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“Strengthen the bonds”: The United States on Display in 1938 France

CAROLINE M. RILEY

There is no doubt but that [Three Centuries of American Art] ... will help to strengthen the bonds which unite the two democracies [of France and the United States]. And this is more useful in the times in which we are living, when we are one against the other, so that we should feel the threads, in every land, in every human endeavor—and art is no less important than any other field for this.¹

The art critic from Belgium’s francophile *Gazette de Charleroi* proclaimed to the newspaper’s readership the importance of American art in developing a shared democratic culture between the United States and western Europe during the mounting political instabilities of the 1930s. As such, the critic confirms how at least some Europeans understood the significance of *Three Centuries of American Art* (hereafter referred to as *Three Centuries*) as an international phenomenon on view in Paris but also impacting other nations. Displayed from May to July 1938, the exhibition curated by New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), consisted of over five hundred artworks in twenty rooms at the famed Musée du Jeu de Paume located in the Tuileries Gardens near the Louvre Museum.² The exhibition served as the most comprehensive examination of American art to date. Indeed, with works spanning from the mid-sixteenth century to 1938, and hundreds of architectural models, drawings, films, paintings, photographs, prints, sculptures, and vernacular artworks, this was the most inclusive display of American art history intended for European audiences of its day.³ Versions of the exhibition traveled or were scheduled to travel to Amsterdam, Brussels, The Hague, London, Rome, and four American cities before World War II plunged Europe into chaos.

Conceived in New York City and presented in Paris, *Three Centuries of American Art* involved a broad network of American and European curators, artists, private collectors, gallery owners, government agencies, ambassadors and heads of state, publicity staff, publishers, printers, art critics, and journalists. MoMA curators' decision to create an international exhibition was motivated by their desire to grow in influence as a museum. Established in 1929, its curators sought to legitimize their version of modernism to Europeans and to generate a history of American art that would center on contemporary art and focus on a greater range of media. After an initial discussion in 1930, beginning in 1932, seven MoMA curators—John Abbott, director Alfred Barr Jr., Iris Barry, president A. Conger Goodyear, John McAndrew, Dorothy Miller, and Beaumont Newhall—supported by registrar Dorothy Dudley and executive director Thomas Mabry Jr., worked for years on the show.⁴ The over five hundred articles written by art critics underscored the exhibition's significance around the world from Australia to Mexico to Germany. This included a book-length response by Edward Alden Jewell, the art critic for *The New York Times*, entitled *Have We An American Art?*⁵ These 1930s scholars actively sought a non-European “usable past” from which to develop their own theories. American art served that purpose. Simultaneously, French critics extolled aspects of American art as a visual vocabulary to articulate a form of cultural recovery after the devastation of World War I, a recovery based on fleeing the industrialization that had destroyed a generation for the perceived safety of a pre-industrial past. For the French, this preindustrial past included American vernacular art.⁶

The 1938 exhibition was just one facet of MoMA curators' broader campaign to invent and reinforce the many versions of modernism at play in the museum as cultural forces that located art at their centers. What made *Three Centuries* singular was the curators' invention of a contemporary art history grounded in a larger American art survey. As Wanda Corn makes clear in *The Great American Thing*, one of the consequences of modernity was a “booster mentality for things American” in the 1920s that, in the quagmire of the Great Depression a decade later, became a type of concentrated nationalism.⁷ *Three Centuries*, in the curators' ambitions and claims, was the first comprehensive history of American art that fulfilled this overarching shift in American values.

The purpose of this article is to document the curatorial and diplomatic ambitions of *Three Centuries*, to highlight the types of displays and histories it generated, and to acknowledge its part in MoMA's Department of Circulating Exhibitions in order to argue for its continued relevance as an early codification of an American art history that was both international and contemporary in its scope. Drawing on art historian Jules Prown's work, this article argues, first, that one of MoMA's curatorial strategies was to conflate artists' biographies in order to create an international image of “American art.” Thus, their history of art joined US and French artistic and cultural accounts via people, not institutions. This strategy is not an atypical method for internationalizing American art during the early twentieth

