

**THE RENÉ D'HARNONCOURT PAPERS ILLUMINATE KEY PERIOD OF MIDCENTURY HISTORY AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

**NEW YORK, September 12, 2003** — The Museum of Modern Art has completed the archiving of the René d'Harnoncourt Papers and opened the entire collection for research, Museum Director Glenn D. Lowry announced today. The papers comprise correspondence and archival materials authored by d'Harnoncourt, who served as MoMA's Director from 1949 to 1968. Covering a vital period in MoMA's history, the papers document the former Director's internal and external communications during an era when the Museum underwent great physical transformation. D'Harnoncourt inaugurated the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden in 1953, and oversaw the Museum's first major building expansion with the 1964 opening of the East Wing, Garden Wing and renovated lobby, all designed by Philip Johnson. The bulk of the collection dates from 1944, just after d'Harnoncourt's appointment to the Museum, and ends in 1968, with his retirement.

The archival project, which encompassed the arrangement, inventory, and preservation of the papers, as well as the creation of a comprehensive directory in the form of a bound index, was a collaboration between The Museum of Modern Art and the Rockefeller Archive Center. The René d'Harnoncourt Papers will be housed and available to researchers at the Rockefeller Archive Center during The Museum of Modern Art's current expansion project. After MoMA's building reopens on 53 Street in late 2004/early 2005, the collection will be returned to the Museum Archives facilities in the new Education and Research Center. Funding for the project was provided by the Rona Roob Fund for Museum Archives.

D'Harnoncourt's correspondence reveals how he implemented his directorial vision, by broadening the scope of exhibitions and programs, exploring a wide range of aesthetic interests and upholding scholarship of the highest level. The documents also convey his sophisticated yet personal style of interacting with artists, staff, trustees and colleagues from around the world. In addition to serving as Museum Director, d'Harnoncourt organized numerous exhibitions documented in drawings, floor plans, and wall captions that can be found in the papers. These include *Arts of the South Seas* (1946), *Modern Art in Your Life* (1949), and *Ancient Arts of the Andes* (1954), culminating with his last exhibition, the influential *Sculpture of Picasso* (1967).

"With the d'Harnoncourt Papers, the Museum Archives at The Museum of Modern Art — with the help of the Rockefeller Archive Center — has assembled an outstanding resource for scholars and students of museum history. This collection will provide a better understanding of the issues MoMA faced at midcentury, as well as an important record of the accomplishments of René d'Harnoncourt," states Mr. Lowry.

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René d'Harnoncourt was born in Vienna, Austria in 1901, where he became interested in art from an early age. In 1925 d'Harnoncourt moved to Mexico, where a collector hired him to sell antique furniture. His work brought him into contact with American collectors, among them Frederick Davis, who owned a shop selling Mexican art objects. D'Harnoncourt organized an exhibition for Davis's shop of the work of three of the most prominent Mexican artists of the time: Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and Rufino Tamayo. D'Harnoncourt made further contacts through his friendship with Dwight Morrow, the American Ambassador to Mexico, and in 1929 was asked by the Mexican Ministry of Education to assemble 48 collections of Mexican folk art — one for each of the United States — to be sent to schools in America.

In 1930 d'Harnoncourt organized *Mexican Arts*, an exhibition that toured 14 venues in the United States and brought d'Harnoncourt's curatorial prowess to the attention of museum officials in this country. After immigrating to the U.S. in 1933 and working for the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the U.S. Department of the Interior in the late 1930s, he was asked in 1941 to guest curate the exhibition *Indian Art of the United States*, shown at MoMA. In 1943 Nelson Rockefeller, then Coordinator of the Office of Inter-American Affairs, asked d'Harnoncourt to join the government department to organize exchange exhibitions throughout South America. Later that year, at Rockefeller's instigation, d'Harnoncourt was asked to join the staff of The Museum of Modern Art as Vice-President of Foreign Affairs and Director of Manual Industry. His appointment to MoMA reflected the Museum's interest in Latin American art. In 1948 he was named Director of Curatorial Departments and in 1949 was appointed Director of the Museum. His passion for international exchange led d'Harnoncourt to create the International Council in 1953, an affiliate group that remains active today. René d'Harnoncourt retired from the Museum in June 1968, and died when struck by a car later that year.

Researchers or students may contact Museum Archives at The Museum of Modern Art at 212/708-9617 for further information about the d'Harnoncourt Papers. To schedule an appointment to see the materials, call the Rockefeller Archive Center at 914/631-4505.

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**Press Contact:** [pressoffice@moma.org](mailto:pressoffice@moma.org)