IMPERFECT INCLUSIONS: EXHIBITING NON-WESTERN ART AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 1935-2019

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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During its ninety-year history, the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA) has undergone four major architectural renovations, accrued a permanent collection of almost 200,000 works, mounted over 5,000 exhibitions, and constructed a vast archive of publications. Apart from these transformations, the museum's curatorial mission over the decades attests to an effort in expanding its representation of modern art beyond the so-called Western canon. In brief, it went from exhibiting modern art's relationship to non-European influences in the early twentieth century to orchestrating major interventions within its concentration of great Eurocentric canonical modern masterworks in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries. To trace this effort historically and assess its success and failure, I will examine major MoMA curatorial endeavors since its founding in 1929, including William Rubin's famous 1984 "'Primitivism' in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity Between the Tribal and the Modern" exhibition and Glenn Lowry's 2019 permanent museum collection reinstallation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During its ninety-year history, the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA) has undergone four major architectural renovations, accrued a permanent collection of almost 200,000 works, mounted over 5,000 exhibitions, and constructed a vast archive of publications. Apart from these transformations, the museum's curatorial mission over the decades attests to an effort in expanding its representation of modern art beyond the so-called Western canon. In brief, it went from exhibiting modern art's relationship to non-European influences in the early twentieth century to finally including modern and contemporary artists of color and women in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries as part of the history of modernism. To trace this effort historically and assess its success and failure is the purpose of this thesis. To do so, I will examine major MoMA curatorial endeavors since its founding in 1929 that culminated in the display of non-European art. These include exhibitions of African traditional arts as well as the better known ones that demonstrate relationships between non-European arts and major expressions of European modern art, such as William Rubin's famous 1984 "'Primitivism' in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity Between the Tribal and the Modern."

This thesis follows a chronological review of the history of MoMA presented in four sections. Section one addresses MoMA's display of non-European art prior to the 1984 "Primitivism" exhibition. Three important early exhibitions from the 1930s and 1940s are considered: "African Negro Art" (1935), "Cubism and Abstract Art" (1936), and "Timeless Aspects of Modern Art" (1948). In addition, information is provided on two lesser-known exhibitions of traditional African arts organized by the museum:

"Understanding African Negro Sculpture" (1952) and "African Textiles and Decorative Arts" (1972). Section two examines the genesis of Rubin's 1984 "'Primitivism'" exhibition and addresses the criticism and debate that directly followed the exhibition. In the third section, I review MoMA's attempts at formulating a more progressive model for presenting the history of modern art in the aftermath of the 1984 "Primitivism" exhibition. This includes the museum's intentional process of self-analysis preceding a major 2004 museum renovation and its attempts at non-linear, genre-based exhibitions in the early 2000s. Lastly, I consider MoMA's innovative 2019 permanent collection reinstallation in terms of the museum's response to criticisms lodged against the 1984 exhibition.

CHAPTER II

EXHIBITING NON-EUROPEAN ART AT MOMA: 1935-1972

Opened in 1929, MoMA was constituted and organized around the desire of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., MoMA's founding director, to establish modern art as a legitimate art historical field of study. Former professor of art history at Wellesley College, he envisioned MoMA as a multi-departmental museum that integrated both fine and applied art from the late nineteenth-and twentieth centuries. Focused initially on a linear chronology of European modernism— which later grew to include American Abstract Expressionism—he saw the museum's permanent collection as "a torpedo moving through time, its nose the ever advancing present, its tail the ever receding past of 50 to 100 years ago."[1] (Figure 1) The torpedo represented Barr's original desire to create a museum capable of considering and reconsidering an evolving modernist movement through the selective de-accessioning of holdings older than fifty years to other museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the strategic acquisition of new works by living artists.[2]

Barr's interest in establishing modern art as a legitimate art historical field extended into his development of an installation style that presented artworks in neutral, idealized spaces designed to force a sense of intimacy between the viewer and the art. Barr moved away from decorative exhibition installations—crowded salon-style displays grouped by size and shape and "skied"—in favor of spacious display methods using

[1] Alfred H. Barr, Jr. quoted in "1929 Starting (a Collection) from Scratch," MoMA Through Time, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, https://www.moma.org/interactives/moma_through_time/1920/starting-a-collection-from-scratch/.

[2] "1929 Starting (a Collection) from Scratch," MoMA Through Time, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/interactives/moma_through_time/1920/starting-a-collection-from-scratch/.

neutral walls with art presented at eye level.[3] As explained by Mary Anne Staniszewski in her 1998 *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art,* Barr's installation style "articulate[d] a universalist presentation of culture" by emphasizing the purely aesthetic appreciation of artwork removed from cultural or historical context.[4] This installation approach would subsequently extend to influence the manner in which non-European art, most notably West African tribal art, was displayed by MoMA throughout most of the twentieth century. The indigenous West African artifacts that Charlotte Barat and Darby English, in the recently published *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA,* viewed as having "informed the major art of the time richly, but without due acknowledgement" were decontextualized and aesthetically presented by MoMA under the protective umbrella of modern art. [5]

The first MoMA show dedicated exclusively to African tribal art's influence on modern art was the landmark 1935 "African Negro Art" exhibition, which featured six hundred and three objects from western and central Africa.[6] (Figure 2) Although it did not display any European or modern art and did not make any direct comparisons between tribal and modern works, the exhibition was one of the first attempts to incorporate African art into a genealogy of modern art. In the exhibition catalogue, *African Negro Art,* the curator James Johnson Sweeney noted that African tribal art was

[3] Mary Anne Staniszewski and Museum of Modern Art, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1998), 62.

[4] Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 81.

[5] Charlotte Barat and Darby English, "Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit," in *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA*, eds. Darby English and Charlotte Barat (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2019), 18.

[6] "1935, Celebrating African Art," MoMA Through Time, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/interactives/moma_through_time/1930/celebrating-african-art/.

discovered by European artists thirty years prior to the exhibition, when they "began to realize the quality and distinction of the Negro plastic tradition to which their predecessors had been totally blind."[7] However, Sweeney also called into question the extent to which the new, emerging European plastic outlook was influenced by African forms and motifs.

> Whether or not African Negro art has made any fundamental contribution to the general European tradition through the interest shown in it by artists during the last thirty years is a broadly debatable point. […] When we occasionally come across something in contemporary work that looks as if it might have grown out of a genuine plastic assimilation of the Negro approach, on closer examination we almost invariably find that it can as fairly be attributed to another influence nearer home.[8]

Sweeney considered the development of modern art as coincidental to rather than dependent upon this new awareness and appreciation of African tribal art. For him, resemblances between African and modern art were predicated on the fact that younger European artists, influenced most notably by Paul Cézanne, were already exploring new means of artistic expression through the use of form.[9] According to Sweeney, African art was certainly appreciated, copied and interpreted, but its influence was minimal.

The "African Negro Art" exhibition was an early attempt by MoMA to display tribal objects from an aesthetic perspective—placing objects on pedestals or in cases against white, lighted backgrounds and surrounding them with adequate space for

[7] James Johnson Sweeney, "The Art of Negro Africa," in *African Negro Art*, ed. James Johnson Sweeney (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1935), 12.

[8] Sweeney, "The Art of Negro Africa," 11.

[9] Ibid.

viewing.[10] The African-American philosopher Alain Locke, who had long made the case that African tribal art was in fact high art, praised the exhibition for not only being the finest American showing of African art but for revealing African art "for the first time in its own right as a mature and classic expression."[11] This exhibition had a distinctly positive affect on Black Americans, as pointed out by Barat and English "the exhibition occurred in the context of a broader conversation about black American artists' relationship to African forerunners and counterparts," serving as a "touchstone for several Harlem artists including Romare Bearden and Jacob Lawrence."[12] Occurring at the height of the Harlem Renaissance in New York City, the exhibition marked the first exposure for most African-American and white audiences to African works as art rather than ethnographic material—rendering MoMA's aesthetic decontextualization acceptable within the context of modern art as a historical field.

As curator, Sweeney stressed the importance of the formal properties of the objects over their ritual or utilitarian functions. In his exhibition catalogue, he writes: "in the end, it is not the tribal characteristics of Negro art nor its strangeness that are interesting. It is its plastic qualities."[13] Although the exhibition catalogue included some information on the tribal objects' geographic and cultural origins as well as their religious and utilitarian functions, installation photographs available on the MoMA website

[10] Barat and English, "Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit," 19; See "African Negro Art Installation Images," African Negro Art Exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2937.

[11] Alain Locke, "African Art (1935)," in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, eds. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), 246.

[12] Barat and English, "Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit," 20.

[13] Sweeney, "The Art of Negro Africa," 21.

indicate that the objects were displayed with minimal if any accompanying text.[14] In addition, although catalogue illustrations are arranged in an approximately geographical sequence beginning with French Sudan in the northwest and moving east and then south, ending with British East Africa (Makonde), this geographical arrangement was largely discarded in the exhibition itself.[15] As noted by Barat and English, "with one exception (the Cameroon room), objects were arranged irrespective of chronological or geographical considerations."[16] Such display practices may have been attributable in part, however, to what Sweeney identified in his catalogue as the "frequent migrations of tribes from region to region and tribal intermingling, […that make it] difficult to attribute stylistic traits with any confidence to a people or an area."[17]

In 1936, the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition again drew attention to African tribal sculpture as an inspirational source for modern art. On the dust jacket of the *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition catalogue, featuring a chart depicting the evolution of modern art movements from 1890 to 1935, Alfred Barr included African sculpture as a direct influence for both Fauvism and Cubism.[18] (Figure 3) Although Barr also noted Japanese prints and Near-Eastern Art as sources of direct influence, only African sculptures were displayed. Of the four hundred works of art featured, five African sculptures were included: a mask from the Bangwa people of Cameroon; a buffalo mask from the Ivory Coast; an ancestral figure from Gabon; and two ancestral

[14] "African Negro Art Installation Images," African Negro Art Exhibition.

[15] Sweeney, "The Art of Negro Africa," 30.

[16] Barat and English, "Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit," 19.

[17] Sweeney, "The Art of Negro Africa," 21.

[18] Alfred H. Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936), dust jacket.

figures from the Bakota people of Eastern and Southeastern Gabon.[19] These works were referenced in the catalogue and displayed in the exhibition with works by Pablo Picasso and Jacques Lipchitz in order to demonstrate the influence of African art on the development of Cubism. While the modern works were described within the catalogue with a good degree of context, the African masks and ancestral figures were once again identified only by type and general location of origin. Although viewed only as source material, the inclusion of African art in the exhibition signified the importance of African influence over Asian and Near-Easter influences, which were not represented with real objects in the exhibition.

A decade later, René d'Harnoncourt's 1948 "Timeless Aspects of Modern Art," presented modernism as part of a long history of aesthetic expression rather than as an isolated historical phenomenon. The exhibition, which sought to "demonstrate affinities and analogies" in art across time and space rather than discover "influences or derivations," was designed to visually illustrate, through groupings of art works, various relationships between the "work of modern artists and that of artists of other eras and cultures."[20] The exhibition displayed fifty-six works of art, with just over half of them from other eras and cultures including the European Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Far-East, pre-Columbian America, Africa, and Oceania.[21] Among these were three African, one Oceanic, and three North American tribal objects. The installation physically divided the exhibition into four distinct themes: "Structure and Abstraction,"

[19] Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 32, 94, 105, 225.

[20] "Timeless Aspects of Modern Art. First of The Museum's 20th Anniversary Exhibitions," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1948, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325629.pdf?_ga=2.157288570.1502892885.1593192774-2075039633.1556315825.

[21] Renè d'Harnoncourt, *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art,* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1948), 3.

"Fantastic and Mysterious," "Volume and Form," and "Stylization and Emotional Content."[22] Of the three African works included, two were displayed in the "Structure and Abstraction" section, where Picasso's *The Painter and his Model* (1928) was positioned in close proximity with a Sudanese wooden figure and a Gabon funerary figure.[23] (Figure 4) In the "Fantastic and Mysterious" section, a wooden African mask from the Ivory Coast was placed near Miró's *Woman in the Night* (1945).[24]

In the catalogue essay, d'Harnoncourt separated the relationship between modern art and earlier art into two categories: (1) influences that have been affirmed by the artists and (2) analogies and affinities that are shared with earlier works of art the artists have not seen.[25] D'Harnoncourt also suggested that aesthetic affinity may be based on many factors in addition to the plastic or morphological, including religious emotion and artistic interest in such things as rhythmic movement, mathematical order, or internal structure.[26] Regarding plastic affinities, d'Harnoncourt cautioned against assigning influence based solely on resemblance or superficial likeness, stating that "purely accidental resemblances are irrevelant [sic] to the understanding of both people and works of art and can, in fact, become very misleading."[27] Rather, d'Harnoncourt advocated for deeper analysis in order to accurately represent the relationships—be they stylistic affinities or affinities of content—between works of art from different eras and

[22] d'Harnoncourt, *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art,* 8.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 4.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

cultures.[28] Staniszewski, however, found that due to d'Harnoncourt's installation strategy, which spotlighted objects in darkened galleries with limited information on cultural context, these deeper conceptual affinities beyond stylistic resemblance were often obscured.[29]

The 1950s saw a brief resurgence in MoMA's interest in traditional African arts, exemplified by the small 1952 "Understanding African Negro Sculpture" exhibition. (Figure 5) The exhibition included thirty-one enlarged photographs, by *Life Magazine* photographer Eliot Elisofon, of eight African tribal sculptures. [30] Three of the sculptures in the photographs were also displayed along with four additional African tribal sculptures that did not have accompanying photographs.[31] All of the sculptures (photographed and displayed) were works from the Belgian Congo, Cameroon, the French Sudan, Gabon, and the Ivory Coast held by European ethnological museums and private collectors. [32] Although an exhibition catalogue was not produced, an introductory statement by Elisofon that accompanied the exhibition noted the important role "Negro sculpture has played in the development of modern Western art." [33] To emphasize this point and to foster an "easy [Western] appreciation of Negro African art," Elisofon

[28] Ibid., 5.