century. Second, and more significantly, the exhibition, through this conflation, extended American influence by emphasizing points of exchange with France and by displaying the exhibition in Paris.⁸ In other words, by bridging American artists with their perceived European counterpoints, MoMA curators not only strengthened American art, but also made American art more accessible to Europeans. More precisely, curators in the exhibition and associated 200-page catalogue created an American art history that sought to link the artistic legacies of both countries through the artists' families and their transatlantic travels. For example, Alfred Barr connected the paintings of Raphaele Peale on view in the exhibition to French culture by arguing that the French painter Jacques-Louis David enjoyed the paintings of Rembrandt Peale (Raphaelle's brother). This point of confluence was not, and is not, a common means of understanding the artistic practices of the Peale family and was purely an attempt by Barr to bind the two nations.⁹ Most of these points of linkage were not so heavy-handed and instead subtly shifted the history of American art into an origin story for a nationalistic and simultaneously international American modernism. Thereby, the curators' genealogy of American art linked colonial works through their makers to 1930s modernist artists. For example, in the Architecture section, McAndrew located the origin of American architectural modernism in a photograph of the San Francisco de Asis Mission Church at Ranchos de Taos. It was a building begun in the 1770s at a time when the contested landscape of now northern New Mexico was controlled by both the Spanish and the Comanche Nation. By the early 1930s, the building had become an artistic pilgrimage. Georgia O'Keeffe in her paintings and Paul Strand in his photographs reinterpreted the exterior of the apse as an early manifestation of modernist ideals. In *Three Centuries*, McAndrew documented his history of architecture by bookending the church with its thick adobe walls and an architectural model of MoMA's new 1939 building with its sleek steel and glass façade. In this juxtaposition on the floors of Jeu de Paume, he asserted that the 1939 museum fully articulated the impulses first expressed at the church. The question for the twenty-first century reader is how this modernism drawing from the Chicago skyscrapers and Le Corbusier could simultaneously be formed from the dirt, straw, and water of present-day New Mexico? Indeed, that both the church and new museum building were so flexible in definition demonstrates the elasticity of American art history as a discourse in the 1930s.

From its conception to its installation, the exhibition embodied evolving definitions of modernism as MoMA curators refined their interpretations over the eight-year time period. For their first international exhibition, MoMA curators, extended the definition of American art beyond painting, sculpture, and architecture to incorporate folk and popular art, film, drawings, photography, and prints. Goodyear and Barr grouped together 187 paintings and 42 sculptures alongside 64 prints or drawings into one section. Covering seven rooms on both floors of the Jeu de Paume, this section was the largest. Paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings

had historically been designated as a fine art category and would have reaffirmed many of the assumptions the French press had made about American art from viewing exhibitions of specific painters or sculptors or by visiting the Exposition Universelle in 1937.¹⁰ On the first floor, in three rooms, under the heading of “Art Populaire,” Barr displayed approximately forty-three artworks composed of paintings, textiles, wooden sculptures, ceramics, and metalwork.¹¹

McAndrew, as the new curator of architecture and industrial arts in MoMA’s Architecture Department, worked under the department’s chairman, Philip L. Goodwin. McAndrew had been given full authority over the departmental installation in Paris. Given the inability to transport American buildings to Paris, he represented the medium in four rooms with a film, twelve architectural models, as well as approximately one hundred photographs and ten graphs. McAndrew commissioned the film, *The Evolution of the Skyscraper*, specifically for the Paris exhibition. This film continued to be employed by MoMA’s Department of Circulating Exhibitions during the 1940s. The architectural models included G. Lloyd Barnum’s model of Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Frederick C. Robie House*, thus reinforcing Wright’s artistic worth as first promoted in Europe in the *Wasmuth Portfolio*. The inclusion of Wright reminded viewers of modernism’s complicated definition, with MoMA labeling him a modernist and the architect publically rebuffing this categorization.

Formed in 1935, the Film Department, headed by its director John Abbott and curator Iris Barry, illustrated the medium with film stills, graphs, costumes, set designs, and three surveys of American films (also commissioned for Paris and employed afterwards by MoMA), as well as film cels of Walt Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Skeleton Dance*, and *Steamboat Willie*. The varied display transmitted not just the final films but film production to the interested French public.

