

CALIFORNIA LIVING



WELCOME TO L.A.

**LACMA and MoCA celebrate the arrival
of glittering new galleries
devoted to 20th-century art**

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Not such a bad score, really.

Yet one cannot but wonder what Isozaki might have done with LACMA's challenge. How would he have handled the site's difficulties, to achieve a mastering metaphor approaching MoCA's potent simplicities?

The mark of the rare true architectural artist is a transcendence over the challenge of program and context, a transcendence that satisfies the program and deals with the surroundings yet is not fatally deformed or defined by such realities in its reach for the personal statement that is at once widely expressive. Isozaki has managed this marvelous feat at MoCA. Pfeiffer, despite a good and honorable try, hasn't risen above his problems at LACMA. ■

Leon Whiteson is the *Herald* architecture critic.

THE OPENING EXHIBITIONS

BY HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA

When two museums open their contemporary art galleries within two weeks of each other, each wants to establish its identity quickly and clearly. Like an advertisement, they want to get their message to the people.

On November 23, LACMA will take on one of the most sensitive issues in modern art — the question of spirituality in abstract painting. "The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985" was conceived by Maurice Tuchman, senior curator of 20th-century art, and will include some 230 paintings

and works on paper, complemented by 125 related books, charts and objects. It continues through March 8, 1987.

Tuchman, who has worked on the show for five years, explains, "The theme is both scholarly and cutting-edge contemporary. We wanted to signal with our first show that our interests would be in new scholarship and new art. If successful, this theme could constitute a reevaluation of modern art history."

Tuchman has narrowly defined the word "spiritual" to mean "occult and mystical thought." A biography is provided in the catalog for every artist in the show,

documenting his study of the occult. "Unless we can prove an artist read something, saw something, talked to somebody (about spirituality), he's not in the show," says Tuchman. To maintain specific definitions, Tuchman included a glossary of terms in the catalog.

According to Tuchman, the idea for such a show was inspired by Finnish scholar Sixten Ringbom's 1970 study of Wassily Kandinsky, "The Sounding Cosmos." Ringbom has contributed an essay to the catalog, along with John Bowlit, Rose-Carol Washton Long and other scholars. (Ringbom will lecture at LACMA at noon on November 23.)

Although many of the artists in the show are well known, a large percentage are rediscovered talents like Hilma af Klint, an abstract symbolist artist whose work

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predates that of Kandinsky. "These are new artists and new ideas, not an anthology of existing information," adds Tuchman.

The exhibition, on the ground floor of the new Robert O. Anderson building, begins in 1890 with examples of Symbolism by Edvard Munch and Paul Gauguin. A gallery of illustrated mystical and occult-related books demonstrates their connection to abstract pioneers Kandinsky, Frantisek Kupka, Kasimir Malevich, Mikhail Matiushin, Mondrian and Klint.

A number of subthemes will embrace diverse artists from the modern era. For instance, the rubric "Cosmic Imagery" will include work by Georgia O'Keeffe, Jean Crotti and Matt Mullican. One dedicated to "Dualities" brings together Ferdinand Hodler, Paul Klee, Tony Smith and Bruno Ceccobelli. "Vibrations" groups Arthur Dove and Mark Tobey with Jackson Pollock and Robert Irwin. "Synaesthesia" (defined as an overlap between the senses) includes Odilon Redon, Francis Picabia and Jasper Johns. "Spiritual Geometry" incorporates Paul Serusier, Barnett Newman and Richard Pousette-Dart.

Since MoCA opened its interim facility, the Temporary Contemporary, in 1983,

their exhibition schedule has emphasized individual retrospectives over shows that dissect a particular theme. So it is not surprising that the institution should choose to mount 77 "mini-retrospectives" when they open their permanent facility on December 10.

"Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art, 1945-1986" includes over 400

works by 77 artists to chronicle the evolution of significant issues in contemporary art. It was organized by Julia Brown-Turrell, who has been MoCA's curator since its founding, along with assistant curator Kerry Brougher.

Brown-Turrell explains the concept behind "Individuals": "Being a contemporary museum, it's important to

focus on living artists. We are a museum that has looked at history, but from the vantage point of individual artists and ways of looking, ways of working, as opposed to finding an overall 'ism' and fitting artists into that idea."

In the catalog, Brown-Turrell writes that the show won't attempt to tell a comprehensive history but will emphasize the

organized. (The critics will appear at UCLA's Dickson Auditorium on December 6 at 11 a.m. for a panel discussion "On the Artist in Society," and a lecture series with other critics will alternate between UCLA and MoCA throughout the year.)