[29] Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 128-9.

[30] "Understanding African Negro Sculpture: Check & Installation List," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, September 25, 1952, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325853.pdf?_ga=2.153249144.1329592450.1602991751-2075039633.1556315825

[31] "Understanding African Negro Sculpture: Check & Installation List."

[32] "Exhibition Of African Negro Sculpture To Go On View At Museum," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, July 1, 1952, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325854.pdf?_ga=2.151256378.2011939775.1603425309-2075039633.1556315825.

[33] "Exhibition Of African Negro Sculpture To Go On View At Museum."

provided a photographic analysis of the sculptures showing front, back and profile views intended to explain their "plastic qualities" and emphasize the similarity of their forms to those in modern art works. [34] Therefore, like the 1935 "African Negro Art" exhibition almost twenty years earlier, the photographs and the sculptures were displayed with minimal if any cultural context.

After this exhibition, MoMA's interest in non-European influences on twentieth-century modern art began to wane. It was not until the early 1970s that MoMA again devoted an entire exhibition to traditional African art. The 1972 "African Textiles and Decorative Arts" exhibition included two hundred fifty examples of textiles and jewelry from twenty-six Black African countries, all borrowed from public and private United States collections.[35] (Figure 6) As noted by Barat and English, the exhibition was intended to "expand the modernist conception of African art beyond the realm of sculpture […] [and] push toward a less hierarchical canon."[36] Regardless of intention, the art was displayed in a manner consistent with the 1935 and 1952 "African Negro" exhibitions. Installation photographs available on the MoMA website indicate that beyond an introductory text, individual African tribal objects were once again displayed devoid of anthropological context.[37]

These five exhibitions, which sought to acknowledge and celebrate non-European and African traditional arts, were nonetheless framed by the introspective installation

[34] Ibid.

[35] "African Textiles and Decorative Arts at Modern Museum," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1972, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_332870.pdf?_ga=2.257149963.1281469137.1604726951-2075039633.1556315825.

[36] Barat and English, "Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit," 72.

[37] See "African Textiles and Decorative Arts Installation Images," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2553?locale=en.

style pioneered by Barr that emphasized aesthetic appreciation and cultural assimilation. Thus, the place of the works within their own cultural history was sacrificed in order to situate them firmly within the history of modern art. Despite MoMA's long history of installation practices focused on cultural-universalism, it was not until the 1984 "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern" exhibition, that serious national and international attention was directed to issues of cultural assimilation and to the problematic nature of the white, Eurocentric cultural traditions that defined MoMA.

CHAPTER III

FROM PICASSO TO 'PRIMITIVISM': WILLIAM RUBIN'S MOMA, 1973-1985

William Rubin, a professor of art history at Sarah Lawrence College, Hunter College, and City University of New York, served as Chief Curator of MoMA's Painting and Sculpture Collection for six years before being appointed in 1973 to the position of Director of the Painting and Sculpture Department. Until his retirement in 1988, Rubin played a crucial role in redefining the museums character, collections and exhibitions—privileging painting and sculpture above all the other mediums. Where Barr had thought of the "permanent" collection in a fluid way, accepting more advanced art and expanding contemporary collections, Rubin focused almost exclusively on enlarging and enriching collections of European masterworks, Abstract Expressionism, and modern sculpture. As Rubin aggressively sought to expand the museum's collections, he befriended Pablo Picasso, with whom he shared a close relationship until the artist's death in 1973.

It was during Rubin's visits with Picasso in the early 1970s that the idea for a monumental Picasso retrospective emerged:

> I had the good fortune not only to observe how Picasso lived but to see many works he had kept near him. […] Studying them all in Picasso's own surroundings altered my image of the man and his work even as it expanded it. My desire to share that experience and perception was the genesis of this exhibition.[38]

Witnessed first-hand, Rubin saw that Picasso's extensive personal collection of paintings and experimental constructed-sculptures, sketches, and drawings told a more complete story about the art and the man than that currently promulgated in major museum collections. Rubin believed that only by merging Picasso's collection with existing museum collections of his work could the restless and inventive continuity and unity of

[38] William Rubin, "Genesis of an Exhibition," in *Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 11.

Picasso's work finally be made clear. The "Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective" was held in the spring of 1980 as part of MoMA's fiftieth-year anniversary celebration. (Figure 7) Rubin planned the retrospective as a continuum of the artist's seventy-eight-year-long career—one long, continuous flow chronologically paralleling the succession of styles and movements in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[39] Believing that there was "virtually nothing in modern art that Picasso has not invented, practiced or at least influenced," the exhibition ultimately served as a vehicle for Rubin to establish Picasso as a central figure in modern art's historical origins. [40] The retrospective included almost one thousand of Picasso's paintings, sculptures, drawings, collages, prints, ceramics, and costume and theater designs drawn from the Musée Picasso—which housed Picasso's private collection after the artist's death—and other public and private collections throughout the world, as well as from MoMA's own permanent collection. Works were organized and installed chronologically on the museum's three floors. Those dating from 1894 through 1909 were displayed in the first-floor galleries, while the second floor included works from 1910 to 1931. The third-floor showcased work from 1931 to 1972 as well as an ancillary installation devoted to Picasso's prints.[41] In the retrospective catalogue, Rubin presented a pictorial chronology of Picasso's life and work, with photographs accompanying documented events in Picasso's life.

This retrospective, devoted entirely to Picasso, did not include any African or Oceanic tribal objects that may have served as sources for Picasso. However, in the

[39] "Most Comprehensive Picasso Exhibition Ever to Open at New York's Museum of Modern Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1980, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_327280.pdf?_ga=2.224913882.1502892885.1593192774-2075039633.1556315825.

[40] "Most Comprehensive Picasso Exhibition Ever to Open at New York's Museum of Modern Art."

[41] Ibid.

catalogue's pictorial chronology, Rubin identified several examples of influences and direct borrowings from African art during 1907 and 1908. Here, Rubin noted African influences for *Demoiselles d' Avignon* (1907), *Nude with Drapery* (1907), *Nude with Raised Arms* (1907), *Vase of Flowers* (1907), *Study for Three Women* (1908), *Three Women (version rhythmée)* (1908), *Standing Nudes and Study of Foot* (1908), *Peasant Woman* (1908), *House in the Garden* (1908), and *Landscape* (1908).[42] This attention to art historical source material represented Rubin's emerging interest in the exploration of the influences of African and Oceanic indigenous art on the evolution of modern art, which culminated in his "Primitivism" exhibition.

In his preface to the comprehensive two-volume exhibition catalogue, *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, Rubin notes that the idea for the exhibition and the emphasis on tribal art originated with Picasso:

> The few exchanges I had about tribal art with Picasso in the last years of his life altered [my views on primitivism][…] In time, I decided that the entire question of primitivism had to be investigated anew. And what better way than by the exploration and research that an exhibition on the subject would occasion. [43]

This investigation led Rubin to organize the ambitious "Primitivism" exhibition with the assistance of Kirk Varnedoe, associate professor of fine arts at New York University who would later join the museum. Open from September 27, 1984 through January 15, 1985, the exhibition included approximately one hundred fifty modern works, with special emphasis placed on Picasso and other artists with strong primitivist tendencies

[42] Jane Fluegel and William Rubin, "Chronology and Plates," in *Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 87-9.

[43] William Rubin, preface to *"Primitivism" In 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), ix.

such as Gauguin, Brancusi, Modigliani, Klee, the Expressionists, and the Surrealists.[44] Also included were more than two hundred objects from indigenous or "tribal" Africa, Oceania, and North America.[45] The exhibition was Rubin's attempt to clarify the significance of tribal objects to modernist primitivism by examining the "Western context in which modern artists discovered them."[46] Tribal and modern works were juxtaposed in four exhibition sections. (Figure 8) The first three sections were designed to progressively move the viewer through Rubin's newly articulated vision of the relationship between tribal and modern art from Gauguin at the turn of the century to the Abstract Expressionists around 1950. First, the "Concepts" section established "fundamental aspects of the modern response to tribal objects;" second, the "History" section reviewed "the direct influence of tribal objects on modern painters and sculptors;" and third, the "Affinities" section explored the "basic common denominators" between the arts "that are independent of direct influences."[47] Also included was a "Contemporary Explorations" section that presented post-1970 European and North American art that shared conceptual similarities with tribal art.[48]

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[44] "New Exhibition Opening September 27 at Museum of Modern Art Examines 'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, August 1984, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_327377.pdf?_ga=2.192406890.1502892885.1593192774-2075039633.1556315825.

[45] "New Exhibition Opening September 27 at Museum of Modern Art Examines 'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art."

[46] William Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism: An Introduction," in *"Primitivism" In 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 1.

[47] "New Exhibition Opening September 27 at Museum of Modern Art Examines 'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art.."

[48] Ibid.

Rubin's reexamination of primitivism, prompted by the "Picasso" retrospective, was grounded in his belief that Picasso's views on the significance of African sculpture "were antipodal to the received ideas."[49] Rubin concluded that:

> Much of what historians of twentieth-century art have said about the intervention of tribal art in the unfolding of modernism is wrong. Not familiar with the chronology of the arrival and diffusion of Primitive objects in the West, they have characteristically made unwarranted assumptions of influence.[50]

Rubin perceived art historians, including Robert Goldwater, as having misconstrued the influence of African and Oceanic tribal art on the vanguard of modern artists. In the "Primitivism" catalogue preface, Rubin suggested that Goldwater, "the very personification of scholarly discretion, had himself understated" the role of tribal art in modernist primitivism.[51] Here, Rubin was referring to Goldwater's statement in his seminal 1938 study *Primitivism in Modern Painting,* later revised and republished in 1967 as *Primitivism in Modern Art,* regarding the extreme scarcity of direct influence of primitive art objects on modern art:

> With the exception of a few of Gauguin's woodcuts, of some paintings of the *Blaue Reiter* group in Germany, and of the very limited production of Picasso's Negroid period, there is little that is not allusion and suggestion rather than immediate borrowing.[52]

In defense of Goldwater, however, Rubin noted that Goldwater's error was due to a lack of documentation available to him at the time and to a lack of "access to certain important collections, that of Picasso among them."[53] In the "Primitivism" exhibition, Rubin moved

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[49] Rubin, preface to *"Primitivism"* In *20th Century Art,"* ix.

[50] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism," 1.

[51] Rubin, preface to *"Primitivism" In 20th Century Art"* ix.

[52] Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art,* rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), xxi.

[53] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism," 1.

beyond what he considered the overly conservative position of Goldwater and sought to document actual relationships between African and Oceanic tribal works and the works of the "many artists whose primitivism was discussed by Goldwater only in general terms."[54]

At the same time, Rubin agreed with Goldwater's position that tribal art "served as a kind of stimulating focus" for, rather than caused, "any 'primitive' qualities that may be found in modern art."[55] This opinion, also expressed by Sweeney in his *African Negro Art* exhibition catalogue, that tribal art stimulated rather than caused developments in modern art became central to Rubin's scholarship:

> As we shall see, the changes in modern art at issue were already under way when vanguard artists first became aware of tribal art. In fact, they became interested in and began to collect Primitive objects only because their own exploration had suddenly made such objects relevant to their work.[56]

Rubin's insistence on conflating these two seemingly contradictory viewpoints—that the influence of tribal art on modern art was both widespread and non-transformative—created a tension between Rubin the curator and Rubin the art historian. By forcing a more "direct" relationship between the tribal and modern, the exhibition visually countered rather than supported Rubin's scholarly assertions that tribal art neither shaped nor altered the course of modern art.

Beyond Picasso and Goldwater, the "Primitivism" exhibition was also influenced by previous MoMA exhibitions concerned with modern art's relationship to non-

[54] Ibid., 18.

[55] Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*, 252-3.

[56] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism," 11.

European influences. For example, Rubin adapted Sweeney's 1935 emphasis on the plastic properties of tribal art and his obfuscation of the origins and intrinsic meanings of the tribal objects. Although Rubin's scholarship refuted the idea of tribal art as anonymous and indistinct, instead categorizing works of tribal art as individual creations "made only by gifted individuals," his exhibition practices told a different story.[57] Like Sweeney, Rubin's installations decontextualized tribal objects to emphasize their plastic qualities. Rubin went even further, however, often showing tribal and modern works side by side in the same display units, "making a contextually evocative installation impossible."[58]

Rubin was also influenced by d'Harnoncourt's "Timeless" exhibition. In considering the "Primitivism" exhibition, Staniszewski criticized Rubin for failing to acknowledge his indebtedness to d'Harnoncourt. Although she does not provide details, she is referring to Rubin's installation techniques and his theory of affinity. Like d'Harnoncourt, Rubin physically divided his exhibition into distinct categories of influence and affinity and aligned or juxtaposed works so that the viewer was compelled to make a formal comparison. More importantly, however, was Rubin's adaption of the concept of affinity. Rubin shared d'Harnoncourt's belief in the importance of affinity over direct influence and the related differentiation between documented influence and undocumented affinity. However, while d'Harnoncourt called for an exploration of affinities between works of art across time and space that included allegorical, emotional,

[57] Ibid., 20.

[58] Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 117.

and conceptual relationships and warned against a false reliance on resemblances, Rubin's interest lay only in the plastic or morphological importance of affinity.

For Rubin, affinity existed in the shared formal character of structural and compositional arrangements outside of historical association. Rubin's construct of formal affinity can be seen as an attempt to support his paradoxical claim that tribal art's influence on modern art was widespread yet non-transformative. As noted by Rubin, Picasso had also recognized this anomaly:

> Picasso himself put it succinctly when he said: 'The African sculptures that hang around … my studios are *more witnesses than models*.' That is, they more bore witness to his enterprise than served as starting points for his imagery […] Nevertheless, Picasso…chose his words carefully, and his 'more…than' construction must be looked at with care. Though more 'witnesses' than 'models,' the sculptures were admitted thus models to some extent. Hence, while first elected for their affinity to the artist's aims, once in the studio, the tribal objects took on a dual role, and exerted some influence.[59]

Picasso's *witnesses* and *models* served as paradigms for Rubin's constructs of *affinity* and *influence*.

