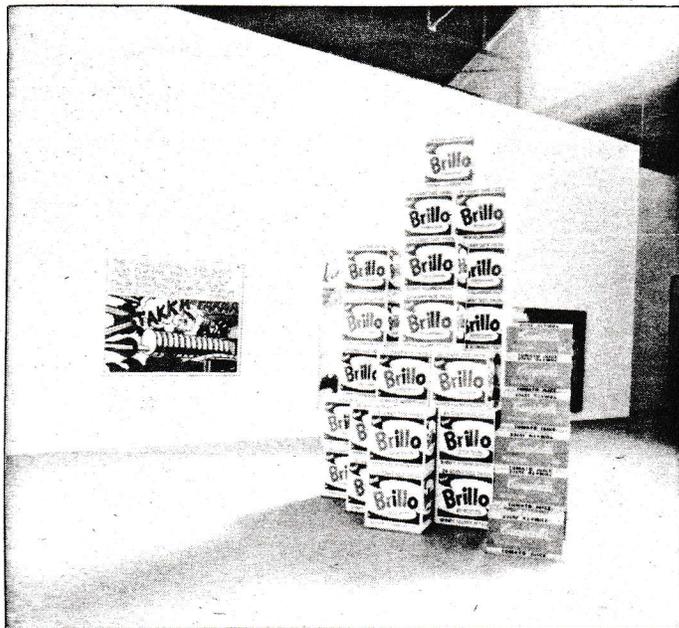
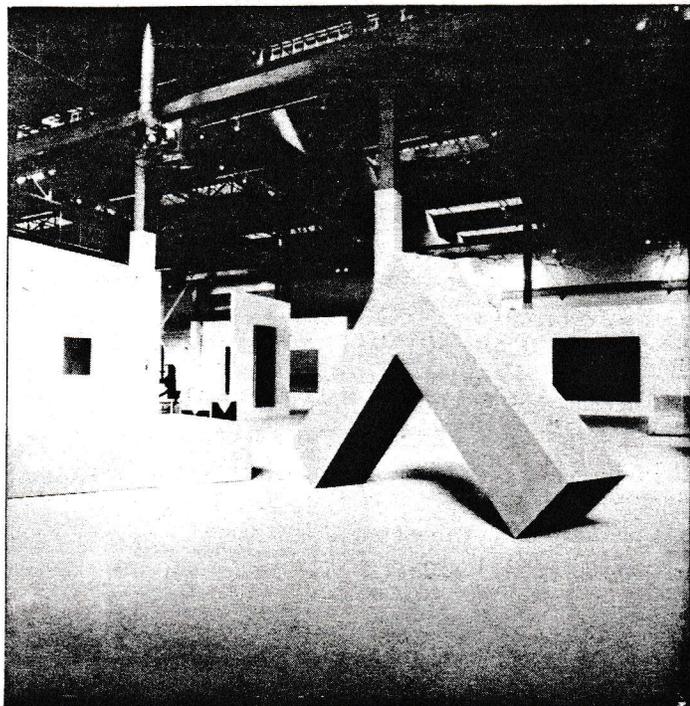


MOCA's First Show The Art Of Collecting

by Hunter Drohojowska



MOCA's first show is a diplomatic venture. Andy Warhol is there, and so is Robert Morris.

When you've got to live up to the publicity and expectations of the sort generated by L.A.'s new Museum of Contemporary Art, the choice of an inaugural exhibition is critical. People look to that first statement to define the tenor of the museum's future policies. MOCA's debut, aptly titled "The First Show," is a breathtakingly beautiful and fully diplomatic venture, with sufficient diversity to cover all the bases. There is something for everyone, including the critics. The institution has a professional aura, and has proven itself capable of bringing together some exceptional works of art, even a number of masterpieces, in its spectacular warehouse space, The Temporary Contemporary, at 154 N. Central, Little Tokyo. But "The First Show," on view through February 19, turns out to be an exhibition rather than a preview of the norm.

