



# MODERN IN THE MAKING

MoMA and  
the Modern  
Experiment,  
1929–1949

EDITED BY  
Austin Porter &  
Sandra Zalman

B L O O M S B U R Y

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## Acknowledgments

This project began in the spring of 2015 when the editors discovered a shared interest in MoMA's early exhibition history. As participants at a symposium on Magic Realism and Modernism, organized by Robert Cozzolino at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, our presentations addressed MoMA's lesser-known installations from the early 1940s. Our subsequent conversation, held while walking through Bob's excellent exhibition *Peter Blume: Nature and Metamorphosis* at PAFA, led to the decision that MoMA's early years demanded greater scholarly attention. With this impulsive agreement, we departed Philadelphia for our respective destinations, Ohio and Texas, and began to make concrete plans to carry out an edited volume.

Our next step was co-chairing a panel at the College Art Association Conference in 2017, where we staged the initial framework for this volume in front of a packed room in New York. It was validating that a discussion of MoMA's early history generated such a receptive crowd. We want to thank the audience for the energy and ideas that came out of that panel. We are especially grateful to our panelists for their important perspectives, particularly MoMA's Chief Archivist Michelle Elligott. We would also like to thank our panel discussant, Richard Meyer, whose book *What Was Contemporary Art?* (MIT Press, 2013) is a touchstone for many of the authors in this volume. Our contributors, who generously shared their scholarship and patiently endured revisions, cannot be thanked enough.

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## Introduction

# Establishing the Modern: The First Twenty Years at MoMA

Austin Porter and Sandra Zalman

In 1949 the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) opened a large, materially eclectic exhibition titled *Modern Art in Your Life*. Part of a series of programs celebrating the museum's twentieth anniversary, this installation combined commercial photography, fashion design, and modern furniture with avant-garde painting and sculpture in an effort to explore the relationship between art and commercial culture (Figure I.1). Museum press releases stressed that the exhibited objects "testify that modern art has largely helped to shape the appearance of our cities, our streets and the homes we live in."<sup>1</sup> Far from being an aberration in MoMA's programming schedule, *Modern Art in Your Life* represented a consistent concern of the museum's early years to "make modern art more comprehensible to more people."<sup>2</sup> The critics were convinced; a representative review concluded that MoMA's survey demystified art and would disarm those who "still revolt against what they consider an outrageous, crack-pot misuse of paint on canvas."<sup>3</sup>

Critical response to the museum's exhibitions was not always this receptive. In fact, during MoMA's first twenty years museum officials often faced detractors of modern art from numerous sources. Critics expressed a mixture of frustration and befuddlement following several early exhibitions that included avant-garde works, unorthodox object juxtapositions, and innovative installation strategies.<sup>4</sup> Opposition to the museum's catholic exhibition tendencies developed from some contemporary artists as well. For example, the American Abstract Artists published a broadside in 1940 that questioned MoMA's commitments to modernism, concluding caustically, "What is this—a three ring circus?"<sup>5</sup>

The mixed reception to modern art in New York—and the United States in general—had fermented long before MoMA opened its doors in 1929. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the museum's founding director, recalled that at least some New Yorkers hoped the 1913 Armory Show would lead to a permanent institution dedicated to the field. He later noted that "possibly because of the war in Europe, possibly because New York was not ready, no such institution developed."<sup>6</sup> As a result, the display of modern art fell primarily to private collectors, including Katherine Dreier and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and to small galleries such as those operated by Alfred Stieglitz. In this



**Figure I.1** Soichi Sunami (1885–1971). Installation view of the exhibition *Modern Art in Your Life* (October 5–December 4, 1949). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photographic Archive, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

cultural context, modern art circulated as the private concern of individual citizens. By naming their enterprise the Museum of Modern Art, MoMA's founders indicated both a historical importance for modernism and a seemingly public institutional endorsement. Still, the presumed superiority of European artists over their American counterparts complicated critical understandings of modernism. Lingering hostilities led in part to the creation of the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1930. When Whitney offered her collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Edward Robinson, then the director, reportedly declined by remarking that “we have a cellar full of those American things already.”<sup>7</sup> Amid this evolving cultural landscape, the founding of MoMA marked a monumental development in the institutionalization, dissemination, and arguably normalization of modern art in the United States.