It would be another year before the Photography Department officially existed. Nevertheless, Beaumont Newhall, as MoMA librarian and later the first curator of photography, was already well respected in the field. In a single room, Newhall had organized sixty photographs and one woodcut to narrate the history of American photography. A year after his famed *Photography: 1839–1937* exhibition, Newhall chose for the MoMA Paris installation both period ambrotypes, daguerreotypes, gelatin silver prints, platinum prints, and stereoviews as well as later reprints from original negatives. Similar to his 1937 installation, he included many of the same works by well-known artists such as Southworth and Hawes, Walker Evans, Lewis Hine (see *Figure 1*), and Imogen Cunningham alongside works by relatively unknown photographers.



Figure 1. Lewis Hine, *Child at Work in Cotton Mill, South Carolina (Sadie Pfeiffer, Spinner in Cotton Mill, North Carolina)* 1910, printed 1920s or 1930s.

First discussing the exhibition in 1930, curators from MoMA and Musée de Luxembourg (the French governmental department charged with overseeing foreign artworks) did not originally intend *Three Centuries of American Art* to serve as a representation of the United States in France.¹² Instead, MoMA hoped that through its display, American art, and by extension the museum, would be praised by art critics working in Paris—judged by Goodyear as the artistic center of the world. Originally, the French curators hoped to be able to apply their own intellectual categories with little input from the lesser-known MoMA curators. Yet, the American staff refused this arrangement and the French administrators acquiesced in 1936. As the 1930s progressed, US officials saw the potential of the exhibition to represent American democratic values. Thus as the United States and France changed, so did *Three Centuries* after MoMA was unable to acquire nearly ninety loans due, at least in part, to mounting geo-political concerns. The substituted artworks, in turn, produced a different canonical history of American art, both on display as well as when disseminated in the exhibition catalogue and in press accounts.

Stated differently, the political environment changed what was displayed and the resulting exhibition altered how Europeans understood the United States as a democratic nation. For example, once it became clear that MoMA would not receive

the Boston Athenaeum's *George Washington* by Gilbert Stuart, Goodyear still needed an image to represent the concept of the "founding fathers" in the early democracy. Thus, he wrote to Louise Burchfield at the Cleveland Museum of Art, seeking Joseph Wright's *George Washington* (see Figure 2). In his letter, Goodyear acknowledged, "We are indeed glad to have [the painting] for the exhibition as it fills a vacancy that troubles [emphasis added]." ¹³ The painting of Washington in profile presented the President in a manner similar to that stamped on coinage and consequently lacked the inquisitiveness of the Stuart canvas. This decision is unsurprising given Wright's role at the US Mint. That Stuart's version appeared on the one dollar bills in the 1880s further conflates these images.