As summarized by art historian Yve-Alain Bois in his 1985 critique of the "Primitivism" exhibition, Rubin identified four types of relationships between tribal and modern art.[60] The first is *simple influence*, where a modern artist's interest in a tribal object is directly reflected in an artwork; an example is an early painting by Max Weber, *Congo Statuette* (1910) in which a small wooden Yaka figure from Zaire was realistically represented.[61] Second is *visible influence,* which is based upon a historically documented morphological resemblance, for instance the similarity between the *Bird-Man* relief from

[59] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism," 17.

[60] Yve-Alain Bois, "La Pensée Sauvage," *Art in America*, vol. 73 (April 1985), 182-3.

[61] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism," 24.

Easter Island and two of Max Ernst's works, *Inside the Sight: The Egg* (1929) and *Oval Bird* (1934).[62] (Figures 9-10) A less obvious example of visible influence is the resemblance between a Zuni war god sculpture and Paul Klee's painting *Mask of Fear* (1932).[63] Examples of *visible influence* were most prominent in the exhibition, representing about half of the modern art displayed.[64] Third is *invisible influence* that is historically proven but wherein there is no compelling discernable resemblance: for example the Ivory Coast Grebo masks and Pablo Picasso's *Guitar* (1912).[65] (Figures 11-12)

Fourth and last is *affinity* wherein there exists similarity of one modern and one tribal object, without any possible historical connection between the two. For Rubin, the multiplicity of underlying affinities that existed between modern and tribal art was of paramount importance. To demonstrate affinity, Rubin compared another of Ernst's works, the bronze *Bird-Head* (1934-5) with an African mask of the Tusyan people. (Figures 13-14) Although Rubin claimed that the two shared a striking resemblance, he asserted that there existed an *affinity* rather than an *influence* because "no Tusyan masks appear to have arrived in Europe (nor were any reproduced) prior to World War II."[66] The most prolific example of the affinities between the art of pioneering modernists and tribal artists for Rubin was Picasso. Rubin argued that while Picasso had seen African and Oceanic objects, neither in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) nor in any other work

[62] Ibid., 25.

[63] Ibid., 29.

[64] Bois, "La Pensée Sauvage," 183.

[65] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism," 32.

[66] Ibid., 25.

did the artist "literally copy or imitate any tribal object."[67] For example, Rubin wrote that "resemblances between the heads in the *Demoiselles* and the [African] masks that have been compared to them in art historical studies are all fortuitous—reflections of affinities between arts that communicate through conceptual signs rather than through pictorial conventions directly derived from seeing."[68] (Figure 15)

Rubin's preoccupation with formal affinity, especially in the work of Picasso, was central to his curatorial approach. Not only did Picasso inspire the organization of the exhibition, but the artist became, as scholar James Clifford pointed out in his critique, the "hero" in Rubin's "universalizing allegory of 'affinity.'"[69] This interest in Picasso was also noted by Bois:

> In a certain sense, the entire exhibition was placed under the aegis of Picasso's remark to Sabartes, 'Primitive sculpture has never been surpassed.' In their zeal to illustrate this axiom, Rubin and Varnedoe appear to have identified with the modern artists whose interest in "primitive" art they wanted to chart—above all, with Picasso himself.[70]

Picasso was best represented among the modern artists, with twenty-four works and his *Guitar* and a Grebo mask prominently displayed as the first pairing of the "Concepts" section.[71] Because of the prominence of Picasso in the exhibition, Rubin's selection of the tribal art to be displayed emphasized the types of tribal objects preferred and collected by Picasso, mainly masks and sculptures. These included African objects from West and

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[67] William Rubin, "Picasso," in *"Primitivism" In 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 260.

[68] Rubin, "Picasso," 265.

[69] James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," *Art in America*, vol. 73 (April 1985), 165-6.

[70] Bois, "La Pensée Sauvage," 179.

[71] Ibid., 183.

South-Central Africa—Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Grebo, Ivory Coast, and Zaire—as well Oceanic objects from New Hebrides and New Guinea in the South Pacific. Rubin's emphasis on African and Oceanic tribal art was linked to his belief that "the perceived inventiveness and variety of tribal art was more in the spirit of the modernist enterprise."[72] For example, Rubin claimed that pre-Columbian court art was too monumental, hieratic, and repetitive for the early twentieth-century vanguard artists.[73] He saw the "astonishing artistic multiformity" of tribal art as one of the most important common denominators of tribal and modern art.[74]

The exhibition's consideration of primitivism within a modernist framework—one interested in how tribal works were interpreted by early nineteenth-century modern artists rather than by their creators—necessitated the presentation of tribal objects outside of their anthropological context. Although this strategy of decontextualization invited widespread criticism, it was a critical component of Rubin's affinity argument. In his preface to the "Primitivism" catalogue, Varnedoe posited that for a tribal object to have an affinity to the modern artist's existing aims, it must have the capacity "to transcend the intentions and conditions that first shaped it" and the power "to surpass its cultural confines."[75] This universalizing claim was meant to justify a disregard for the historical and cultural context of tribal works. Affinity as defined by Rubin offered the opportunity

[72] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism," 3.

[73] Ibid., 3.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Kirk Varnedoe, preface to *"Primitivism" In 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), x.

to explore the influence of tribal cultures on modern art though a Eurocentric aestheticization of tribal objects.

Despite Rubin's intentions, his exhibition installation and accompanying narrative failed to reposition "primitivism" in the positive way he had intended. In his attempt to create a working literature in the field of primitivism, Rubin had fixed modernism in a moment of "discovery" wherein pioneer modern artists recognized tribal objects as mirrors reflecting their own formalistic explorations. In doing so, he was decried for having obscured the colonial context of tribal art by sheltering under the wishful idea of "affinity." Rubin had envisioned the "Primitivism" exhibition and catalogue as "an opening to a new phase of scholarship in the subject [of primitivism.]"[76] However, in the end, the exhibition had less to do with stimulating academic interest in the "power of art to surpass its cultural confines" and more to do with provoking critical historical discussion regarding the aesthetic appropriation of "primitive" art.[77]

Reflecting on the exhibition, MoMA itself acknowledges that it "is best remembered not for the work it displayed, but for the criticism it inspired."[78] Among the art historians and critics who raised the most immediate and serious concerns were Yve-Alain Bois, Thomas McEvilley, Hal Foster, and James Clifford. Bois took issue with what he considered the unfulfilled promises on the part of the exhibition's curators. This included the use of quotation marks to demarcate the term primitivism in the exhibition title, which Bois viewed as an attempt to mitigate embarrassing connotations rather than

[76] Rubin, preface to *"Primitivism" In 20th Century Art,* x.

[77] Varnedoe, preface to *"Primitivism" In 20th Century Art,* x.

[78] "1984, The Controversial 'Primitivism' Exhibition," MoMA Through Time, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/interactives/moma_through_time/1980/the-infamous-primitivism-exhibition/.

address them. Bois also argued that the stress on tribal art was problematic, both because it excluded other equally influential non-European art, such as the pre-Columbian court art of the Aztec, Olmec, and Incan and Egyptian art, and because tribal art as a category was unstable.[79] Most notably, Bois objected to the emphasis on the morphological likeness between modern and tribal art, which excluded what he considered the more important and interesting conceptual relationships.[80]

By contrast, criticism lodged by McEvilley, Foster, and Clifford addressed broader issues regarding the exhibition's representation of African, Oceanic, and North American indigenous art as subordinate to Eurocentric art history. The most serious issue for these three critics was the decontextualization of the tribal objects. McEvilley saw this lack of context as an act of repression: "both Rubin and Varnedoe […] have treated the primitives as less than human, less than cultural—as shadows of a culture, their selfhood, their Otherness, wrung out of them."[81] Although Varnedoe acknowledged in direct response to the criticism that "such reactions confirm what was a given before the outset: that the show treads on highly sensitive territory, especially in regard to cross-cultural comparisons," he defended the exhibition as a legitimate attempt to "illuminate an aspect of Western modernism: its contact with and inspiration from tribal art of Africa, Oceania and North America."[82]

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[79] Bois, "La Pensée Sauvage," 180.

[80] Ibid., 184.

[81] Thomas McEvilley, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief (1984)," in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, eds. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), 346.

[82] Kirk Varnedoe, "On the Claims and Critics of the "Primitivism" Show – 1985," in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, eds. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003); 369-70.

Decontextualization also triggered concerns about the obfuscation of western imperialism. Hal Foster spoke to the far-reaching implications associated with assigning Rubin's concept of affinity to primitivism:

> Primitivism, then, not only absorbs the potential disruption of the tribal objects into Western forms, ideas, and commodities, it also symptomatically manages the ideological nightmare of a great art inspired by spoils. [Primitivism] disguises the problem of imperialism in terms of art, affinity, dialogue, to the point […] where the problem appears "resolved."[83]

Rubin's concept of "affinity" had glossed over the appropriation of tribal art by early nineteenth-century modern artists. Scholars, such as Foster, recognized this as a false and dangerous reality. McEvilley decried Rubin, proclaiming that in the exhibition "the colonized nations were called upon to testify to the superiority of the colonizers."[84] Clifford asserted that the exhibition's narrative history succeeded "in demonstrating, not any essential affinity between the tribal and modern or even a coherent modernist attitude toward the 'primitive,' but rather the restless desire and power of the modern West to collect the world."[85]

Concerns that MoMA's exhibition of art from the colonized or postcolonial world was a self-serving attempt to validate the superiority of classical modernism reflected broader changes in cultural attitudes occurring at the time. These changes heralded an interest in an expansive historical perspective of modernism—a perspective that extended beyond the Eurocentric version of art history, that embraced other geographical

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[83] Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art (1985)," in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, eds. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), 386.

[84] Thomas McEvilley, "The Global Issue (1990)," in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, eds. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003); 398.

[85] Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," 167.

microhistories, and that increasingly challenged racist, imperialist ideas that marginalized minority cultures, women, and people of color.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER THE "PRIMITIVISM" EXHIBITION: GLENN LOWRY'S MOMA, 1995-2019

The "Primitivism" exhibition was widely viewed as an attempt to preserve the hierarchy of the linear Eurocentrism that lay at the core of classical modernism by exploiting non-white cultures. The controversy that followed sparked debate regarding European and Eurocentric cultural imperialism, drew attention to the art world's lack of geographical and racial diversity, and prompted a rethinking of art historical infrastructure and the nature and purpose of museums. As noted by scholar Jack Flam in his 2003 anthology, *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, the exhibition marked a cultural turning point and gave voice to concerns regarding Eurocentric society's relationship with world culture that had previously been silenced. [86]

It was within this new cultural climate that Glenn Lowry was appointed the director of MoMA in 1995. At that time, MoMA was in the early stages of planning a major museum expansion to be completed in 2004. Under Lowry, however, the discussion moved from one concerned primarily with space requirements, to one committed to telling a more inclusive and open-ended story of modern art. Between 1995 and 1997, this planning process sought to consider MoMA's future as a cultural institution and reexamine its core mission. To a large extent, the changes leading to the museum's innovative 2019 reinstallation of its permanent collection had their genesis here, in the process of self-examination prompted by the 1984 "Primitivism" exhibition. Lowry described this process as an "institution-wide initiative to explore the intellectual,

[86] Jack Flam, "Introduction," in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, eds. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), 17.

programmatic and physical possibilities for the Museum in the next century."[87] It involved discussions among MoMA curators, staff, and trustees, as well as architects, historians, scholars, and critics, at various conferences and public forums—most notably an October 1996 conference at the Rockefeller Pocantico estate in New York.[88] Of particular importance at the Pocantico conference, was a debate centered on a number of metaphors suggesting potential models for how to best tell the story of modern art. As summarized by Lowry:

> The two metaphors that struck me as perhaps most resonant were the metaphors of the museum as a skeletal structure—as a spine of which different pieces could be adjusted, articulated, and framed—or the museum as a sponge, something that is expandable and compressible and that is layered with different sets of possibilities held together by seemingly infinite webbed relationships.[89]

Lowry found this metaphor indicative of the dichotomy between what he saw as a strong linear narrative (spine) and a seamless heterogeneous whole (sponge). The ensuing debate framed the discussions about the future of MoMA by identifying the tension between MoMA's customary linear avant-garde progression and a more inclusive, non-hierarchical, non-centralizing approach. Among the strongest advocates for the "spine" model was Varnedoe, then MoMA's chief curator of painting and sculpture. Varnedoe, like Rubin before him, sought to maintain MoMA's existing chronological and Eurocentric narrative of modern art across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Conversely, Lowry championed the "sponge" model that presented an open-ended and

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[87] Glenn D. Lowry, "The New Museum of Modern Art Expansion: A Process of Discovery," in *Imagining the Future of the Museum of Modern Art, Studies in Modern Art 7,* Museum of Modern Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art: Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1998), 11.

[88] John Elderfield, preface to *Imagining the Future of the Museum of Modern Art, Studies in Modern Art; 7* (New York: Museum of Modern Art: Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1998), 8.

[89] Glenn D. Lowry in "Building the Future: Museums of Modern Art in the Twenty-first Century: Summary Session" in *Imagining the Future of the Museum of Modern Art, Studies in Modern Art; 7* (New York: Museum of Modern Art: Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1998), 69.

malleable museum realigned to the interests of the moment—one that would present modern art through the lens of contemporary issues and include a more diverse body of art and cultural associations.