### A Focus on Exhibitions, Not Collecting

This book examines how exhibitions at MoMA routinely challenged viewer expectations during the museum's first twenty years. Several included authors analyze

exhibits that have seen little scholarly attention while others examine previously overlooked aspects of well-known installations. Regardless of their focus, each essay addresses how MoMA used exhibitions to expand the purview of modern art. Early museum administrators, especially Alfred Barr, resisted attempts to limit the parameters by which modern art was understood during the institution's early years. Perhaps most significantly the museum rarely exhibited its collection—which was, in any case, intentionally provisional. As Barr put it in 1942, “Obviously [the collection] could not stay ‘modern’ unless it did change, gradually but completely.”<sup>8</sup> As a result, in its earliest years MoMA operated much more like a *Kunsthalle*, with an ambitious temporary exhibition schedule that reflected the diversity of modern art.<sup>9</sup> Years later Barr described how “[o]ther museums didn’t have to depend on exhibitions the way we did. They had large endowments, and could put on their permanent collection and let it go at that. But we had to keep the pot boiling.”<sup>10</sup> It is telling that Barr made these remarks in 1953, the year when museum officials decided to maintain a permanent collection. By initially not depending on a fixed group of objects to represent modern art, the museum offered a malleable understanding of visual modernism as both continuously contemporary and informed by an ever-unfolding history. This volume demonstrates, therefore, that the museum’s curators and administrators cultivated modern art as a developing, rather than definitive, category.

Just as MoMA prioritized an eclectic exhibition schedule during its initial two decades that de-emphasized a permanent collection, this volume similarly decenters canonical histories in favor of less-known, marginalized aspects of the museum’s early installations. This approach departs from previous scholarship, which has often emphasized that MoMA, through Barr specifically, promoted a rigid formalism.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, MoMA’s emergence as a massively influential contributor to postwar modernism has effectively erased the experimental nature of the museum’s early years. In many ways, the museum contributed to this reputation through its own extremely robust publication program, which reprinted significant exhibition catalogues at times when interest surged in particular topics. Critics and historians alike have often pointed to these texts as evidence of the institution’s adherence to predictable patterns. For example, Barr’s infamous chart, published as the dust jacket of the *Cubism and Abstract Art* catalogue (1936), is regularly misunderstood by scholars and the popular press alike as evidence of his supposedly rigid understanding of modern art. Taken out of context, the exhibition (whose catalogue was only reprinted for the first time in 1966) is an easy target, but Barr never intended the diagram to be definitive, nor for it to stand for all of modern art.<sup>12</sup> This volume thus seeks to isolate the museum’s early exhibition efforts from its later reputation. By prioritizing lesser-known exhibitions along with fresh analysis of more well-known installations, the following essays demonstrate how MoMA offered a far more tangled, complex, and indeed contradictory form of modernism in its first two decades than scholars have previously acknowledged. In short, this volume explores a period of modern art when MoMA still had the “dubious distinction of being the most controversial cultural institution the city offers.”<sup>13</sup>

## Initial Forms of a Big Broad Modernism

Conceived on a posh winter excursion to Egypt, the Museum of Modern Art sought to depart from the detached elitism traditionally associated with art museums. Just days before the museum opened on November 7, 1929, the stock market crash sent the nation into a decade-long economic depression. This inauspicious coincidence may have changed the course of MoMA's activities as courting the public became not just an ethos but also a financial necessity. The concern with serving the public led museum officials to design exhibitions and programming that promoted a version of modern art fundamentally intertwined with multiple levels of cultural production. Its initial exhibition space, situated adjacent to more traditional business interests, set an important tone. The fledgling museum's first quarters were on the twelfth floor of the Heckscher building at Fifth Avenue and 57th Street, where the museum kept company with Doolittle and Throttle stock brokers (7th floor), Dazzling Advertising Agency (8th floor), Mimi Decorators (9th floor), Metropolis Film Company (10th floor), and Shrugwell Real Estate (11th floor).<sup>14</sup> The museum's enterprising spirit fit right in among these commercial neighbors. Despite the stylishness of the building's lobby, installation shots reveal how modest and unadorned MoMA's rented rooms appeared—especially in contrast to other museums at the time, which still emulated temple-like environments. MoMA was also unique in its charter—which stressed education and study as its primary purpose. Thus, from its initial conception, museum officials demonstrated a commitment to thinking broadly about the meanings of modern art and art's audiences.