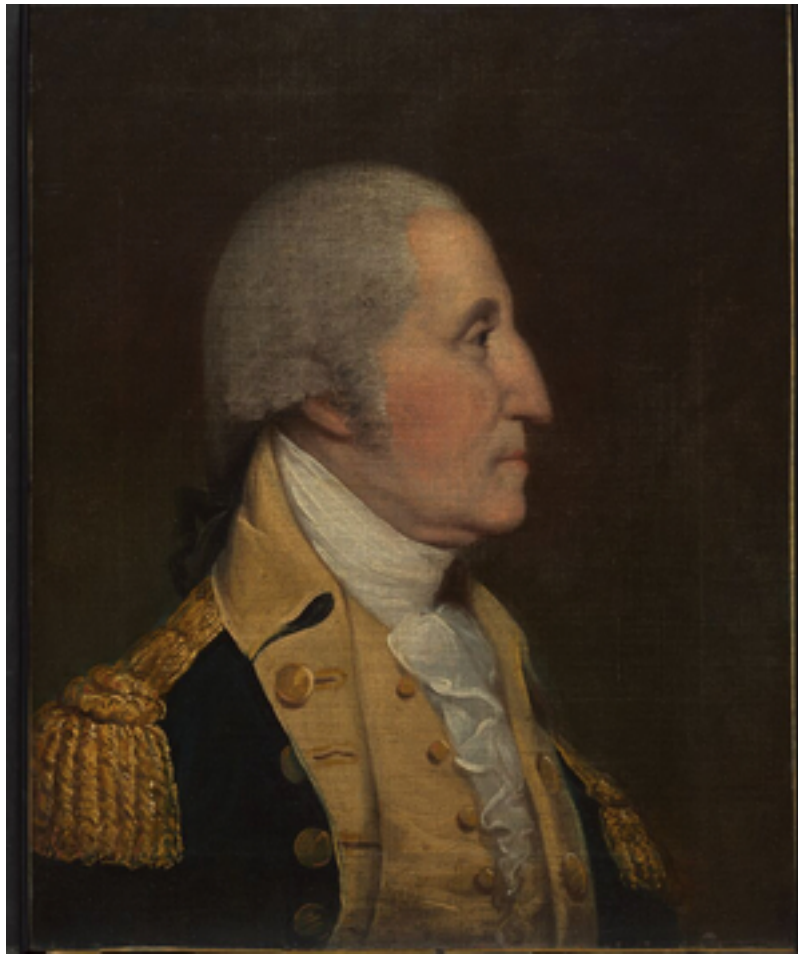


Figure 2. *George Washington*, previously attributed to Joseph Wright (c. 1790s).

The question remains: Why did the French government want to produce an exhibition with MoMA instead of the new Whitney Museum of American Art, the well-established Metropolitan Museum of Art, or any number of other institutions in New York City, let alone elsewhere in the country? In part the answer seems to be one of personalities. It appears from correspondence that French curators knew

Goodyear from his travels to Paris and trusted his artistic taste.¹⁴ Further, the French curators hoped to get loans from institutions and private collectors through the intercession of an American museum. They then would impose their own rhetoric regarding American art's significance for an international audience. These reasons might explain, in part, why the French chose MoMA, a new museum, but does not wholly answer the question. That MoMA was able to invert the relationship during its 1936 negotiations with the Musée du Luxembourg and promote its own mission speaks to the ambitions of the MoMA staff and the French government's need for the exhibition.

Scholars have written about the US government's motivations behind its installations, both of objects and people, at the Parisian Expositions universelles of 1878, 1889, 1900, and, to a lesser extent 1937, often framing them within cultural history or anthropology. But these installations displayed only recently completed artworks that heralded the United States' current stature rather than creating a comprehensive history of American art.¹⁵ More specifically, this article responds to scholarship by art historians Jennifer Marshall, Anne Staniszewski and Kristina Wilson and others who have explored the power of MoMA exhibitions during its early history in promoting new conceptions of art and culture.¹⁶ Nevertheless, this article speaks to issues that are specific to *Three Centuries*—namely, the political ambitions of this interwar exhibition and its role in both broadening and solidifying an American art history.

Changing Political Climate in Europe

The exhibition was made all the more meaningful given the mounting instability in Europe during the 1930s—a Europe in which German fascism grew powerful after Adolf Hitler became Chancellor and the Nazi Party assumed control of the nation in 1933. It should be remembered that American and French curators and diplomats were not alone in recognizing the potential for exhibitions as propaganda. Certainly, German government officials, headed by Josef Goebbels, hoped that propagandistic exhibitions, such as the 1937 *Der Ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew)*, would reorient German citizens' understanding of one another in order to minimize the humanity of the Jewish people. Simultaneous with MoMA curators' planning, installation, and disassembly of *Three Centuries*, the Nazi Party continued its tireless campaign to spread its ideology across Europe as other nations attempted to grapple with the repercussions of this growing unrest. In March 1938, at the same time that MoMA curators were attempting to secure loans, German troops invaded and annexed Austria. In July, while the exhibition was on view in Paris, 350 miles southeast in Evian, France, delegates from thirty-two countries met to decide how to handle the mounting international refugee crisis. In September 1938, as Americans unpacked crates and reinstalled artworks in New York City, four nations—France, Germany,

Great Britain, and Italy—signed the Munich Agreement ceding the ethnically diverse Sudetenland, without Czechoslovakia’s consent, to Germany.¹⁷