The first notable example of Lowry's interest in a more progressive curatorial approach was the *MoMA2000* project. A direct attempt to move away from the "spine" model that had defined the museum for the past seventy years, the project sought to counter the rigid linear perception of modern art and join modern and contemporary artistic sensibilities within the context of the emerging twenty-first century. *MoMA2000* consisted of three successive series of exhibitions, each covering a forty-year period. The first, "Modern Starts" covered the period 1880-1920 and included three exhibitions with staggered openings—"People" with eight installations ran from October 7, 1999 through February 1, 2000, and "Places" with nine installations and "Things" with eight installations ran from October 28 through March 14. This was followed by "Making Choices," which examined art between 1920-1960 in twenty-four thematic exhibitions and showed March 16 through September 26, 2000. The final series "Open Ends," featuring ten exhibitions, covered 1960 forward and ran from September 28, 2000 through March 4, 2001. [90]

The three series were multidisciplinary and organized thematically, with works from other periods interspersed to create dialogues between various historic moments. The installations represented a mix of strategies common to MoMA during the preceding seventy years as well innovative approaches intended to present a new narrative that

[90] Glenn D. Lowry, "Forward," in *Modern Contemporary: Art at the MoMA since 1980*, eds. Kirk Varnedoe, Paola Antonelli, and Joshua Siegel (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2000), 8-9 https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_174_300132957.pdf?_ga=2.61336556.1948614912.1598398131-2075039633.1556315825.

attempted to deconstruct modernism's didactic underpinnings. The introduction of distinct, thematically arranged installations was not new, having been used in many exhibitions including d'Harnoncourt's 1949 "Timeless" exhibition and Rubin's 1984 "Primitivism" exhibition. In addition, as in "Timeless" and "Primitivism" juxtapositions and look-alike pairings were meant to suggest the affinities among works of art. For example in the "Actors, Dancers, Bathers" installation in the "Modern Starts People" exhibition, Dutch female photographer Rineke Dijkstra's 1993 photograph *Odessa, Ukraine*—a photograph of a boy in maroon bathing trunks—was hung next to Paul Cézanne's 1985 *Bather*. (Figure 16) In an innovative push towards greater diversity, installations also included art and artists representative of previously marginalized populations within thematic exhibitions that moved from the paradoxical to the poetic to the provocative. In the "Making Choices" series, "The Marriage of Reason and Squalor" exhibition sought to demonstrate the interaction of contradictory choices and unpredictable oppositions. It included, in addition to artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Frank Stella, Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica, Cuban-American artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and African-American artists Jacob Lawrence and Melvin Edwards—whose *Lynch Fragment* series (1986) confronts the physical cruelty of slavery.[91] Similarly, the "Making Choices" series included the work of Ming Smith, an African-American female photographer, in the "Life of the City" exhibition and works by African-American female folk artist Minnie Evans and Haitian artist Enguérrand Gourgue were displayed as part of

[91] "Complex Themes of Irrationality in Art Investigated: The Marriage of Reason and Squalor," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, June 30, 2000, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_387003.pdf?_ga=2.184968810.23049821.1599598892-2075039633.1556315825

"The Raw and the Cooked" exhibition.[92] This inclusion of Latin American, Black, and female artists based upon the relevancy of their work to the themed exhibitions was a step toward addressing, if not fully correcting, MoMA's history of underrepresenting works by women and persons of color—a concern raised both before and after the "Primitivism" exhibition. Unfortunately, however, the innovative curatorial practices demonstrated in the *MoMA2000* exhibitions all but disappeared by the time the 2004 museum expansion and permanent collection reinstallation was completed.

Although the 2004 expansion and redesign doubled the capacity of the museum, the museum's new design and disposition of space bore little resemblance to the bold, open-ended, pluralistic *MoMA2000* exhibitions. The 2004 renovation retained MoMA's customary series of galleries and continued to separate art by periods, with contemporary works below and modern masterpieces above. The great treasures of MoMA's painting and sculpture collections continued to be grouped together on the upper floors, now connected by a stairway, with works from 1880 to 1940 on the fifth floor and works from post-World War II to the 1970s on the fourth floor. Still chronological, these galleries were arranged by artistic movement—cubism, surrealism, German expressionism, etc.—in order to emphasize the episodic development of modern art within a linear timeline. In addition, although the 2004 expansion included MoMA's first dedicated space for contemporary art, the physical separation of stand-alone contemporary galleries on the second floor reinforced the sense of tension between contemporary and modern art that had marked MoMA since the 1980s. This was a pronounced step back from the

[92] "Artists: Making Choices Exhibition," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/178?locale=pt.

MoMA2000 configurations that had freely intertwined modern and contemporary art to create interesting exchanges between various historic moments.

Another step backward from both the *MoMA2000* project and Lowry's advocacy for a "sponge" museum model was the regression in terms of racial and gender diversity. Art historian Maura Reilly expressed concern that when MoMA reopened its newly expanded museum in 2004, very few women artists and artists of color were included. By her account "only four percent of the works on display were by women, and even fewer by non-white artists."[93] In a 2007 article, New York Magazine art critic Jerry Saltz complained that since MoMA's 2004 reopening, the number of female artists displayed had ranged from three to eight percent and "only about one percent of all the art up to 1970 in MoMA's Painting and Sculpture Collection is by women."[94] For Reilly and Saltz, this failure to recognize female artists was the antithesis of the promise Lowry had made to tell a more complex story of modern art.

Overall, the 2004 reinstallation failed to fully actualize the shift in critical thinking about art that MoMA had previewed in its *MoMA2000* project. In terms of its core modern art collection, there was little movement away from the staid linear history of modern art. Although there is no scholarship available to definitively identify the exact reasons why Lowry pulled back from his original vision in the 2004 modern art collection reinstallation, Reilly suggests that it involved backlash over *MoMA2000's* anti-chronological approach. For example, Hal Foster was critical of the project and viewed it

[93] Maura Reilly, "MoMA's Revisionism Is Piecemeal and Problem-Filled: Feminist Art Historian Maura Reilly on the Museum's Rehang," *ARTnews* (October 31, 2019), https://www.artnews.com/art-news/reviews/moma-rehang-art-historian-maura-reilly-13484/.

[94] Jerry Saltz, "Where Are All the Women?" New York Magazine (November 15, 2007), https://nymag.com/arts/art/features/40979/.

as a failed experiment. He found the first *MoMA2000* series "Modern Starts" to be cause for concern, calling it "a post-historical hodgepodge of disparate works placed together in look-alike groupings."[95] In *MoMA2000*, the unconventional, non-chronological installations were meant to interrupt the flow of the one-way narrative of modern art at the heart of MoMA. However, replacing chronologically organized galleries with theme-based exhibitions that mixed media and artworks required the clear demonstration of affinities and relationships in order for the new narrative to be understood and accepted. Just as Rubin's emphasis on the morphological likeness between modern and tribal art failed to consider deeper conceptual relationships, so too did Lowry's reliance on surface associations tied to complex and sometimes whimsical themes fail to establish credible dialogues between works of art. In addition, Lowry's "hodgepodge" approach was suggestive of the eighteenth-century *Wunderkammer*—cabinets of curiosities—a pre-modern construct seen as lacking credulity and didactic function. Whatever the reasons for MoMA's decision to abandon the vision developed in the 1990s and actualized in the early 2000s, it would take another decade and-a-half and another major museum expansion before Lowry could once again attempt to realize his vision.

[95] Hal Foster, "It's Modern but is it contemporary? Hal Foster at the new MoMA," *London Review of Books* vol. 26 No. 24 (December 16, 2004).

CHAPTER V

RE-INSTALLING THE PERMANENT COLLECTION IN 2019

In 2019, MoMA completed a five-year, $450 million multistage expansion and renovation project marking its ninetieth-year anniversary. The expansion added an additional 47,000 square feet of gallery space, including new street-level galleries, two new spacious galleries for special exhibitions and installations on the third floor, and expanded main galleries on the second, fourth, and fifth floors.[96] When the museum reopened to the public on October 21, 2019, the permanent collection reinstallation highlighted the acquisition and display of an international array of works by women, minorities and people of color. Other changes included a renewed focus on the permanent collection, rather than on temporary exhibitions, and a pronounced integration of media that eased the dominance of painting and sculpture. The permanent collection was presented in three distinct temporal segments—1880s–1940s on the fifth floor, 1940s–1970s on the fourth floor, and 1970s–present on the second floor. However, galleries were reconfigured to create anachronistic juxtapositions and new mixed-media rooms were organized around themes and ideas. A major impetus behind this reconceptualization of the museum's permanent collection installation was articulated by Lowry in a 2019 interview with Andrew Goldstein, editor-in-chief of Artnet News:

> One of the foundational ideas behind the museum was that it would be a work in progress—that it wasn't actually finished, it was evolving and changing and developing over time. I'm inspired by […] this notion that the definitions that had

[96] "The Expanded and Reimagined Museum of Modern Art to open on October 21, 2019," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, February 5, 2019, https://press.moma.org/news/museum-renovation-and-expansion-project/#:~:text=News-,The%20Expanded%20and%20Reimagined%20Museum%20of,Opened%20on%20October%2021%2C%202019&text=The%20Museum%20of%20Modern%20Art%20opened%20its%20expanded%20campus%20on,of%20modern%20and%20contemporary%20art.

> begun to accrue around a narrow reading of modernism or modern art could be expanded productively to embrace a much broader and more generous understanding of the concept, and a recognition that there were many different modernities that evolved over time in different places, and that they talked to each other.[97]

Lowry envisioned an ever-evolving museum with an expansive and more inclusive art historical narrative in line with Barr's original vision of the museum as a "torpedo." In keeping with this vision of a metabolic and self-renewing collection, Lowry tied the 2019 reinstallation to a broader plan for a continuously evolving and rotating permanent collection that would entirely change over a two-to-three-year period. [98]

For Lowry, the reinstallation was an adjustment of the traditional narrative of modernity. Canonical works were placed alongside and across from other paintings, sculptures, and various mediums from different historical, geographical, and conceptual origins. This approach encouraged viewers to draw atemporal comparisons, as modern works of art were no longer presented to museum goers in isolation. *New York Times* art critic Holland Cotter saw this as an attempt by MoMA to reverse "decades of stonewalling multiculturalism" by presenting an "integrated presence of 'difference' itself."[99] He viewed this difference, which manifested itself in a notably diverse catalogue of artists, as a "reboot" rather than a "revolution."[100] A reboot that signaled MoMA's commendable if not belated attempt to finally push past the hierarchy of linear

[97] Glenn D. Lowry, "'So, Is MoMA Woke Now' Not Quite. A Q&A With Director Glenn Lowry on Why 'You Can Never Be Comprehensive in Some Absolute Way,'" interview by Andrew Goldstein, *Artnet News* (October 15, 2019), https://news.artnet.com/the-big-interview/glenn-lowry-moma-reopening-interview-part-1-1678816.

[98] Glenn D. Lowry, "'So, Is MoMA Woke Now.'"

[99] Holland Cotter, "MoMA Reboots With 'Modernism Plus,'" *The New York Times* (October 10, 2019), https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/10/arts/design/moma-rehang-review-art.html.

[100] Cotter, "MoMA Reboots."

Eurocentrism at the core of classical modernism. For example, Hal Foster noted the inclusion of "an impressive number of pieces by women as well as major exhibits by African American artists […] and Indian artists […] [as well as] an important donation of Latin American art, and a large gallery given over to contemporary Chinese work." [101]

Others, however, like Maura Reilly and art critics Murray Whyte and Chloe Wyma expressed concern that the reinstallation represented only a perfunctory or symbolic effort in its inclusion of non-white, non-male artists—as evidenced by superficial pairings of art works and shallow art historical context. Whyte noted that while the "new MoMA works hard to be cross-cultural," its curating "can feel labored and tokenistic."[102] Reilly, Whyte and Wyma were critical of the abundance of what they considered heavy-handed token choices, where artwork from previously underrepresented races, cultures, and geographies were strategically inserted among European modern masterpieces in order to present a public image of MoMA as inclusive and progressive. For example, Reilly questioned the inclusion of single works by African-American women in a gallery devoted to Pablo Picasso: "what Holland Cotter in the *New York Times* called 'a stroke of curatorial genius,' I call tokenism."[103] Wyma denounced "untroubled" installations and "missed encounters—moments where MoMA sits out the opportunity to question its reflexive hagiographies."[104] This speaks to the

[101] Hal Foster, "Change at MoMA," *London Review of Books* vol. 41, no. 21 (November 2019), https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v41/n21/hal-foster/change-at-moma.

[102] Murray Whyte, "At the new MoMA, cracking open Modernism's narrow tale," *Boston Globe* (October 17, 2019), https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/art/2019/10/19/new-moma-tiny-cracks-old-linear-tale-modernism/8WNZIdrGdwaSI5OIvitcmK/story.html

[103] Reilly, "MoMA's Revisionism Is Piecemeal and Problem-Filled."

[104] Chloe Wyma, "Loose Canon," Artforum (October 21, 2019) https://www.artforum.com/slant/chloe-wyma-on-the-reopened-moma-81076.

perceived failure of MoMA to be openly self-critical of its Eurocentrism. William S. Smith, editor of *Art in America,* and Hal Foster. Both Smith and Foster also called attention to the fact that while MoMA was attempting politically and socially progressive programming, it was maintaining private funding models dependent on income inequality and unethical philanthropy. Smith noted that "MoMA has reopened at a time when the system behind its finances is under intense scrutiny."[105] Foster saw this as an example of "the contradiction between public mission and private interest or, more nakedly, between democracy and plutocracy."[106]

Cumulatively, these criticisms are representative of a twenty-first century skepticism deeply rooted in the uneven historical relationship with privilege and the cultural politics of race and gender common to cultural institutions such as MoMA. As suggested by Reilly, "in an effort to address the sins and errors of the past," MoMA was "inserting artists back into the mainstream canon within which they had either been marginalized or made invisible."[107] Among the best signifiers of these "sins and errors" were the protests for peace, inclusivity, and social justice that occurred regularly at MoMA beginning in the 1960s. In 1969 the Women Artists in Revolution (WAR) pressed MoMA for increased representation of women and the Art Workers Coalition (AWC) demanded greater inclusion of marginalized African and Latino artists.[108] Criticism of

[105] William S. Smith, "Dissident Modernism Meets Peak Philanthropy at the New MoMA," *Art in America* (October 25, 2019), https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/moma-reopens-modern-art-politics-protests-63665/.

[106] Hal Foster, "Change at MoMA."

[107] Reilly, "MoMA's Revisionism Is Piecemeal and Problem-Filled."

[108] "1970, Art and Protest," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3921.