During its first decade, the museum exhibited objects that ranged widely from artifacts reflecting early traces of human civilization to contemporary industrial design. These early installations demonstrate how museum officials understood modernism in capacious terms not necessarily limited to geographic or temporal limits. Still, numerous recurring themes contributed to the shape and character of broader exhibition patterns. Historians have acknowledged the important influence of European modernism at MoMA, as seen in didactic exhibitions such as *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1936) and *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (1936–7). Scholars have also emphasized the impact of industrial design displayed at *Machine Art* (1934) and *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* (1933). These installations led to enthusiastic press criticism at the time and continue to generate debate today. As with *Modern Art in Your Life*, these and other exhibitions attempted to challenge viewers to draw connections between the visual arts and vernacular forms ranging from the international avant-garde to corporate influences. Commercial interests reappeared often as an underlying theme. Most blatantly, the museum staged exhibitions that touted the affordability of the work on view, including *Useful Household Objects Under \$5* (1938).<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the museum often organized more traditional solo exhibitions but even these ranged from showcases of artist-makers like Picasso and Matisse to the self-trained Morris Hirshfield (1943). During these early years one could argue that a defining characteristic of MoMA's exhibition strategy was a refusal to adhere to any single template or formula. The fact that MoMA created the first curatorial departments of film, photography, architecture and design, and theater and

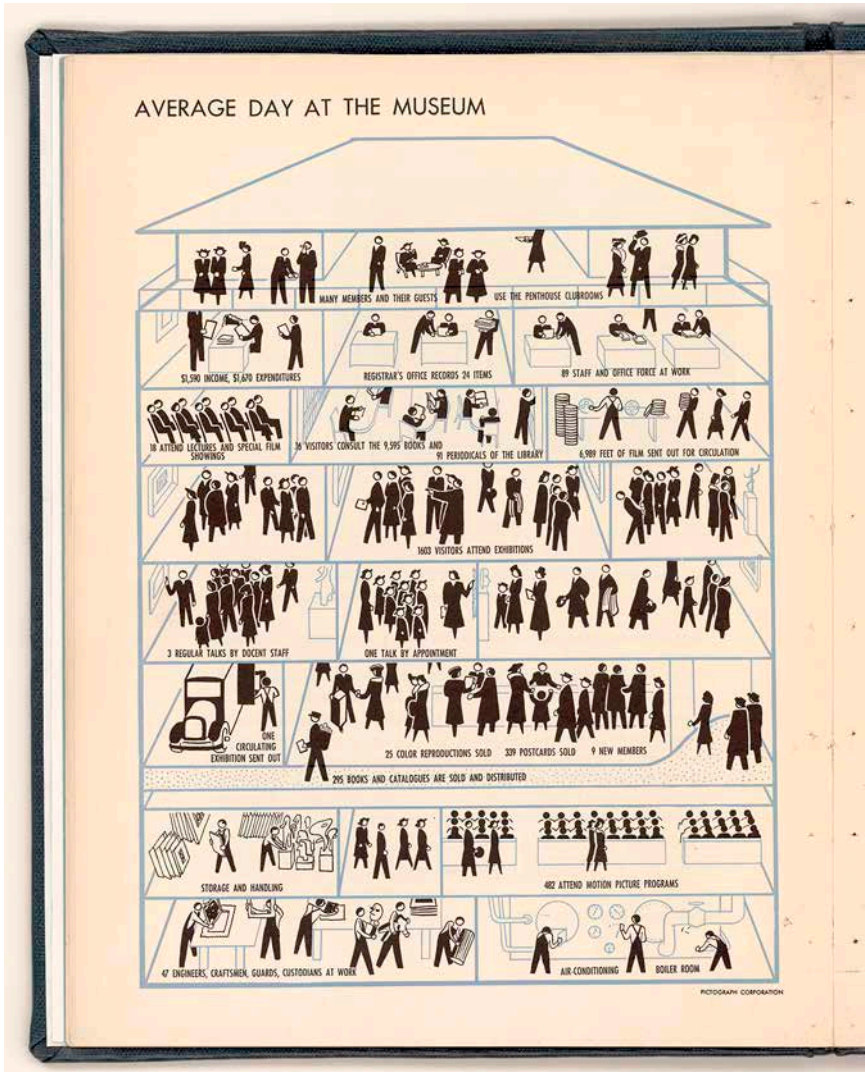
dance in the country during this same period is further evidence of the institution's structural commitment to a multiform modernism.