"The First Show" includes more than 140 paintings and sculptures selected from eight

collections of contemporary art, three from Europe and five from the United States, to comprise a rough survey of the last four decades. The show has two parallel purposes: the time frame provides a cursory overview of developments in contemporary art and indicates that MOCA will only be collecting art made since 1940. The more interesting theme rivets attention on the act of collecting art with all its obsessional dedication, as something more than the random acquisition of objects. Each of the collections reflects the personality of the owners, an emphasis that is born out in the catalogue featuring interviews with each collector. Every collector naturally leans toward a certain taste, an intellectual passion, that edits the various artistic statements into a coherent essay. The Texas collector Dominique de Menil is represented by eccentric surrealists like Matta and Joseph Cornell, and *Nouveau Realistes* Yves Klein and Jean Dubuffet. Howard and Jean Lipman, from

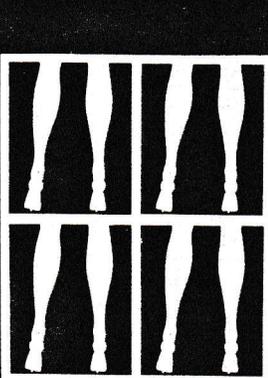
New York, have collected the American sculpture of the 1950s and 1960s, including David Smith, Louise Nevelson, and Alexander Calder. Drs. Peter and Irene Ludwig, of Germany, concentrated on Pop Art and are considered to have some of the finest such holdings in the world. From L.A., Robert Rowan collected the color field artists in the early 1960s, Jules Olitski and Morris Louis, and now has turned to young L.A. artists such as Mike Kelley. Marcia and Frederick Weisman, now divorced, were supporters of the abstract expressionists such as Willem de Kooning and Clifford Still. Taft and Rita Schreiber bought the European abstract artists of the late 1940s and 1950s, Alberto Giacometti and Joan Miro. Charles and Doris Saatchi, from London, began collecting more recently, and the focus is on the neo-expressionists such as Julian Schnabel and his influences, such as the Germans Georg Baselitz and Anselm Kiefer. The Italian Count Giuseppe and Giovanna Panza di Biumo are highly regarded for their collection of conceptual and minimal artists, Joseph Kosuth and Donald Judd, and especially for the phenomenological artists of Southern

California, such as Robert Irwin and Larry Bell.

Combining these collections inevitably reveals the movements of recent art history, and the show is installed chronologically to support the survey concept. In my opinion this is the most effective design. Each collection's unique flavor is diluted, mixed together as in a casserole. This error is apparent whenever, by chance, several works from the same collection appear together. There is power in one room of Ludwig's Pop Art. Generally, one is frustrated, constantly referring to the wall tags and trying to memorize which collector owns what work of art.

"The First Show" was conceived by Pontus Hulten, MOCA's founding director, and organized by senior curator Julia Brown. (Hulten resigned last spring and Richard Koshalek is the current director.) It has similarities to an exhibition Hulten arranged in 1963 for the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. "The Museum of Our

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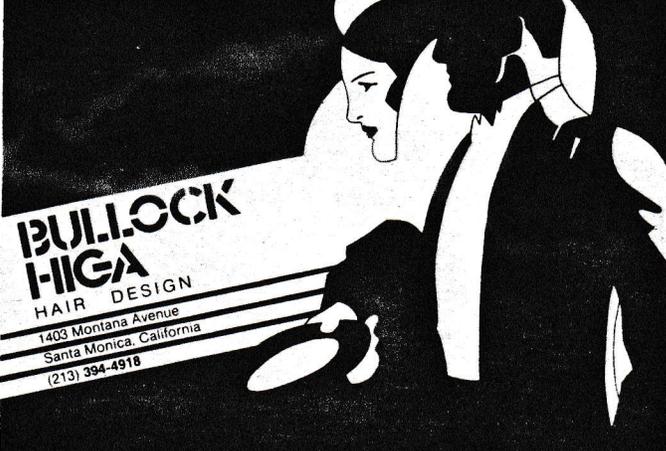


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