The exhibition points up MoCA's fascination for site specific work with large-scale installations commissioned

the early work of minimalist Dan Flavin.

The sculpture continues at the Temporary Contemporary with artists whose work is associated with minimalism, such as Donald Judd, and with assemblage by George Herms, Lucas Samaras, John Duff and others.

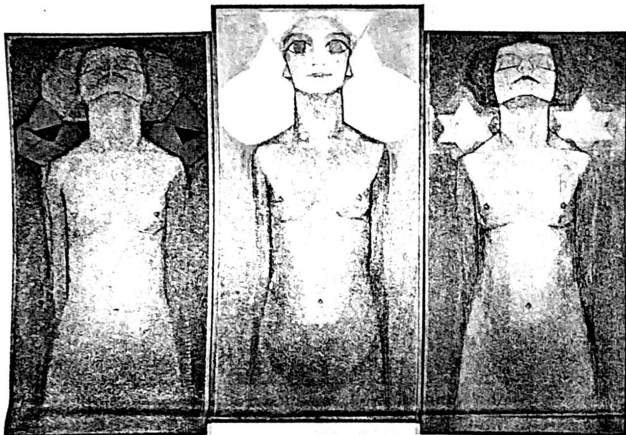
Assemblage and sculpture from the late '50s and early '60s by Robert Rauschenberg and Claes Oldenburg provide the transition to the section devoted to Pop Art, which includes work by James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein and Ed Ruscha. The theme continues with artists using language and imagery, sometimes drawn from popular culture. This includes such artists as John Baldessari and Cindy Sherman.

Another part of the show includes theatrical spaces created by Ed and Nancy Reddin Kienholz, Jannis Kounellis and others, while the concluding gallery is dedicated to myth and allegory, paintings by artists such as Charles Garabedian, Anselm Kiefer, Julian Schnabel, Susan Rothenberg and Eric Fischl. According to assistant curator Kerry Brougher, this area is meant to complement the four individual shows that will come to the adjacent galleries during the next year, shows focusing on Francisco Clemente, David Salle, Elizabeth Murray and Donald Sultan. Brougher adds, "We have attempted to pull work together that reinforces points made in the catalog."

Richard Koshalek, director of MoCA, says that the exhibition approximates an ideal permanent collection, and he hopes that during the next 13 months the general public will treat it as such and come back repeatedly to study the art.

He also hopes a few collectors will get used to not having certain works at home. "There are a number of works we'd like to have stick to our walls. If we could have 25 to 50 works, it would be a major accomplishment. We really want to build a permanent collection — as an asset to the community." ■

Hunter Drohojowska is a Los Angeles-based art critic and journalist.



contributions of individuals and suggest turning points. "This exhibition is an attempt to represent aspects of an evolution in which sculpture has moved away from its base and painting away from its frame, both physically and metaphorically," she writes.

The catalog, thoughtfully conceived and edited by Howard Singerman, includes essays by respected critics Kate Linker, Donald Kuspit, Hal Foster, Ronald J. Onorato, Germano Celant, Achille Bonito Oliva, John C. Welchman, and Tom Lawson in which they analyze salient issues of the last 40 years. Yet artists in different sections in the catalog overlap and the exhibition is not strictly

MoCA's debut exhibition chronicles modern art from 1945 to 1986. Works there include Susan Rothenberg's *Red Head*, top right, executed in 1980, and Willem de Kooning's *Pink Lady*, left, executed in 1944. LACMA is exhibiting works from modern art's entire history, from 1890 on. Works on display include Piet Mondrian's *Evolution*, c. 1910-1911, top left.

from artists Robert Irwin, Matt Mullican, Richard Serra and others. These will be housed in the Temporary Contemporary, along with reconstructed environmental works from the '60s and '70s by Southern California's seminal artists Bruce Nauman, Larry Bell and Doug Wheeler.

Otherwise, MoCA has tried to install the show in roughly chronological order with enough of each artist's work to demonstrate a progression of development. The exhibition begins in the California Plaza building and traces abstract painting, beginning in the mid-'40s with artists such as Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman, to the colorfield painting of Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis, to the more recent reductive paintings of Frank Stella, Brice Marden and Agnes Martin.

Also at California Plaza, sculpture as material and metaphor is examined in the work of Louise Bourgeois, David Smith, Louise Nevelson, Eva Hesse and Joel Shapiro. There is an additional area reserved for