Barr continued to develop MoMA as a vehicle for enquiry and discovery ten years after the museum was established. In the catalogue for *Art in Our Time*, staged as the museum's tenth-anniversary exhibition in 1939, Barr explained that the "Museum of Modern Art is a laboratory; in its experiments the public is invited to participate."<sup>16</sup> In order to more fully disseminate this experimental spirit to the public, the museum developed strategies for broadening its audience. For example, the Department of Circulating Exhibitions generated shows for smaller venues nationwide, while the publications department began to regularly produce illustrated catalogues with scholarly essays.<sup>17</sup> But MoMA also aggressively courted the public through less traditional means. In 1933, museum officials hired a publicity director, Sarah Newmeyer. By the end of the decade, *Art in Our Time* was "discussed in the first television broadcast by an American museum."<sup>18</sup> And perhaps most directly, MoMA sought to draw potential audiences through its progressive education department, established in 1937, which reflected its deep commitment to developing a larger, more informed, arts community.

### Politics, the War Years, and Audiences beyond New York

During its second decade the museum attempted to expand viewer engagement with a new, larger space and through a more direct acknowledgment of international political concerns. When the museum opened its new Goodwin/Stone building at 11 West 53rd Street in May 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt contributed to inauguration festivities with a radio address on the theme of "cultural freedom."<sup>19</sup> To engage with analogous themes of individuality in the new galleries, visitors passed through a façade of glass and steel that—compared to its Victorian neighbors—demonstrated not only a complete endorsement of modern efficiency, but corporate capitalism as well.<sup>20</sup> The opening of the new building—with its comfortably "air-cooled galleries," penthouse, cinema, and garden—not only greatly enhanced the space available for exhibitions but augmented the museum's reputation as an appealing place to spend time.<sup>21</sup> These seemingly secondary spaces did much to ingratiate MoMA (and modern art) in the minds of the public, as writers extolled the virtues of visiting the cinema (twice daily showings), taking tea up at the penthouse, or eating refreshments in the garden as key components "for priming the inner man to artistic contemplation."<sup>22</sup> Far from mere diversions, these spaces contributed to MoMA's promotion of the ideological link between democratic ideals, modern life, and modern art. As illustrated in a 1940 museum publication, the sheer variety of public events and internal actions that represented an "average day at the museum" characterizes MoMA as a dynamic institution that does far more than simply exhibit works of art (Figure. I.2).

In linking modern art with modern life, MoMA also recognized—albeit selectively—the connection between art and politics.<sup>23</sup> This association became apparent in multiple exhibitions that responded to contemporary events such as the economic crisis of the Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe. Barr expressed a strong interest in art censored by the Soviet Union and Fascist countries in several exhibitions



**Figure I.2** Diagram, Average Day at the Museum. The Year's Work: Annual Report to the Board of Trustees and Corporation Members of the Museum of Modern Art for the years June 30, 1939–July 1, 1940. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

staged during the 1930s. Similar political themes were addressed through the display of reproductions of frescos by Diego Rivera (1933), etchings of the First World War by Otto Dix (1934), and posters supporting Spanish Republicans in their Civil War (1937). Meanwhile, *New Horizons in American Art* (1936) demonstrated the influence of the federal government in cultural production through New Deal arts programs.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, MoMA began organizing exhibitions that expressed support for the Allied cause while also extending the institution's prior interest in mass media. Perhaps most notably the museum became well known for installations involving the creative use of photography that blurred distinctions between art, commerce, and politics. For example, *Road to Victory* (1942) included dramatic, mural-sized enlargements of photographs that enthusiastically promoted American engagement in the war abroad.<sup>24</sup> But the museum also organized lesser-known installations that addressed the war through more pedestrian forms of media. The *Women in Necessary Civilian Employment* (1943) exhibition displayed magazine covers that featured photographs of women working in wartime industry. Related programming invited "real life cover girls" to the exhibition (Figure I.3).<sup>25</sup> Other war-themed exhibitions stressed international diplomacy. *Airways to Peace* (1944) combined photographs that charted the history of flight along with aeronautical maps and a massive globe. The exhibition was accompanied with wall texts written by former presidential candidate Wendell Willkie. These exhibitions often combined photography with patriotic themes in an effort to serve an increasingly broad range of



