

A Living Artists Show At the Modern Museum

By MICHAEL BRENSON

The large international exhibition of contemporary painting and sculpture that will inaugurate the renovated and expanded Museum of Modern Art on May 17 is also intended to demonstrate the museum's commitment to the work of living artists.

"An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture," the first major international survey exhibition at the Modern since 1970, is regarded as a response of sorts to persistent criticism by some artists and critics that the museum has long been biased in favor of work produced earlier in the century and has largely ignored living artists as a result.

The museum has been closed since last January in order to complete a building program that began in 1980 and that will provide it with twice as much exhibition space as before.

The international survey, whose contents and point of view have been a carefully guarded secret, will contain 195 works by 165 artists from 17 countries, ranging from the United States and Western Europe to Eastern Europe, Australia and South America. It will occupy two full floors of the museum.

Balance Seen Restored

"The show is a sign of hope," said Kynaston McShine, the senior curator of painting and sculpture who selected the work that will be shown in the exhibition. "It is a sign that contemporary art is being taken as seriously as it should be, a sign that the museum will restore the balance between contemporary art and art history that is part of what makes the place unique. One of the great things about the institution is seeing young artists within the context of the museum."

William Rubin, director of painting and sculpture at the museum, said: "It is true that over the last six years or so, partly as a result of the building program, partly as a result of the crunch of the Picasso show, which had to push other things aside, and

partly because we had so little exhibition space to do the contemporary side of things, contemporary art was slighted. One reason why we wanted to open with a major show of very contemporary art was to signal the fact that we intend to have a very serious program in that area."

Mr. Rubin added, however: "This is a museum of modern art, not contemporary art. That means we have an obligation to a whole 100 years of art. The outer edge of contemporary is only a small part of a much larger picture. It is also a part much more easily seen in other New York museums and in hundreds of galleries."

According to Mr. McShine, a prerequisite for selection in the survey was that an artist's reputation had to have been established after 1975. That means there will not be work by such artists as Frank Stella and Cy Twombly, both of whom are well represented in the museum's permanent collection, or Leon Golub, an artist first shown at the Modern in 1959, whose reputation has been re-established since 1975.

"The show is not didactic," Mr. McShine said. "It is a celebration of our reopening and of our time. The show is a survey, an overview. It was important to have work from a lot of different places and to introduce a large public to a great deal of current activity. I wanted it to be an international cross-section of what is going on."

The exhibiton will include the Chicago-based painters Nicholas Africano and Roger Brown; the abstract painters Gregory Amenoff, Katherine Porter and Claude Viallat; the Neo-Expressionists Georg Baselitz, Eric Fischl, Jörg Immendorff, Malcolm Morley, A. R. Penck, David Salle and Julian Schnabel; the pattern painters Robert Kushner and Kim MacConnel; the modern-day Intimist Howard Hodgkin; the New Image painters Robert Moskowitz and Susan Rothenberg and the humorist Mark Tansey.

The sculptors include Magdalena Abakanowicz, Siah Armajani, Scott Burton, Barry Flanagan, Tom Otterness, Joel Shapiro, Christopher Wilmarth and Gilberto Zorio.

The full list has not yet been made public, but it is not known which artists have been left out. "I think that some people can benefit from not being in the show," Mr. McShine said. "They will have to think about their work."

Mr. McShine has been with the museum since 1968, and is known for his 1976 show "Natural Paradise: Painting in America 1800-1950" and the 1980 traveling Joseph Cornell retrospective. He said he began working on the international survey in 1981 and tried to look at "everything,



"Adam and Eve (Expulsion from the Garden of Eden), by Roger Brown, which will be part of "An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture," exhibition at Museum of Modern Art.

everywhere," not magazine reproductions but "actual work."

"In 1981 I was traveling a lot because of the Cornell exhibition," he said. "Because the exhibition was in Europe it allowed me the freedom of visiting galleries and keeping up with what is going on."

This will be the first international art exhibition in New York in a long time, Mr. McShine said. "The only kind of large group exhibition in New York is the Whitney Biennial, which is an American show," he added. "The Guggenheim tends to focus on one country, such as new art from Italy. Europe, with exhibitions like 'Documenta' and 'Zeitgeist,' is way ahead of us in integrating European and American art."

"Documenta" is an international exhibition that generally takes place every four years in Kassel, West Germany. "Zeitgeist" was a large international show in West Berlin in 1982.

"I have to go beyond the way work is perceived in New York," said Mr. McShine. "That's why I'm here. A serious public cannot depend upon the whims of commercial galleries. It has to depend upon museums."

"We felt it was very important to reaffirm the museum's continuing commitment to contemporary art," said Richard E. Oldenburg, director of the museum, "particularly at a time when we are opening the new collection galleries, where all the classical works will be on display. It is a very good juxtaposition. To do justice to the subject, it had to be a very large show, and we had to devote all our temporary exhibition spaces to it."

"The new spaces will allow us to do what we have been trying and wanting to do all along," Mr. Oldenburg said. "There will be more contemporary art on view in the exhibition galleries. I would be surprised if at any time there was not one prominent contemporary exhibition in one medium — painting and sculpture, prints and illustrated books, drawings, photography, architecture and design, film and video."

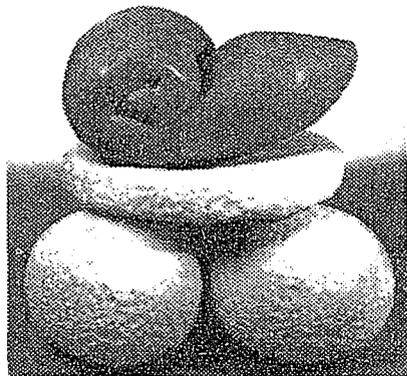
In 1977, the critic Roberta Smith wrote in Art in America that the new building would be the museum's "last chance to make a more substantial commitment to the living."

Critics of the museum's policy toward contemporary art have pointed out that prior to the coming international exhibition, there had not been a major contemporary survey exhibition at the museum since Mr. McShine's "Information" show in 1970. They also note that the museum has scheduled only two painting and sculpture exhibitions on living artists: the painter Lee Krasner and the sculptor Richard Serra.

Mr. Oldenburg retorted: "When people criticize us for neglecting contemporary art, they are usually talking exclusively about painting and sculpture. Even in painting and sculpture, there has been a balance of modern and contemporary shows, such as those on Robert Rauschenberg, Sol LeWitt, Jackie Windsor and Louise Bourgeois. Prior to 1978, we had 53 shows on contemporary artists in our 'Projects' series. Even the 'Primitivism in 20th Century Art' show in the fall is going to have a large component of contemporary work. We have also scheduled a 'New Work on Paper' exhibition by the drawing department, a photography show on Irving Penn, video programs and so on. One should always be looking at the total schedule."

Mr. Rubin added: "One of the problems of any museum this size is that we are working on shows three, four and five years in advance. What we have done for the coming years is simply reserve slots and galleries for contemporary art, with the idea of waiting until shortly before exhibitions begin before deciding what to show."

"An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture" will run through Aug. 7. It will not travel. The exhibition and its catalogue were made possible by an American Telephone & Telegraph Company grant and support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



A sculpture, "Carving No. 2," by Barry Flanagan to be in show.