MoMA, however, went beyond the lack of diversity in its modernist canon. For example the Guerilla Art Action Group (GAAG) protested MoMA's ties to the war industry and support of the Vietnam War.[109] In the 1980s. a new group of feminist activist artists called the "Gorilla Girls" protested MoMA's underrepresentation of female artists and artists of color in several of its 1984 exhibitions, most notably MoMA's 1984 "An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture" exhibition.[110] If then, as Reilly has suggested, the 2019 reinstallation was intended to be corrective to such past omissions and failures, it becomes critical to consider the reinstallation within the context of the criticism surrounding what is arguably the most poignant example of MoMA's perceived cultural insensitivity and exclusionist practices—Rubin's 1984 "'Primitivism' in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity Between the Tribal and the Modern."

If the 1984 "Primitivism" exhibition stands as an example of what Cotter referred to as MoMA's "decades of stonewalling multiculturism," then the 2019 installation can be viewed as a direct attempt to finally address this lacuna by integrating "difference" throughout the reopened MoMA—most notably through the addition of female artists and artists of color.[111] This "difference" was advertised in MoMA's "Opening Season, Fall 2019" exhibitions, which signaled MoMA's intent to bring important voices and new discoveries to the museum. The 2019 "Opening" featured "Sur Moderno: Journeys of Abstraction—The Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Gift," an important donation of Latin American art celebrating seventy-one artists from Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, and

[109] "1970, Art and Protest."

[110] See "An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture Exhibition," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020 "https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2220?locale=en).

[111] Cotter, "MoMA Reboots."

Uruguay; large surveys of African-American printmaker Betye Saar and African-American performance artist William Pope. L; and major installations by African-American video artist Arthur Jafa, Brazilian multimedia artist Rivane Neuenschwander, and Indian photographer Dayanita Singh.[112]

Within the galleries, one of the most striking curatorial decisions was the rehang of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, Picasso's infamous 1907 painting portraying five female Barcelona prostitutes. (Figure 17) For decades, *Demoiselles* had been shown in the context of earlier Cubist works painted by Picasso and Braque. [113] As part of the 2019 reinstallation, *Demoiselles* was juxtaposed with a large scene of a race riot painted in 1967 by Harlem-born artist Faith Ringgold. (Figure 18) The Ringgold painting, *American People Series #20: Die*, "shows white and black Americans, blood-spattered, clinging to one another for safety, their faces contorted in a similar manner to Picasso's damsels."[114] (Figure 19) As explained by MoMA, Ringgold painted *Die* after studying Picasso's 1937 *Guernica*, which hung at MoMA before returning to Spain in 1981: "*Die's* scale, composition, and abstract background explicitly refer to Picasso's *Guernica."* [115] However, in contextualizing the pairing with *Demoiselles*, MoMA asserted that the inclusion was intended to intensify "the questions that *Demoiselles* raises about

[112] "Opening Season: Fall 2019," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/groups/45.

[113] Jason Farago, "The New MoMA Is Here. Get Ready for Change." *The New York Times,* October 3, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/03/arts/design/moma-renovation.htm.

[114] Jason Farago, "The New MoMA Is Here. Get Ready for Change."

[115] "Faith Ringgold, *American People Series #20: Die* 1967," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/199915.

representations of women, power, and cultural difference."[116] There is no doubt that *Die's* violent composition looks less to *Demoiselles* than to *Guernica*, yet in the absence of *Guernica* MoMA chose to maintain the Ringgold-Picasso connection through a pairing that also addresses race and gender violence, albeit with far less clarity and contextual support.

Many, like Cotter, saw the atemporal pairing of Picasso with a black, female American artist from the 1960s as representative of MoMA's attempt to shatter the museum's chronological method and confront the "problematic politics" of the colonial and sexual violence inherent in the African-influenced *Demoiselles*.[117] Reilly, however, questioned the placement of a single Ringgold painting in a room dedicated to the white, male Picasso and thirteen of his early paintings and sculptures. For her, such a placement presented "Ringgold as a derivative of Picasso, or as a supporting character."[118] For Reilly, the juxtaposition also suggested an insensitivity to the issues of colonialism and appropriation. In its wall text, MoMA noted that the pairing of Ringgold and Picasso called attention to Picasso's engagement with African Art.[119] However, as noted by Reilly, *Die* presents no clear response to primitivism, making the relevance of that engagement undefined.[120] Reilly speculated that MoMA was displaying Ringgold as an act of reparation to make amends for Picasso's earlier appropriation of African forms, a

[116] "Gallery 503: Around *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5135.

[117] Cotter, "MoMA Reboots."

[118] Reilly, "MoMA's Revisionism Is Piecemeal and Problem-Filled."

[119] Whyte, "At the new MoMA."

[120] Reilly, "MoMA's Revisionism Is Piecemeal and Problem-Filled."

viewpoint shared by Wyma.[121] Wyma viewed the pairing as an attempt to "inoculate" against the more troubling dynamics of *Demoiselle.*[122] For Wyma, MoMA was intentionally using an African-American woman to erase or camouflage primitivism's misogynistic, racist, and colonialist underpinnings.

Whyte also questioned the placement of Louise Bourgeois' *Quarantania I* (1947-53), a stand of white totemic wood sculptures, in the same Picasso room. (Figure 20) Although the inclusion of *Quarantania I* suggested an attempt at simple likeness—*Quarantania I* presents five clustered abstract figures, like *Demoiselles*, and is a sculpture featuring an abstracted female personage, like *Woman's Head (Fernande)*, the only Picasso sculpture in the room—MoMA asserted that as with Ringgold, Bourgeois' inclusion was intended to "enter into dialogue with Picasso's psychologically charged scene."[123] Also criticized as a superficial pairing was the atemporal juxtaposition of African-American female artist, Alma Woodsey Thomas' 1973 *Fiery Sunset* with Henri Matisse's 1911 *The Red Studio,* in a room dedicated to Matisse.[124] (Figure 21) MoMA's attempts to support the pairing were less straightforward than for that of Ringgold and Bourgeois with Picasso—noting only Thomas' fascination with the paper cutouts of Matisse's final years and her experimentation with form and color.[125]

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[121] Ibid.

[122] Wyma, "Loose Canon."

[123] "Gallery 503: Around *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5135.

[124] "Gallery 506: Henri Matisse," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5137.

[125] "Alma Woodsey Thomas: American, 1891–1978," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/artists/47098?locale=en.

There were also examples in the 2019 reinstallation where minority artists of significance continued to be overlooked or misrepresented within the context of the history of modern art. This was the case with Janet Sobel (1899-1968), a female Ukrainian-American abstract expressionist painter. MoMA owns two Sobel paintings, one of which, her 1945 *Milky Way*, was included in the 2019 reinstallation. Oddly, however, *Milky Way* was displayed in "Architecture for Modern Art" a room dedicated to museum architecture and exhibition design.[126] (Figure 22) This placement is problematic given that MoMA acknowledged that Sobel is the "first artist to use the drip painting technique which directly influenced Jackson Pollock."[127] As noted by Wyma, "had *Milky Way*, with its tangled roulades of enamel paint, been shown near Pollack's *One: Number 32, 1950*, for instance, viewers would have been compelled to confront problems of gender, scale, and originality."[128] In addition, such a coupling would have raised the question of why *Milky Way*, gifted to MoMA in 1970, had been obscured by MoMA for almost fifty years and excluded from its history of abstract expressionism.[129]

Despite the criticism surrounding MoMA's inclusion of these artworks, there were numerous examples of successful, contextually correct pairings and insertions meant to promote a more historically accurate and balanced presentation of modern art. *The Moon* (1928) by female Brazilian artist Tarsila do Amaral, (Figure 23) which was first shown in Paris in 1928, was positioned alongside Picasso's *The Studio* in a room

[126] "Gallery 519: Architecture for Modern Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5141.

[127] "Janet Sobel," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/artists/5503?locale=pt.

[128] Wyma, "Loose Canon."

[129] "Janet Sobel."

devoted to 1920s Paris.[130] This pairing demonstrated MoMA's interest in highlighting the strong internationalization of various avant-garde moments within the interwar period between 1918 and 1939. Also of note is the fact that Vasudeo S. Gaitonde, considered one of India's foremost abstract painters, was included in a gallery featuring American abstract expressionists Mark Rothko, Louise Nelson, Barnett Newman, and Ad Reinhardt. His 1962 *Painting, 4* was hung adjacent to Rothko's 1950 *No. 10.* [131] (Figure 24)

Many of the new works on display were acquired in the five years prior to the 2019 reinstallation, suggesting an aggressive acquisition strategy designed to achieve Lowry's goal of expanding MoMA's predominantly Euro-American canon. This strategy varied from the process employed by Rubin in his selection of African, Oceanic, and North American tribal works for the 1984 "Primitivism" exhibition. Rubin's selection process was meticulously discriminating, with tribal works selected based solely upon their ability to demonstrate Rubin's continuum of influence through look-alike resemblance and power of form.[132] Conversely, Lowry's selection process for the 2019 reinstallation, while meant to highlight and complement the existing collection of modern and contemporary masters, centered on the collection of art from previously underrepresented artists in order to contextualize a stronger international art historical narrative. Two of the most striking examples of MoMA's twenty-first century interest in acquiring diverse works of art involved large-scale gifts. The first was the major gift

[130] "Gallery 514: Paris 1920s," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5109.

[131] "Gallery 404: Planes of Color," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020. https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5118?.

[132] Kirk Varnedoe, "On the Claims and Critics of the "Primitivism" Show – 1985," 369.

between 2016 and 2018 by MoMA Trustee Patricia Phelps de Cisneros of almost 200 works by Latin American artists for the large "Sur Moderno" exhibition.[133] The second recent large-scale acquisition was the 2018 gift of forty-two rare, early works by female, African-American artist Betye Saar. The Saar acquisition resulted in "The Legends of *Black Girl's Window,*" the first ever dedicated examination of Saar's work as a printmaker.[134] (Figure 25) In addition to these large-scale gifts, there were a number of newly acquired individual works. These included Thomas' *Fiery Sunset* acquired in 2015 and Ringgold's *Die* acquired in 2016. In addition, African-American conceptual artist David Hammons' *Pray for America* (1969) was acquired in 2015 for display in the "War Without, War Within" gallery. [135] (Figure 26) Sudanese artist Ibrahim El-Salahi's *Prison Notebook* (1976) comprised of thirty-eight ink on paper drawings conveying the trauma of his six months in Khartoum's notorious Kober Prison, was acquired in 2017.[136] (Figure 27) A series of drawings by Rammellzee, an African-American visual artist and graffiti writer noted for introducing elements of the avant-garde into hip-hop, were acquired in 2018 for inclusion in a room devoted to contemporary artists who made street art in the

[133] "Selected Gifts from Patricia Phelps de Cisneros," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3921.

[134] "The Legends of *Black Girl's Window*," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5060.

[135] "Gallery 420: War Within, War Without," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020. https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5150.

[136] "Ibrahim El-Salahi: Prison Notebook 1976," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/218219?sov_referrer=theme&theme_id=5150&effective_date=2020-10-25.

1960s and 1970s.[137] In 2019, Amaral's *The Moon* was acquired and Gaitonde's *Painting, 4* was taken out of deep storage to hang adjacent to Mark Rothko's 1950 *No. 10*.[138]

MoMA's acquisition strategies preceding the 2019 reinstallation were designed to both reconstruct a more international canon and foster an atemporal intermingling of works based on themes and perceived connections. The extent to which this actually allowed the museum to move past the linear story of modern art formulated by MoMA during its ninety-year history is debatable. Reilly pointed out that although the 2019 installation represented itself as non-chronological, MoMA's own traditional narrative of modern art continued to dominate, "the ghost of the mainstream modernist timeline remains."[139] Unlike the *MoMA2000* exhibitions, the 2019 reinstallation presented a museum still largely arranged according to critical dates, styles, and schools and still devoted to the customary litany of the great European masters of modern art. However, perhaps the biggest indication of MoMA's interest in moving toward atemporal inclusivity was Lowry's commitment to continuously rotate works within the permanent collection:

> Critical works that people travel long distances to see, like Matisse's *Dance,* Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, Monet's *Water Lilies*—we're not going to change those. But we might change where they're located, and we certainly will change their neighbors.[140]

Although a clearly innovative curatorial device, Lowry was not suggesting a selective de-accessioning of historical holdings in order to make way for an even more diverse array

[137] "Gallery 414: City as Stage," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5173.

[138] "Gallery 404: Planes of Color."

[139] Reilly, "MoMA's Revisionism Is Piecemeal and Problem-Filled."

[140] Glenn D. Lowry, "'So, Is MoMA Woke Now.'"

of newly acquired works. Rather, he was placing the emphasis of the systematic rotation on the addition and subtraction of works outside of the linear Eurocentric canon.[141] Like the acquisition strategy for the reinstallation, this can be seen as a long-term commitment to the construction of a diversified and internationalized cannon more in line with the modern and contemporary artistic sensibilities of the twenty-first century. At the same time, however, Lowry's rotating collection—although commendable—could be construed as an unwillingness to take a definitive stand on any one story of modern art or as a direct attempt to avoid or deflect potential criticism regarding any one atemporal or historical contextualization.

As much as MoMA made attempts in 2019 to display a more diverse body of art, it also attempted to more directly address the cultural associations surrounding its expanding modern canon. This could be viewed as an attempt to counter Rubin's revisionist view of Primitivism, which sought to preemptively marginalize important issues such as cultural appropriation, imperialism, and colonization under the construct of affinity. The 1984 exhibition presented African, Oceanic and North American tribal indigenous works as valuable only in relation to Eurocentrism art history while simultaneously failing to problematize the modern artists' encounters with them. This reinforced and perpetuated the dangerous numbing effect surrounding colonialism and cultural appropriation.