**Figure I.3** "Magazine Cover Competition." Women war workers present at the opening of the exhibition of "Women in Necessary Civilian Employment" (1943). Left to right: Dorothy I. Walker, trainman for the Pennsylvania Railroad; Betty Ward, New York, U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps; Deborah Hutchison, New York (who has worked on farms for the past two summers); Muriel Klein, Western "Unionette" or telegraph messenger; Mrs. Terella Albrecht, who drives a taxi for the Cornelia Cab Company. Publicity photograph. Photographic Archive, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

patrons. Yet they also caused administrative concerns. A confidential memo circulated between museum officials in 1944 conveyed such anxieties bluntly by acknowledging that war-themed exhibitions had arguably compromised the integrity of the museum by overtly expressing political agendas.<sup>26</sup>

The crisis of the war also forced MoMA officials to reevaluate the institution's broader goals, which subsequently led to a renewed emphasis on education as a centerpiece of the museum's enterprise. Barr, though removed from the directorship in 1943 in part because of his support for folk and vernacular art, remained committed to the museum and its public. In 1944, Barr prepared a confidential report that sought to clarify the museum's educational agenda and goals. Originally, the museum's stated purpose was "to encourage and develop the study of the modern arts and the application of such arts to manufacture and practical life." Now, Barr proposed that "[t]he primary purpose of the museum is to help people enjoy, understand and use the visual arts in our time."<sup>27</sup> This sentence appears in all caps in Barr's papers, and he elaborates on the importance of the distinction he is attempting to make: "Obviously, these three activities—enjoying, understanding, using—should be thought of as interdependent. Each confirms, enriches and supports the others. Together they indicate the museum's primary function which is educational in the broadest, most creative, least academic sense."<sup>28</sup> In support of this mission, Barr wrote *What Is Modern Painting*, a small, highly readable introductory text. First published in 1943, WIMP (as the book was known internally) intended to demythologize modern art in no small part by providing Barr with the opportunity to articulate his ideas on the relationship between art, democracy, and totalitarianism. While the publication's primary goal was to assist the general reader in understanding modernism (which Barr took seriously, soliciting feedback from farmers, maids, and children),<sup>29</sup> later editions of WIMP featured revised language that more directly criticized totalitarianism as the Cold War intensified.<sup>30</sup>

The museum's postwar support for US cultural diplomacy abroad, built upon a previously established interest in international exhibition programming, ironically led to domestic controversy.<sup>31</sup> After strongly supporting the Allies and later assisting with the projection of democratic themes through its traveling exhibitions, MoMA was consistently forced to defend both its activities at home, and the rise of postwar abstraction in general, against charges of Communist sympathies from Congressional critics.<sup>32</sup> Barr's successor as director, René d'Harnoncourt, continued to assert that freedom of the arts was a political issue inextricable from freedom of expression. Emphasizing the connection between MoMA and democratic ideals, he declared: "I believe a good name for such a society is democracy, and I also believe that modern art in its infinite variety and ceaseless exploration is its foremost symbol."<sup>33</sup> MoMA's continued interest in shaping not only aesthetic but political concerns on a global level also complicates its later reputation as a promoter of art as a largely insular entity. In fact, by the end of the 1940s MoMA's programming had become so accepted by mainstream culture in the United States that even *The Saturday Evening Post*, well known for its conservatism, could assert that "the museum ... resembles nothing more than a fancy six-story jack-in-the-box, which is continually popping out with something new and remarkable."<sup>34</sup>

## 1949: Twentieth Anniversary

To mark its twentieth anniversary MoMA staged a series of exhibitions that exemplified the twin pillars upon which the museum operated. The first argued that modern art represented part of a continuum that existed in relation to the past, not a radical break from it. The second maintained that modern art was deeply intertwined with contemporary culture. To highlight these tenets to the public, the museum opened two exhibitions in tandem: in late 1948 *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art*, which ran through the beginning of 1949, and *Modern Art in Your Life*, which capped the year, closing on December 4, 1949. Explicitly aimed at nonexperts, these installations combined to address a suspicion that museum personnel not only entertained but also sought to redress—that people might not like modern art. MoMA's two-pronged defense posited that if viewers liked other periods of art, they could like modern art, and if viewers liked modern living (which in this case largely meant consumer culture), they already inadvertently liked modern art.

