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Museum of Modern American Art Shown at the Modern

Intensely Modern Painters Rub Elbows With Conservatives

Display Affords an Admirable Field fo Comparisons on Art Fashions of Today and Other Years.

By HENRY McBRIDE.

The present exhibition of works by living American artists in the Museum of Modern Art, like the former exhibition by "Nineteen Americans," can be regarded as a sort of a dress rehearsal for the role the museum is ultimately to play. Many of the men who contribute to the entertainment have been set up, as it were, like tenpins, to be knocked over. The public is practically invited to take a crack at them. But this is quite as it should be. Artists who hope to survive the "cold, impersonal" judgment of posterity should harden themselves early in life to disinterestedness.

The choice of artists has been partly courageous, partly conventional. It is about fifty-fifty in that respect. The courage is displayed in choosing certain new people who have never before been featured here in official exhibitions—such as John Kane of Pittsburgh, Benjamin Kopman, Mark Tobey and Merton Clivette. Convention is indicated by the inclusion of a number of men who formed their characters thirty years ago or more and are still publishing the theories of a former period. Having linked these unlikely comrades together in a public exhibiton in New York, the committee of the museum will now retire for a moment, I fancy, with ears bent to the ground to hear what it may hear.

The chances are it will hear an earful. The new museum generally manages to excite criticism. That, I take it, is a sign that it is a live institution. Mr. Macbeth will be obliged to get out a new booklet at once, with illustrations by Mr. Kopman and Mr. Tobey.

Purely Speculative.

Young artists who have not been included in the show will have a sudden revulsion against modernity, and the older men who did get in, such as Mr. Hassam, Mr. Dougherty and Mr. Glackens, will think—but I vow I don't know what they'll think. Being confirmed exhibitors of long standing, probably they'll consider it as "just one more exhibition." But some of their academic friends will certainly agree that they have compromised themselves seriously.

Under the circumstances first place in the news record goes to the new men. A word or two about each may not come amiss. Benjamin Kopman, much the best of the quartet, was discovered through the offices of this newspaper. He wrote a letter of protest about something or other to The Sun years ago and the letter gained for him the interest of the Weyhe Gallery, and later that of the Neumann Gallery. He has a weird imagination and knows how to handle a paint brush. In fact, he is quite a painter. His pictures quite hold their own in the present company.

John Kane of Pittsburgh is a houde painter who paints only in his hour of ease. His uninstructed but genuinely poetic pictures found their way into the Pittsburgh Interna tional, where they were singled ou for praise by the New York critics Pittsburgh was somewhat surprise at this, but finally has become re signed to having a "man of feeling" in its midst. Mark Tobey is anothe man with a fierce imagination. "Un trammeled" is the word for it. He will bear watching. The most inter esting thing about Mr. Clivette i that he was born on the steamshi Enterprise in the Indian Ocean in 1848. He is rounding out a length career with paintings that are not picturesque as his career.

Doubts About That "Man."

But there are other things of terest in the show. Gaston Lacha sends a group of carvings, includi the long-awaited "Man," who, it w thought, might turn out to be t mate for Mr. Lachaise's already f mous "Woman." The "Woman" also in the show, looking prou handsome and supremely indiffere to the fact that she is not even me tioned in Lorado Taft's new boo about American sculpture. Whethe the "Man" is to take rank with her or not cannot be told just yet, fo the figure is still in plaster, and is so large that it cannot be properly shown in the present gallery. A present it seems both apostolic and fleshly, as though it were the apo theosis of Elmer Gantry, but in an other setting, and with differen lights, it might be anything else.

"The Wrestler," by Dudley Tal cott, is a gigantic figure in alumi num. The shiny metal helps to sug gest the thought of a robot. There is also the suggestion that the sculp tor too self-consciously insisted on being "strong." However, it is con ceivable that this figure, out o doors, and with a helpful back ground, might achieve an effect.

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