501 Motion and Illumination

The French poet Charles Baudelaire expressed the sentiments of many when in 1863 he called for artists to abandon historical subjects in favor of the present moment. “Modernity,” he wrote, “is the transitory, the fleeting, the contingent.”

Newly invented lens-based technologies like photography and cinema were perfectly suited to capture the spontaneous pleasures of everyday life. As a product of the Industrial Revolution, photography was modern from the start. Much like locomotion and electricity, it introduced a new way of seeing the world—a form of vision mediated by machines. Some artists, awed by the speed of railway travel, depicted the blurred landscapes they witnessed from train windows. Others favored domestic interiors, using newly available gas and electric lamps to flood their scenes with light. Still others wandered the city, photographing and filming its dazzling illumination as dusk fell.

502 Lillie P. Bliss

When The Museum of Modern Art first opened in 1929, with only a handful of artworks in its collection, it was more of an idea than a full-fledged institution. The museum's aspiration to establish a more robust collection was fulfilled when, in 1931, it received a bequest of more than 150 works from Lillie P. Bliss, one of three intrepid women who founded the museum. A staunch advocate for modern art, Bliss had sought out the work of mostly late-nineteenth-century French artists whose radical approaches to color, space, and form were controversial at the time.

The bequest became the core of the MoMA collection. The generous terms of the gift allowed works from her bequest to be sold to fund new acquisitions. That exceptional foresight facilitated the purchase of many artworks now considered synonymous with MoMA, including Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night*.

503 Picasso, Rousseau, and the Paris Avant-Garde

"Long live Rousseau!" These words appeared on a banner decorating a party organized by Pablo Picasso in Paris in 1908. The guest of honor, Henri Rousseau, was a self-taught painter who, despite having been dismissed by the Paris art world, had captured the imagination of Picasso and his milieu. They saw in Rousseau's work an authentic voice far more vital than what was taught in art academies.

United by a shared dissatisfaction with Western tradition, these artists looked elsewhere for inspiration for their own innovations. Rousseau conjured imaginary jungle scenes from sources such as popular magazines and visits to Paris's botanical garden and zoo. Picasso and his peers looked directly to African sculpture and masks, which many of them avidly collected. This new awareness of African culture, imported into France via colonial channels, was pivotal in the formation of Cubism.

516 Pepón Osorio's *Badge of Honor*

Badge of Honor emerged from Osorio's engagement with a predominantly working-class neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey, where it was first shown in a storefront. Osorio was concerned to learn that for many young people there, having a parent in jail was considered a badge of honor.

Taking a closer look at the impact of mass incarceration on one family, Osorio filmed a conversation between an incarcerated father at New Jersey's Northern State Prison and his teenage son at their family home. He traveled back and forth between them over several weeks, sharing footage with each to capture a distanced yet intimate exchange. Here, projections of the father and son face opposite sides of a wall separating two dramatically opposed spaces: a prison cell and a teenager's bedroom. At one point, notwithstanding the notion of the "badge of honor," the son declares, "Dad, I would be willing to give up anything for you to just be home with us."

519 Bauhaus and Beyond

"A reunion between creative arts and the industrial world" is how architect Walter Gropius described the Bauhaus, the school of art and design he founded in 1919 in Weimar, Germany (it later moved to Dessau and then to Berlin). Conceived as a laboratory for radical artistic experimentation, the Bauhaus featured a curriculum that combined instruction in "form problems," including space, color, and composition, with practical courses in the applied arts, such as metalwork, cabinetmaking, weaving, and typography. Bauhaus design objects typically deployed simple, harmoniously balanced geometries in the service of functional efficiency for the modern home and office.

The Bauhaus closed in 1933 under pressure from the Nazi Party, but its legacy continued abroad, as teachers and students, fleeing political persecution, found employment elsewhere in Europe and in North and South America. This gallery presents works produced at the school during the fourteen years it was open alongside works by former Bauhauslers created in the following decades.