For *Timeless Aspects*, director René d'Harnoncourt hoped to elucidate the connections between modern art and the objects of other cultures and centuries by juxtaposing disparate works that exemplified a theme. "For example," the press release instructed, "emphasis on structure is the link between such differing works as a 13th-century Chinese painting, a Cezanne landscape, a cubist work by Picasso and an 18th-century Piranesi."<sup>35</sup> As was often the case, MoMA treated the exhibition as but one possibility among many, discouraging a dogmatic reading and inviting visitors to undertake their own explorations.<sup>36</sup> The exhibition thus claimed both to be of the contemporary moment, and that essentially, all forms of artistic production were inherently tied to the contemporary. Press material included a statement from Picasso, who proclaimed: "To me there is no past or future in art. If a work of art cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all."<sup>37</sup>

Despite MoMA's popularity—it received 500,000 visitors in 1949—the general public remained skeptical of modern art at midcentury. *Modern Art in Your Life* sought to demonstrate that modern art was undeniably a part—even an instigator—of contemporary culture. Visitors to the exhibition would pass through a long and low tunnel to emerge into a bright, high-ceilinged room of painting and sculpture.<sup>38</sup> D'Harnoncourt, respected for his dramatic installations, planned the exhibition with avant-garde art at the core of the show. From this central core, the visitor could explore the exhibition's premise—that modern art had infiltrated every aspect of modern life, affecting cities, homes, and daily living. Throughout the rest of the exhibition, viewers encountered wallpaper, a Lazy Susan, a Kleenex box, fabric, and furniture. As objects of industrial design, these connections demonstrated the usefulness of modern art in a practical, product-oriented way. However, the Surrealist section of the exhibition made the case for modern art's psychological power in ways the public might not have anticipated. In a darkened chamber lit with dramatic spotlights, D'Harnoncourt had installed re-creations of six full-scale department store window displays, complete with luxury items for sale—potentially available just around the corner on Fifth Avenue (Figure. I.4). Not only did the museum exemplify the way that modern art could be used expressly to cultivate capitalist desire, museum administrators also co-opted the role of the department store to feed off that desire themselves.



**Figure I.4** Soichi Sunami (1885–1971). Installation view of the exhibition *Modern Art in Your Life* (October 5–December 4, 1949). The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

## Dismantling Myths

Clearly, the Museum of Modern Art is one of the world's most influential institutions in the construction of international understandings of modern art.<sup>39</sup> Besides its importance to the increasingly global art world, MoMA's exhibitions and publications are a constant reference point in art historical discourse. Still, the museum's early history has not received extensive, rigorous scholarly attention. Indeed, MoMA's reputation for exerting a rigid form of formalist modernism persists in popular memory, despite clear evidence that in its first two decades, the museum was one of the most experimental institutions of its kind.<sup>40</sup>

Critical analysis of MoMA's role has gone from emphasizing the individuals that shaped the museum's history to a more focused examination of the relationship between its exhibitions and the broader field. Serious independent histories of MoMA began with Russell Lynes's *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art* (1971). That this book remains a key resource is evidence of the need for additional scholarly work on MoMA's history.<sup>41</sup> More recently, scholars have begun to address the inconsistencies between the museum's exhibitions and the myths that surround them. While breaking new ground, this volume also builds upon a small

but vital scholarly bibliography. Richard Meyer's *What Was Contemporary Art* (2013) provides an important inspiration. However, in taking a broad view of the relationship between Alfred Barr, modern art, and museum exhibition practice in the 1930s and 1940s, Meyer discusses only a handful of exhibitions. Similarly, scholarship by Kristina Wilson (2009) and Jennifer Jane Marshall (2012) contribute meaningfully to our understanding of a single exhibition—1934's *Machine Art*. Haidee Waason's *Museum Movies* (2005) provides an examination of MoMA's film department, and Mary Ann Staniszewski's *The Power of Display* (1998) highlights MoMA's innovative exhibition design history.<sup>42</sup> The selective scholarly emphasis on specific aspects of MoMA's history has subsequently led art historical scholarship to rely upon a relatively narrow understanding of the museum's history as a point of departure, and at times a foil, for new contributions to the field.