Despite the concerns raised by Reilly and Wyma that the juxtaposition of Ringgold's *Die* with Picasso's *Demoiselles* failed to address issues of colonialism and appropriation, there were ample and clear examples of MoMA's efforts in 2019 to address socially relevant issues. MoMA directly addressed the exploitation of colonialism

[141] "The Expanded and Reimagined Museum of Modern Art."

with Cuban artist Wifredo Lam's *The Jungle*, (Figure 28) which was displayed in a gallery devoted to the works of refugee artists who fled Europe and the devastation of World War II.[142] In its description of the painting, MoMA accurately reflected on the harshness of Cuba's four hundred years of colonial subjugation, noting that the painting conveys "the haunting consequences of slavery and colonialism for his native island of Cuba."[143] Beyond the evils of colonialism and cultural appropriation, the 2019 reinstallation also demonstrated a willingness to acknowledge and at times confront other serious social issues. For example, Gallery 402: *In and Around Harlem* presented works by Harlem artists including Jacob Lawrence, Helen Levitt, Alice Neel, and William H. Johnson. Their art represented a fusion of art, politics, and adversity surrounding "the multi-decade mass exodus of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North."[144]

2019 also marked the first time the intersection of art and war was introduced as a prevalent theme, with MoMA attempting to provide political commentary commensurate with the times. The fifth floor gallery, "Responding to War" addressed how art produced during the 1930s and 1940s by "artists of various nationalities in diverse circumstances" reflected the horror of World War II and the "cataclysmic period that stretched from the rise of Nazism and other totalitarian regimes, in the 1930s, to the end of the war, in

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[142] "Gallery 401: Out of War," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5115?locale=en.

[143] "Wifredo Lam The Jungle (La Jungla)," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/34666?sov_referrer=theme&theme_id=5115&effective_date=2020-09-06.

[144] "Gallery 402: "In and Around Harlem," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5116.

1945."[145] Here Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo's *Animals* (1941), painted on the eve of America's entry into World War II, foreshadowed the horror of war to come, while Picasso's *The Charnel House*, inspired by newspaper war photographs, marked the war's horrific end.[146] On the fourth floor, the evils of the Vietnam War and the political violence of Chile and the Sudan were among conflicts addressed in "War Within War Without." Here African-American artist Benny Andrew's *No More Games* from 1970 joined was joined with Chilean artist Lotty Rosenfeld's *A Mile of Crosses on the Pavement* (1979-80).[147] As noted by MoMA, "thickly applied or oozing materials suggest violence" and "dark undercurrents emerge through the transformation of familiar symbols and forms like flags, crosses, and flowers."[148] There was also an attempt to address the damaging effects of technology and scientific management that marked the early twentieth century. In "Machines, Mannequins, and Monsters," MoMA acknowledged the desires and anxieties aroused by the shared experiences of sweeping change during the technological revolution.[149] Smaller nods to social inequality, included the film series "It's All in Me: Black Heroines" that ran from February 20 to March 5, 2020. (Figure 29)

[145] "Gallery 522: Responding to War," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5114?locale=en.

[146] "Rufino Tamayo *Animals,*" The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79030?sov_referrer=theme&theme_id=5114&effective_date=2020-09-06; "Pablo Picasso *The Charnel House*," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020,https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78752?sov_referrer=theme&theme_id=5114&effective_date=2020-09-06.

[147] "Gallery 420: War Within, War Without."

[148] Ibid.

[149] "Gallery 510: Machines, Mannequins, and Monsters," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5138?locale=en.

The series addressed issues of racism by presenting films that countered mainstream cinema's historical misrepresentation of black female identity.[150]

Despite MoMA's attempts to highlight its sensitivity to some social evils, a sense of avoidance extended into more contemporary issues, where MoMA's public mission and its private interest collided. One example involved MoMA's display of Ibrahim El-Salahi's *Prison Notebook* (1976) in the 2019 reinstallation. Although the inclusion of *Prison Notebook* gave voice to art and artists concerned with state repression and imprisonment, it avoided any meaningful discussion of twenty-first century carceral injustice and trauma or the social and moral costs of mass incarceration. Of equal importance, it drew attention to MoMA's own toxic philanthropy. In April 2019, at a MoMA conference about globalism and the art world, participants circulated a statement—signed by more than two hundred artists, curators, and academics—calling on the institution and Trustee Larry Fink, CEO of the investment firm BlackRock, to divest from companies that profited financially from the operation of private prisons. The statement decried Fink's ownership in private, for-profit prison companies GEO Group and Core Civic, as well as MoMA's own institutional ties to private prisons and mass incarceration. [151] Such public concerns reflected on MoMA's attempts to embrace diversity through progressive programming while simultaneously maintaining questionable financial associations. In an age of nonprofit museum governance, scrutiny of controversial philanthropic relationships—those with individuals or organizations with

[150] "It's All in Me: Black Heroines," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.moma.org/calendar/film/5194?locale=en.

[151] Alex Greenberger, "'These Prisons Punish for Profit': At MoMA Conference, Academics Call on Museum, Board Member to Divest From Private Prisons," ARTnews, April 28, 2019, https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/moma-larry-fink-statement-cmap-12450/.

divisive social, business, or political associations—was becoming increasingly problematic for museums of all sizes. For large, world-renowned cultural institutions such as MoMA, however, this scrutiny also presented an opportunity to forge lasting, authentic relationships with both the public and the artistic community by engaging in consistently transparent practices.

Despite such challenges, Lowry's approach to the 2019 reinstallation of MoMA's permanent collection can be viewed as part of the broader efforts of modern and contemporary art museums to reframe their museological strategies and curatorial practices in response to globalization, shifts in economic and cultural power, and rapid technological change and environmental changes. For example, when London's Tate Modern reopened in 2016 after a major expansion, artists outside of the Eurocentric canon were prominent in the renovated galleries and fifty-percent of the opening solo exhibitions were by women.[152] United States museums have also been moving more aggressively towards an inclusive canon. This is indicative of what Porchia Moore sees as an "inclusive museum movement." A movement that calls upon museums to "operate within principles of intersectionality, acknowledgement of legacies of oppression and privilege, and equity of access predicated on values of social justice." [153] This leaning was visible in 2017, for example, when Atlanta's seventy-five-year-old High Museum of Art highlighted the work of artists of color, women artists and gay artists in nine of its

[152] Izabella Scott, "The Magnificent New Tate Modern Opens with 50% Female Solos and More Non-Western Artists" *Artsy* (June 16, 2016), https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-the-magnificent-new-tate-modern-embraces-a-diverse-future-for-art.

[153] Porchia Moore, "Future Forward: Towards a Racially Inclusive Museum," Museum Education Roundtable, Blog (September 2016), http://www.museumedu.org/future-forward-towards-a-racially-inclusive-museum/.

fifteen annual exhibitions.[154] In 2018, the groundbreaking "Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power" was exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. This collaborative touring project was organized by Tate Modern in collaboration with the Brooklyn Museum, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Arkansas, and The Broad, Los Angeles.[155] Focused on twenty years of Black American art and struggle, the exhibition included over one hundred and fifty artworks from 1963 to 1983 by Black American artists.[156] Like these and other museums of modern and contemporary art, MoMA's curatorial revisionism has positioned it within the twenty-first century to meet current global standards for the public, semi-official museums of the global north.

[154] Lulu Garcia-Navarro, "How an Art Museum is Reaching a More Diverse Audience," National Public Radio (January 7, 2018), https://www.npr.org/2018/01/07/576219631/how-an-art-museum-is-reaching-a-more-diverse-audience.

[155] "Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power," The Brooklyn Museum, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/soul_of_a_nation.

[156] "Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power."

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have considered MoMA's efforts over the decades to expand its representation of modern art, moving from the exhibition of modern art's relationship to non-European influences to the exhibition of an international array of modern and contemporary works by women, minorities and people of color. One of the factors complicating MoMA's representation of modernism's relationship to traditional African, Oceanic, and North American arts was the inconsistent narrative regarding both the degree of influence traditional arts had on modern art and the degree to which these traditional arts changed the course of modern art. Although MoMA's art historians have consistently held that the early twentieth-century modern artists were the first to appreciate African and Oceanic tribal objects as high art, opinions regarding the extent and nature of the relationship between the two have vacillated over time. The narrative has moved from Sweeney's 1935 depiction of the influence of African sculpture as minimal, purely plastic, and coincidental to the development of modern art—to d'Harnoncourt's attempts to demonstrate the conceptual affinities between modernism and the broad spectrum of art across time and space—to assertions made in the 1950s and 1970s that stressed the direct and important role traditional African sculpture and decorative arts played in the development of modern art—to Rubin's scholarly attempts to reconcile these opinions through his paradoxical claim that tribal art's influence on modern art was overwhelming yet non-transformative.

Further complicating matters, was MoMA's presentation of traditional African, Oceanic, and Amerindian arts within a modernist framework, firmly situating primitivism

as an aspect of the history of modern art, not of tribal art. This was representative of MoMA's longstanding interest in the universalist presentation of culture. This universalist attitude originated at MoMA in the 1930's as a desire to "tame displayed artifacts for aesthetic appreciation and cultural assimilation"[157] In the post-World War II years, it became synonymous with an emerging global vision, promoted by organizations such as the United Nations and UNESCO, that championed the unification and equalization of the human race and rejected racist evolutionary theories.[158] Although an enlightened and tolerant view, MoMA's universalizing humanism obscured the agency of the pre-modern, traditional cultures that produced the tribal art they displayed. By the 1980s, institutionalized attitudes, such as MoMA's, that recognized the equal rights of all peoples but marginalized differences associated with race, gender, geography, and culture were being routinely criticized. These criticisms focused on an array of questionable practices and affiliations within museums worldwide, including colonialism, appropriation, white privilege, and the underrepresentation of female artists and artists of color in its exhibitions. This resonates with what Barat and English identified as the most ambitious strain of MoMA's thinking on modernism, "the notion that an expressible universal humanity, one that functionally nullifies matters of difference, does so, somehow, without hurting people."[159] Endeavors such as Rubin's 1984 treatment of African, Oceanic, and Amerindian tribal art, regardless of intent, can be viewed as

[157] Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 124.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Barat and English, "Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit," 73.

representative of what Barat and English call "regrettable framing placed around a commendable impulse."[160]

Attempts at correction, prompted in part by a growing public advocacy for social justice and inclusivity, were initiated by Glen Lowry in the late 1990s. Between 1999 and 2001, Lowry sought to actualize a reimagined modernism for the twenty-first century with the museum's *MoMA2000* project. The *MoMA2000* installations were aesthetic experiments designed to replace the linear story of modern art with an eclectic mix of thematically based exhibitions populated by a refreshing diversity of artists, styles, mediums, and periods. MoMA's promotion of inclusive, atemporal collection reconfigurations paralleled museological endeavors occurring at other museums, such as The Brooklyn Museum, New York, the Denver Art Museum, Colorado, the High Museum of Art, Georgia, and the Tate Modern, London. [161] However, backlash against overly ambitious "hodgepodge" approaches to deconstructing the well-established chronology of modern art caused these museums to uniformly rethink their strategy and revert, at least for a time, to more traditional and less controversial installations. In the 2010's, museums of modern and contemporary art turned their attention once again to the expansion of the modernist narrative. MoMA's 2019 permanent collection reinstallation mixed media, organized galleries thematically, and interspersed newly acquired, lesser known modern and contemporary art with the modern masters, but this time within a linear progression presented in three distinct temporal segments. Despite criticism suggesting instances of tokenistic pairings and shallow art historical context, a close

[160] Ibid.

[161] Reilly, "MoMA's Revisionism Is Piecemeal and Problem-Filled."

examination of the 2019 reinstallation reveals its cumulative success in softening the rigid linear perception of modern art and joining modern and contemporary artistic sensibilities. As a result, MoMA gained credibility as a more globally conscious and socially inclusive institution.

The exhibitions and the reception of the exhibitions discussed in this thesis are important to understanding MoMA's evolving cultural agenda within the broader context of its position as a symbol of institutional orthodoxy. MoMA's early interest in indigenous non-European art served both to establish the legitimacy of modern art as a movement, by centering it within a broader absolute aesthetic, and to strengthen MoMA's position as one of most influential modern art museums in the world. Conversely, in the 1980s the "Primitivism" exhibition provoked widespread criticism that sought to discredit the brand of universal humanism that had defined the museum for decades. This signaled the end of Rubin's reign and the beginning of Lowry's. Lowry's experimentation with the "sponge" model led him from the deconstruction of MoMA's linear spine in 2000 to its partial reconstruction in 2019. More importantly, it led to important interventions within MoMA's concentration of great Euro-American canonical modern masterworks.

As the definitive authority on modern art for almost a century, MoMA has for generations worked to meticulously craft a coherent historical narrative predicated on an evolving story of aesthetic influence. Simultaneously, as arguably one of the most public of cultural institutions, MoMA has reflected the greater cultural paradigms and shifts in social values representative of modern times and brought international attention to the growing discourse surrounding the diversification of the field of art history. MoMA's status as a well-known and globally respected institution lends prestige and power to such

a discussion, allowing it to bring the conversation forward to a much larger audience than could be achieved by smaller, community-based museums or culturally specific museums acting independently. Although other museums may more directly and forcefully engage with non-European art—such as the Africa Center, New York, founded in 1984, whose mission is to provide "a gateway for engagement with contemporary Africa"—MoMA has an exponentially greater capacity to influence the public at large.[162] At MoMA, viewers who flock to see the modern masterworks of Picasso, Matisse and Rothko are now also exposed to artists like Faith Ringgold, Tarsila do Amaral, Alma Woodsey Thomas, and Vasudeo S. Gaitonde—artists they may never have otherwise encountered.

Critics have, and rightly so in certain regards, viewed MoMA's evolving aesthetic judgments in the twenty-first century as aligning with a broader body of overtly performative thinking among cultural institutions seeking to reject elitism in favor of political correctness. Throughout its history, MoMA has tolerated and often embraced such criticism, using the controversy itself to engage with the public in an often transparent and instructional manner.[163] For MoMA, controversy has always been a powerful enabler of change. In 1984, the controversy surrounding Rubin's "Primitivism" exhibition was unintentional. Reflecting on the exhibition decades later, Jack Flam noted that Rubin had conceived the "exhibition in one cultural climate and in doing so helped to provoke the overt manifestation of another."[164] Unlike, Rubin, however, Lowry's attempts to open a new dialogue centered on the racially, culturally, and geographically diverse modernities that evolved over time can be considered intentional and purposeful.

