about art, both of the past and of their time. Artists still need to find outlets which give them support and the ability to be seen. Many of the aims behind promoting art are still the same as those a century ago, however, they have become easier to explain to a public that at least understands that new art is being produced all the time and that in order to understand it, people need to be willing to learn about it.

195 Lynes, 444.
Bibliography


Robert Henri

Fig. 1: Robert Henri, Laughing Child, c. 1907-1908
Oil on canvas
The Eight

Above: Fig 2: George Benjamin Luks
   *In the Steerage*, 1900.
   Oil on canvas

Left:
Top: Fig 3: William Glackens
   *The Shoppers*, 1908.
   Oil on canvas

Middle: Fig. 4: Everett Shinn
   Oil on canvas

Bottom: Fig 5: John Sloan
   *Election Night*, 1907.
   Oil on canvas
The Eight cont.

Top: Fig. 6: **Arthur B. Davies**  
*Sleep Lies Perfect in Them*, c. 1908.  
Oil on canvas

Above: Fig. 7: **Ernest Lawson**  
*Early Spring in Connecticut*, date unknown.  
Oil on canvas

Right: Fig. 8: **Maurice Prendergast**  
*People on the Beach: Revere Beach*, c. 1896-97  
Watercolor and pencil on paper
Stieglitz and “291”

Fig 9: Alfred Stieglitz
*The Steerage*, 1907. photograph

Fig 10: Edward Steichen
*The Young Photographer (self-portrait)*, 1898. Vintage silver bromoil print
Stieglitz and “291” cont.

Fig. 12: Cover of Camera Work

Fig 13: Steiglitz in “291”
Photo c.1905-1907

Fig. 14: Alfred Stieglitz, *291--Picasso-Braque Exhibition*, 1915, platinum print.
Stieglitz and “291” cont.

Fig. 15: Floor plan of the “291” gallery.
Stieglitz and “291” cont.

Above: Fig 16: Marius de Zayas
Portrait of Agnes Meyer, c. 1913.
Pastel over graphite on paper

Right
Top: Fig. 17: Marsden Hartley
Abstraction, 1913.
Oil on canvas

Bottom: Fig. 18: Max Weber
Dancer in Green, 1912.
Medium not listed
The Armory Show

Top: Fig. 19: **Arthur B. Davies**  
*Moral Law-A Line of Mountains*,  
Date unknown. Oil on Canvas

Middle: Fig. 20: **Arthur B. Davies**  
*Reclining Woman*, 1911.  
pastel on gray paper

Bottom: Fig. 21: **Walt Kuhn**  
*Morning*, 1912.  
Oil on Canvas
The Armory Show cont.

Above: Fig. 22: **Walter Pach**
*Renoir's "Liseuse,"* 1912.
Etching

Right:
Top: Fig. 23: **Odilon Redon**
*Roger and Angelica*, c. 1910.
Pastel

Bottom: Fig. 24: **Wassily Kandinsky**
*Improvisation No. 27 (Garden of Love)*, 1912. Oil on canvas
The Armory Show cont.

Fig. 25: Floor Plan for the Armory Show

**Galleries**

A: American Sculpture and Decorative Arts  
B: American Painting and Sculpture  
C: American Painting: included Bellows and Hartley  
D: American Painting: included Hartley  
E: American Painting: included Kuhn, Davies, Stella, and Walkowitz  
F: American Painting: included the Ten  
G: English and German Painting: included Kirchner and Kandinsky  
H: French Painting and Sculpture: included Matisse and Brancusi  
I: French Painting and Sculpture (the chamber of Horrors): the Cubists  
J: French Painting and Watercolor: included Redon  
K: French and American Watercolor: included Redon and Marin  
L: American Watercolor  
M: American Painting: the Urban Realists  
N: American Painting and Sculpture  
O: French Painting: the Impressionists  
P: French, Dutch, and American Painting  
Q: French Painting: included Van Gogh and Cézanne  
R: French and Swiss Painting
The Armory Show cont.

Fig. 26: Flyer for the Armory Show

Fig. 27: Entrance to the Armory Show
(Gallery A)

Fig. 28: The Armory Show
Gallery I

Fig. 29: The Armory Show
Gallery H
The Armory Show cont.

Fig. 30: Marcel Duchamp
_Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2_
1912 Oil on canvas

Fig. 31: "Seeing New York with a Cubist: The Rude Descending a Staircase"
Cartoon. _Evening Sun_ 3/20/1913
Top: Fig. 32: **Katherine Dreier**
*Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1918.

Left: Fig. 33: photograph of Katherine Dreier
Date unknown

Right: Fig. 34: **Marcel Duchamp**
*Fountain*, 1917
**Katherine Dreier cont.**

Fig. 35

Katherine S. Dreier and Marcel Duchamp in the library at The Haven, her estate in West Redding, Conn., in the late summer of 1936. Above the bookshelf is "Tu m", installed there in 1931. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Fig. 36: Société Anonyme exhibition rooms, Located at 19 East 47th Street, New York, 1921.
Katherine Dreier cont.

Above: Fig. 37: Installation at the Brooklyn Exhibition. C. 1926.

Right: Fig. 38: Artist and collector Katherine Dreier is pictured at the 1948 exhibition at Yale.
The Museum of Modern Art

Fig. 39: Abby Aldrich Rockefeller
Fig. 40: Lillie P. Bliss
Fig. 41: Mary Quinn Sullivan
The Museum of Modern Art cont.

Above: Fig. 43: The first exhibition of the Museum of Modern Art. 1929

Left: Fig. 44: Photograph of Cornelius Bliss (right), brother of Lillie, handing Goodyear (middle) and Barr (left) the transfer document of the Lillie P. Bliss collection. 1934.