This volume considers the complexity of the multifaceted modernism that MoMA advocated during its formative years. The following fourteen essays analyze how MoMA's first two decades set an ambitious, at times contradictory, agenda that has often gone overlooked. These essays expand upon several developments in research on MoMA and twentieth-century exhibition practices in general. Included authors demonstrate a particular engagement with the legacy of social art history, the turn toward visual culture, and a growing emphasis on art in global contexts. This book departs from traditional accounts of modernism that focus on artistic production to consider instead the ways in which modern art (as a shifting set of objects and ideas) circulated. In doing so, the following essays also build on a growing body of museum studies scholarship that critically considers institutional histories and curatorial agency.<sup>43</sup> As related frameworks have become increasingly important to the ways in which we understand how the public interacted with modern art broadly construed, the early history of MoMA becomes a particularly fertile ground for intellectual revision. After all, MoMA's mandate to court the public long before the so-called blockbuster era of museums in the 1960s makes the museum's exhibition history a rich case study from which to examine how art was used as a tool for political and cultural engagement.

These issues are addressed in essays distributed across four sections that highlight the overarching themes of MoMA's first twenty years. The first part analyzes the museum's engagement with vernacular and commercial influences. Marci Kwon's essay considers the relationship between surrealism and folk art between the mid-1930s and the early 1940s, which concludes by tying "folk surrealism" to the rise of totalitarianism. The influence of commercial design is addressed by Jen Padgett, who considers a largely overlooked 1942 textile exhibition that offered competing tensions of functional and aesthetic value, painting and textile, and anonymous and known modernists. Vernacular work, as represented in children's art, is addressed further by John Blakinger, who argues that the museum's promotion of children's art was consistent with progressive educational values while also motivated by more political concerns. A more explicitly commercial, though racialized, understanding of exhibition display is addressed by Andy Campbell, who considers the installation of a market in MoMA's garden as part of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* in 1940. He argues that this resulted in a new kind of display, one that sought to mimic a more authentic experience while inadvertently embodying the markets of capital and cultural patrimony.

The following section addresses how MoMA advanced curatorial fields in mediums previously not associated with fine art, including photography, dance, and architectural design. Sarah Kate Gillespie considers how a display of nineteenth-century American photography staged during the Second World War attempted to align two very different bodies of imagery in an era when curatorial discourse on multiples remained in flux. Jason Hill also considers the exhibition of photography, hinging his analysis on the display of press photography, a form of visual reproduction whose very nature challenged traditional ideas of museum practice. Relatedly, Swagato Chakravorty considers how the exhibition of photography provided new opportunities for the museum to address dance and performance. Experiential factors are also addressed by Catarina Schlee Flaksman, who analyzes *The House in the Museum Garden* (1949), which allowed visitors to experience a domestic space in MoMA's "backyard" while connecting directly with social and commercial interests as well.

The third group of essays emphasizes the museum's outreach efforts to make modernism more accessible through transportable media. Rachel Kaplan considers how museum officials used photographic reproductions to offer venues far outside of New York the opportunity to understand modernism. This focus on the mobility of images reappears in James Farmer's essay, which examines the use of photomechanical technology to reproduce a Native American rock mural as a primary object for display within the museum. The notion of mobility is interpreted socially by Suzanne Hudson, who examines the museum's focus on American veterans during and immediately following the Second World War.

The final section examines MoMA's engagement with international themes. By revisiting curatorial strategies that reinforced primitivist notions of objects, John Ott offers a critique of associated mechanisms by which canons are formed and enforced, while also envisioning compelling alternatives. Antje Gamble considers the exhibition of Italian modernism immediately after the Second World War, which, she argues, largely ignored Italy's recent history of Fascism in favor of a formal beauty meant to advance diplomatic relationships in the postwar period. Finally, Angela Miller considers the postwar implications of exhibiting work identified specifically as "American" art, while seeking to interrogate previous canonical narratives.

These four parts address ways in which the museum offered an innovative engagement with commercial and vernacular culture, while considering modernism as a global phenomenon informed by the past. Together, these chapters demonstrate how MoMA's first two decades were characterized by a range of exhibitions that eschewed the idea of an inflexible artistic lineage with which the museum has nonetheless often been identified. Though several exhibitions staged during this period are touchstones for current scholarship, the museum also organized numerous installations that either have been completely forgotten or were largely regarded as failures. Perhaps most surprisingly, MoMA's first twenty years demonstrate a remarkable willingness to "get it wrong" in order to advance aesthetic discourse.

This volume also arrives at a critical historical moment as the relationship between museums and public life is particularly challenged. Today, museum officials and cultural critics no longer need to defend contemporary art from charges of communist influence. Instead, the global advance of capitalism has given art museum