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[162] "About Us," The Africa Center, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.theafricacenter.org/about/visit/.

[164] Jack Flam, "Introduction," in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art,* 17.

As much as MoMA has and will continue to be subjected to greater scrutiny than other museums, one can only wonder within a rapidly, ever-shifting social climate where this new trajectory will lead. However, the commitment formulated and codified in 1998 by Lowry to preserving MoMA's position as "a venue of debate and discovery, of enjoyment and engagement, in the next century" appears sufficient to sustain the museum into the future. [165]

[165] Lowry, "The New Museum of Modern Art Expansion," 11.

APPENDIX: FIGURES

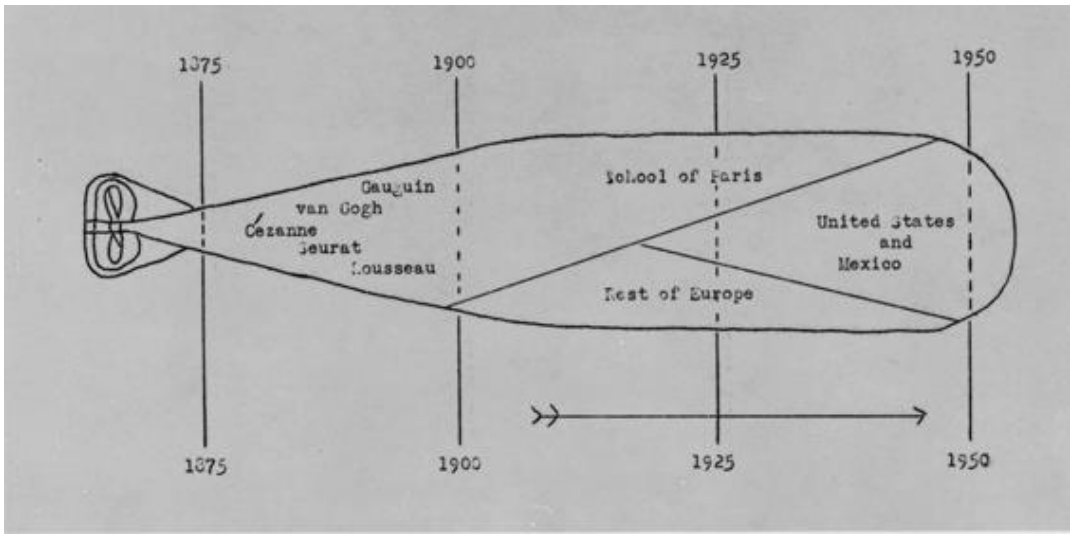

Figure 1. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.'s "torpedo" diagram of the ideal permanent collection of The Museum of Modern Art, 1941.

Figure 2. Installation view of the exhibition "African Negro Art." March 18, 1935–May 19, 1935. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN39.1. Photograph by Soichi Sunami.

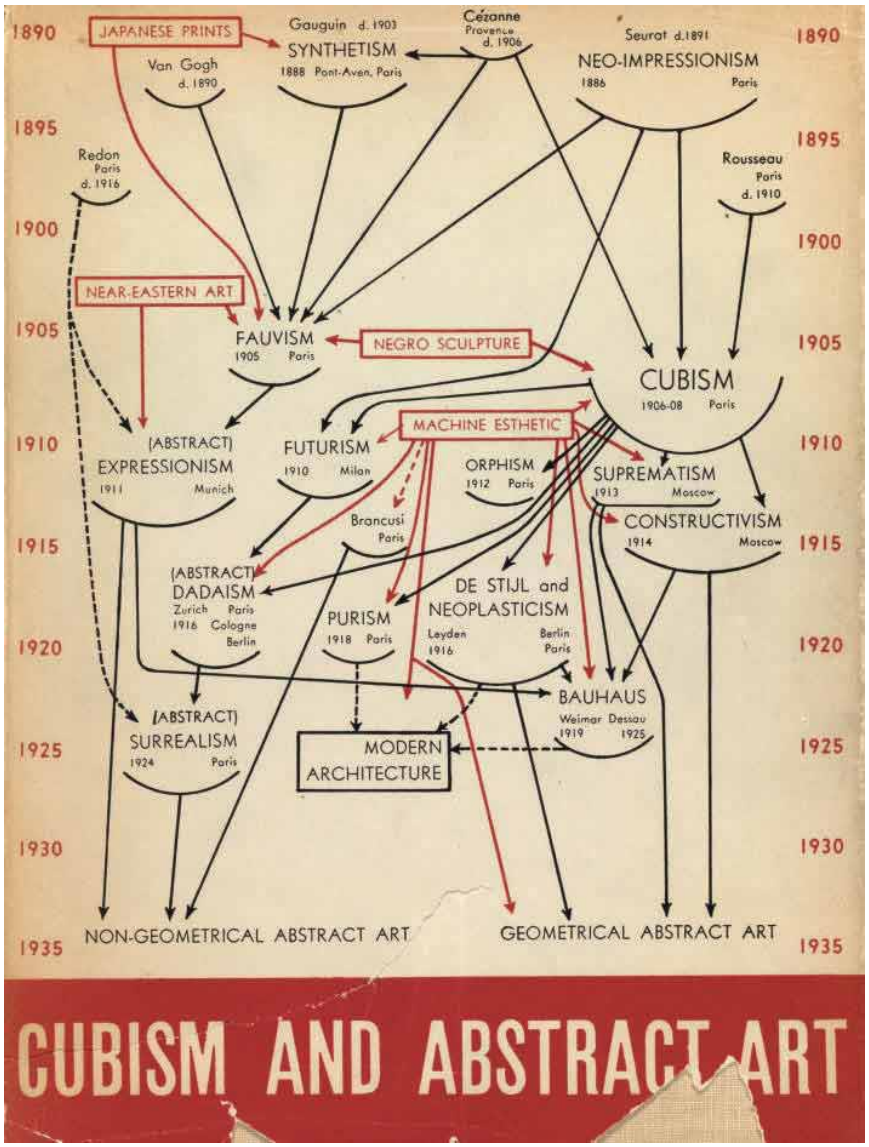

Figure 3: Chart developed by Alfred H. Barr that appeared on the dust jacket of the catalogue for *Cubism and Abstract Art*. Alfred H. Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936).

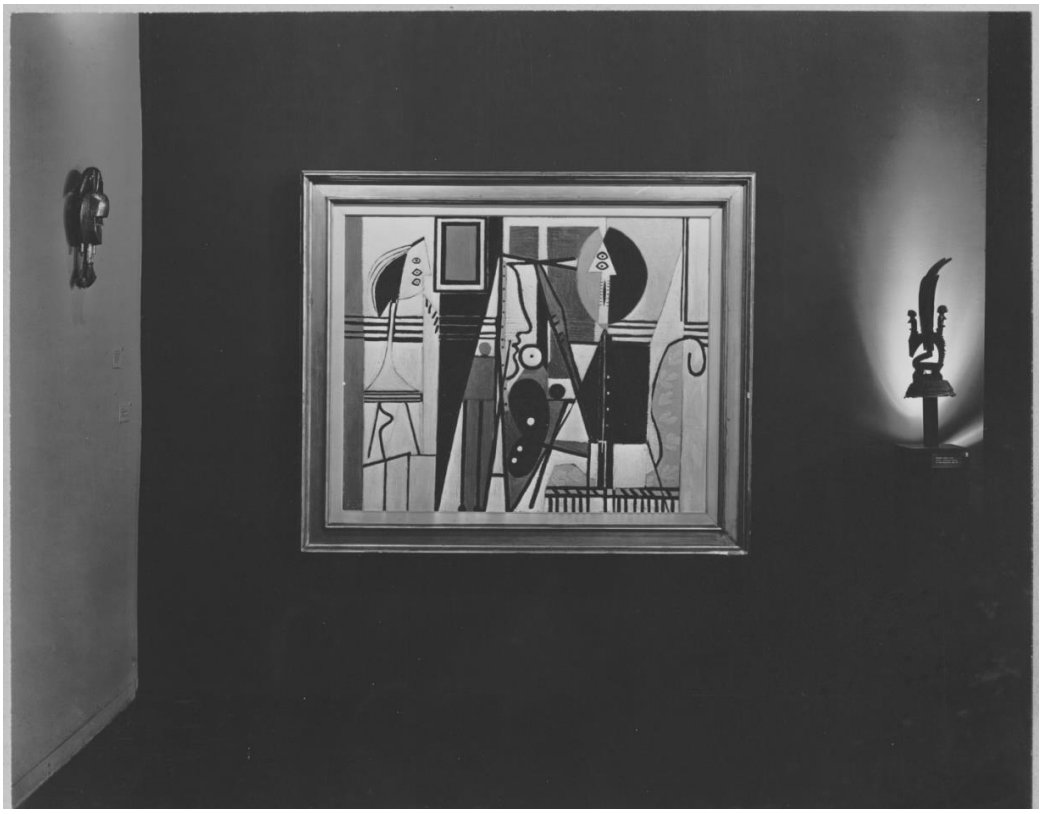

Figure 4: Installation view of the exhibition "Timeless Aspects of Modern Art." November 16, 1948 – January 23, 1949. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN393.4. Photograph by Soichi Sunami.

Figure 5. Installation view of the exhibition "Understanding African Negro Sculpture." July 1, 1952–October 5, 1952. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN515.4. Photograph by Soichi Sunami.

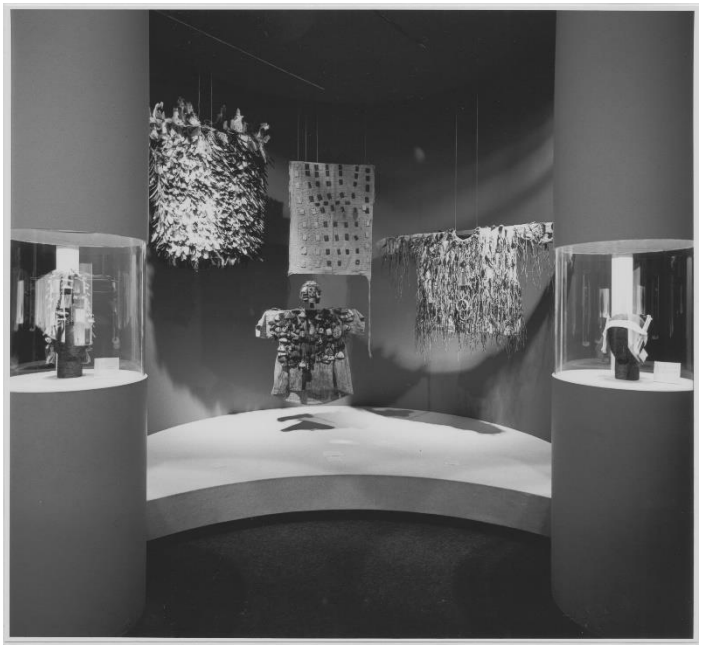

Figure 6. Installation view of the exhibition "African Textiles and Decorative Arts." October 11, 1972–January 31, 1973. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN1012c.5. Photograph by George Cserna.

Figure 7: Installation view of the exhibition "Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective." May 16, 1980-September 30, 1980. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN1290.1. Photograph by Mali Olatunji.

Figure 8: Installation view of the exhibition "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern." September 19, 1984 – January 15, 1985. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN1382.4. Photograph by Katherine Keller.

Figure 9. Installation view of the exhibition "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern." September 19, 1984 – January 15, 1985. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN1382.8. Photograph by Katherine Keller.

Figure 10. Left: Bird-Man relief, Easter Island, painted stone, 14.125" (36 cm) high, The Trustees of the British Museum, London; Right: Max Ernst, *Inside the Sight: The Egg*, 1929, oil on canvas, 39.125" x 31.875" (100 x 81 cm), Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Figure 11. Installation view of the exhibition "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern." September 19, 1984 – January 15, 1985. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN1382.9. Photograph by Katherine Keller.

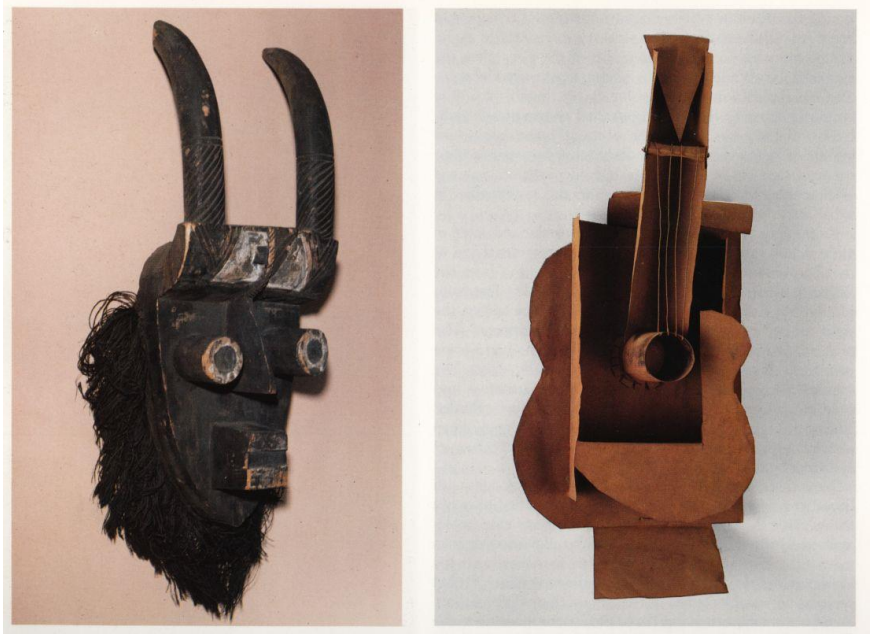

Figure 12. Left: Mask Grebo, Ivory Coast or Liberia, painted wood and fiber, 25⅛" (64 cm) high, Musée Picasso, Paris, Formerly collection Pablo Picasso; Right: Pablo Picasso, *Guitar*, 1912, sheet metal and wire, 30½" x 13¼" x 7 5/8" (77.5 x 35 x 19.3 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of the artist.

