

**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ACQUIRES LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY'S
EM 1 (TELEPHONE PICTURE), REUNITING IN ITS COLLECTION THREE
MASTERWORKS OF MODERN ART**

New York, NY, November 15, 2016— The Museum of Modern Art has acquired László Moholy-Nagy's *EM 1 (Telephone Picture)*, 1923, a masterwork from the artist's Bauhaus period. It will join *EM 2* and *EM 3*, which were given to the Museum by Philip Johnson in 1971 in honor of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, the artist's widow. The Museum purchased *EM 1*, which had been held in a private collection since 1987, at the Sotheby's Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale on November 14, 2016. Mathias Rastorfer of the Galerie Gmurzynska in Switzerland bid on behalf of the Museum.

MoMA Director Glenn D. Lowry said, "We have long aspired to add the third of Moholy-Nagy's Telephone Pictures to the two we have owned for many years. This acquisition allows us to present Moholy-Nagy's radical experiment in its full glory, and to tell the complete story of this remarkable moment in the history of the avant-garde."

In 1923, Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), a Hungarian artist who had recently joined the Bauhaus faculty, produced an unprecedented type of painting: "enamel pictures that were manufactured by machine." Moholy-Nagy ordered three paintings from a local Weimar sign factory, using Ostwald color charts and a scaled grid to provide instructions (the titles *EM 1*, *EM 2*, and *EM 3* refer to the word *Emaille*, German for enamel). The three completed paintings were delivered to Moholy-Nagy at the Bauhaus; he exhibited them at Der Sturm gallery in Berlin the following year. Sharing an identical composition, they were scaled in progressive sizes of small (*EM 3*), medium (*EM 2*), and large (*EM 1*). Moholy-Nagy's later statement that he ordered them by telephone presented the radical notion of the modern artist as a producer of ideas, not necessarily a maker of objects by hand.

"Like Marcel Duchamp's invention of the readymade sculpture, Moholy-Nagy's *Telephone Pictures* changed the history of what one could call 'art,'" said Ann Temkin, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture. "The prescience and daring of the *Telephone Pictures* are all the more strikingly vivid nearly a century after they were made."

In 2012 all three of the panels were included in MoMA-Nagy's critically heralded exhibition *Inventing Abstraction: 1910-1925*. All three works were also on view in the exhibition, *Moholy-Nagy: Future Present* at the Guggenheim Museum in summer 2016.

EM 1 (Telephone Picture) joins 135 other works by Moholy-Nagy in MoMA's collection, including paintings, sculptures, drawings, illustrated books, prints, graphic designs, photographs, and a film.

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