Figure 13. Installation view of the exhibition "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern." September 19, 1984 – January 15, 1985. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN1382.9. Photograph by Katherine Keller.

Figure 14. Left: Mask, Tusyan, Upper Volta, wood, fiber, and seeds, 26 3/8" (67 cm) high, Musée Barbier-Muller, Geneva; Right: Max Ernst, *Bird-Head*, 1934-35, bronze (cast 1955), 20 7/8 x 14 ¾ x 9 1/8" (53 x 37.5 x 23.2 cm), Galerie Beyler, Basel.

Figure 15: Installation view of the exhibition "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern." September 19, 1984 – January 15, 1985. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN1382.19. Photograph by Katherine Keller.

Figure 16: Installation view of the exhibition "Actors, Dancers, Bathers," in the series, "Modern Starts," 1st of 3 cycles of *MoMA2000*. October 6, 1999–February 1, 2000. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN1836F.17A. Photograph by Katherine Keller.

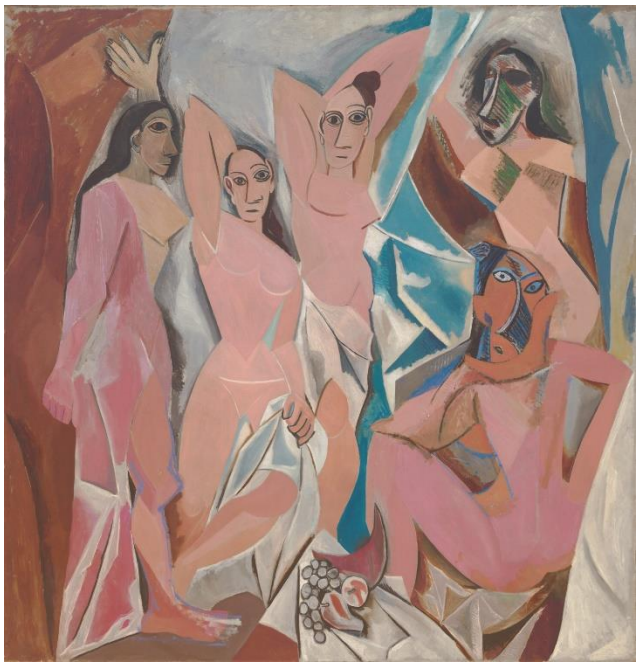

Figure 17. Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907, oil on canvas, 8' x 7' 8" (243.9 x 233.7 cm) Museum of Modern Art, New York.

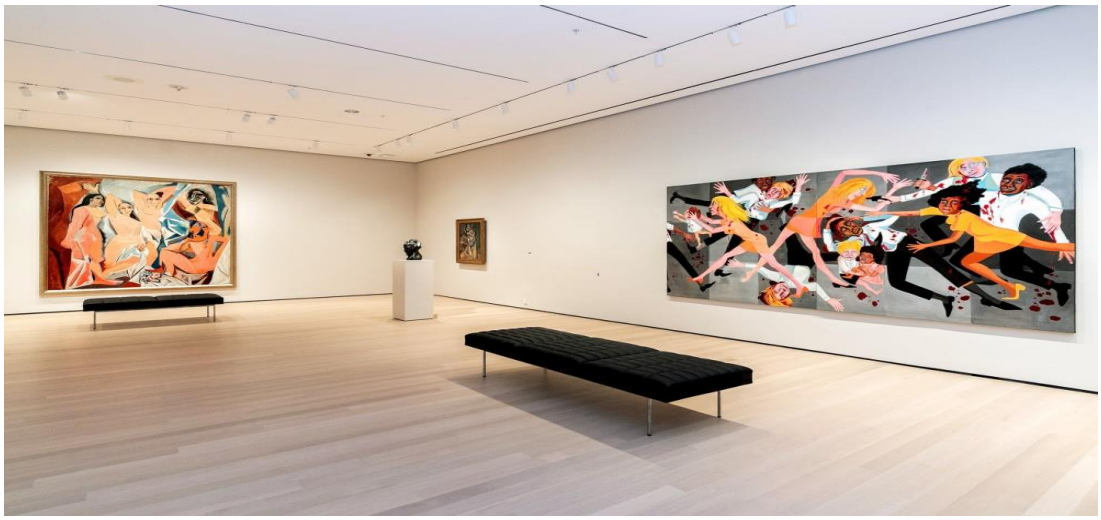

Figure 18. Installation view of the gallery "Around Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" in the exhibition "Collection 1880s-1940s," October 21, 2019–October 25, 2021. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN2418.R1.503.16. Photograph by Heidi Bohnenkamp.

Figure 19. Faith Ringgold, *American People Series #20: Die*, 1967, oil on canvas, two panels, 72 x 144" (182.9 × 365.8 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

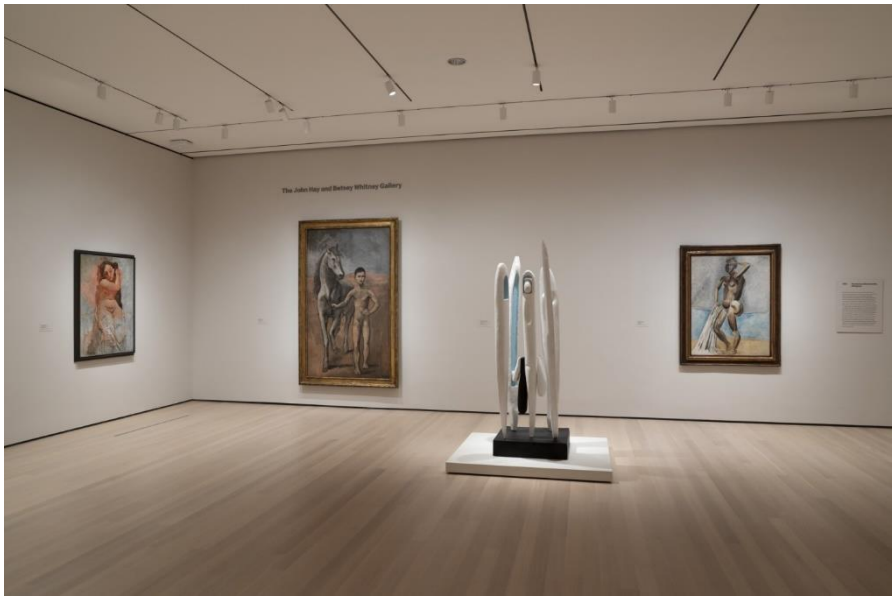

Figure 20. Installation view of the gallery "Around Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" in the exhibition "Collection 1880s-1940s," October 21, 2019–October 25, 2021. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN2418.R1.503.3. Photograph by Jonathan Muzikar.

Figure 21. Installation view of the gallery “Henri Matisse” in the exhibition “Collection 1880s-1940s,” October 21, 2019–October 25, 2021. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN2418.R1.506.11. Photograph by Jonathan Muzikar.

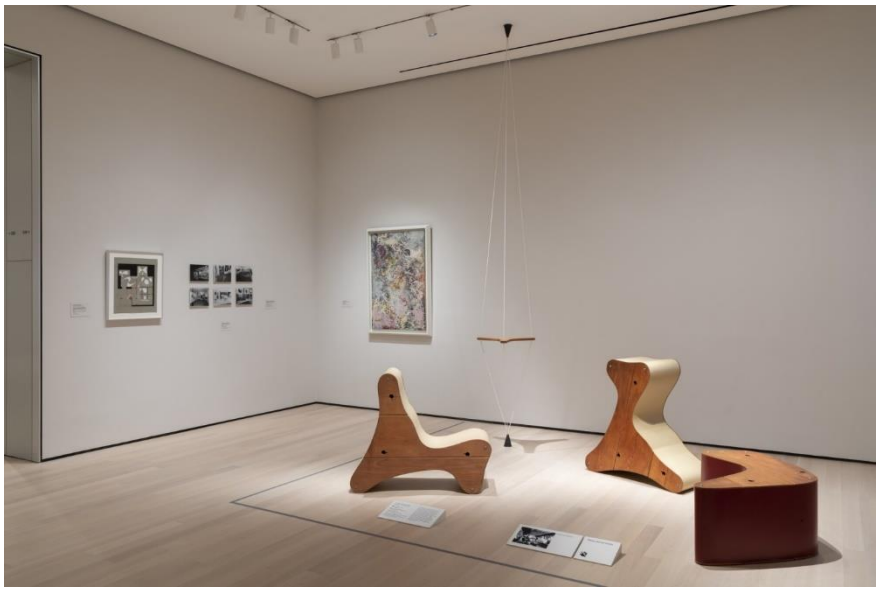

Figure 22. Installation view of the gallery “Architecture of Modern Art” in the exhibition “Collection 1880s-1940s,” October 21, 2019–October 25, 2021. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN2418.R1.519.7. Photograph by Jonathan Muzika.

Figure 23. Tarsila do Amaral, *The Moon,* 1928, oil on canvas, 43 5/16 × 43 5/16" (110 × 110 cm) The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 24. Installation view of the gallery "Planes of Color" in the exhibition "Collection 1940s-1970s," October 21, 2019–October 25, 2021. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN2419.R1.404.4. Photograph by Robert Gerhardt.

Figure 25. Installation view of the exhibition "Betye Saar: The Legends of Black Girl's Window," October 21, 2019 - January 4, 2020. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN2428.1. Photograph by Heidi Bohnenkamp.

Figure 26. Installation view of the gallery "War Within, War Without" in the exhibition "Collection 1940s-1970s," October 21, 2019–October 25, 2021. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN2419.R1.420.5. Photograph by Robert Gerhardt.

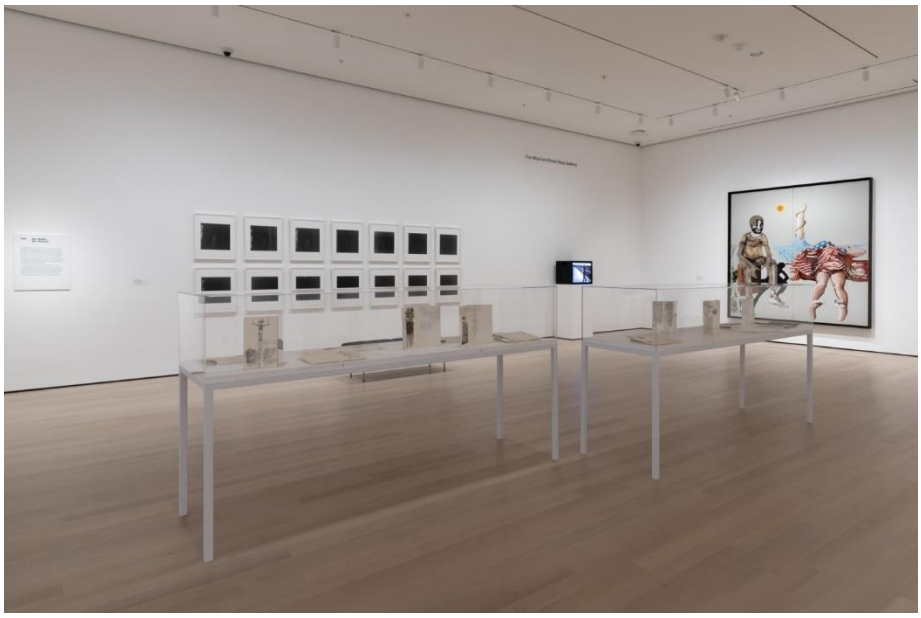

Figure 27: Installation view of the gallery "War Within, War Without" in the exhibition "Collection 1940s-1970s," October 21, 2019–October 25, 2021. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN2419.R1.420.10. Photograph by Robert Gerhardt.

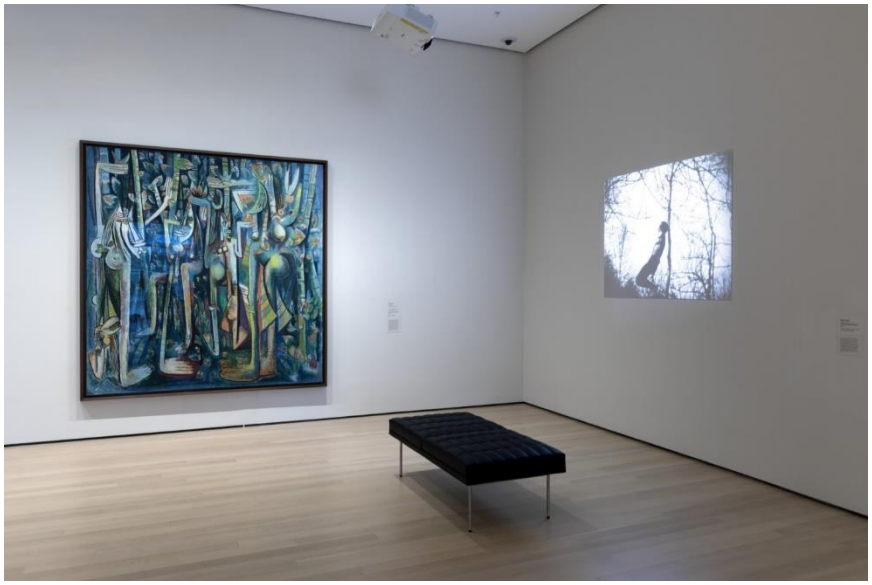

Figure 28. Installation view of the gallery "Out of War" in the exhibition "Collection 1940s-1970s," October 21, 2019–October 25, 2021. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN2419.R1.401.6. Photograph by Robert Gerhardt.

Figure 29. Angela Bassett as Lornette in Strange Days, 1995, directed by Kathryn Bigelow, featured in “It’s All in Me: Black Heroines,” Film Series, February 20 to March 5, 2020, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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