Originally scheduled to be placed on view in 1934, then again in 1937 as part of the World’s Fair, before its eventual installation in 1938, the exhibition continued to change aesthetically and iconographically due to new artworks as it increased in both scale and scope. It should be remembered how slowly France—the embattled nation—recovered from the devastation of the Great War as citizens rebuilt infrastructure, struggled with the continued volatility of public finances, and grew increasingly alarmed over Germany’s rearmament.¹⁸ France’s political instability only increased during the 1930s. The decade began with the assassination of President Paul Doumer in 1931. In the chaos, five governments rose and fell in 1933 alone, and in total during the twenty-year interwar period, nearly forty governments controlled France (815). Liberals, socialists, and communists formed the Popular Front that enabled the French Socialists, led by Léon Blum, to gain control of the Parliamentary Chamber in 1936 (816). It was under Blum’s liberal administration, and likely because of its diplomatic objectives, that French and American curators renewed their discussions concerning *Three Centuries of American Art*.

French and American government officials saw the possible diplomatic role of art displays. MoMA curators and French museum officials found an ally in Blum, who recognized that exhibitions could function as a tool for national reconciliation.¹⁹ He was not the only official to see art’s potential for tempering violence. American ambassador to France William Bullitt, a close friend of President Franklin Roosevelt, explicitly envisioned *Three Centuries* as a tool of diplomacy. In a letter to Goodyear dated July 22, 1937, he remarked, “I am intensely interested in such an exhibition and hope that you will feel that you can count on this embassy for any help you may need.”²⁰ Yet, Bullitt was unsure how to achieve these diplomatic aims. Consequently, it was not until after World War II that the US Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), was more successful in deploying American art as a diplomatic tool. Thus, *Three Centuries* served as a testing ground for the US government and is only now acknowledged as a precursor to exhibitions during the 1940s and 50s that touted diplomatic aims in Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

Despite all the worthy ambitions of his administration, Blum fell from power in 1938 to be replaced by the Radical Socialists, who, under Édouard Daladier’s leadership, formed a more conservative ministry.²¹ This change affected MoMA as the museum struggled to get a more conservative French government to support the exhibition. At the preview for *Three Centuries of American Art*, Ambassador Bullitt represented the United States on the dais before the international audience. Addressing Bullitt in his speech, Jean Zay, the ministre de l’éducation nationale, stated that “your works have travelled across the ocean, but [previously] you have carefully guarded your artistic treasures as if, through an improvised extension of the formula enunciated by [President James] Monroe, American art had to remain in America.”²² Though misappropriating the significance of the Monroe Doctrine as an

isolationist policy, Zay, and by extension the French government, understood the political opportunity for diplomatic alliance by having American art on display as France struggled with mounting unrest. Americans could have heard the radio broadcast at 6 a.m. EST in their homes as they started their Fridays on May 27. The remarks of the French and US authorities were broadcast to all of North and South America.²³

Conceiving of the Exhibition

Three Centuries reaffirms the undetermined nature of “choice” in the normative practice of constructing an American art history. A review of the interwar displays of American art in Paris, and even the exhibitions that never materialized, makes clear that *Three Centuries* could not have happened without the earlier negotiations in Paris. During the interwar period, six exhibitions influenced *Three Centuries*.²⁴ The *Exposition d’artistes de l’École Américaine* of 1919, for instance, displayed more conservative pieces chosen by an international committee. Consequently, the Musée du Luxembourg curators and administrators that MoMA staff first encountered in 1930 still struggled to understand how American art fit into the pre-existing French narratives of foreign cultures. The 1934 version of *Three Centuries* would have been slightly more in line with what the Musée du Luxembourg was expecting. In 1920, American art dealer Mary Sterner reinstalled at least a portion of the little-known Junior Arts Patron of the US *Exhibition of American Art* at the *Chambre syndicale de la curiosité et des beaux arts* in Paris.²⁵ The reduction of 387 works on view in New York City to 309 in Paris stems from the decision by Sterner and the American committee to include only contemporary artists in their Paris show. It had some of the same artists and patrons as *Three Centuries*. For example, both shows highlighted the work of George Bellows and included the boxing painting *Stag at Sharkey’s* (1909). Though the exhibition never reached fruition and there is limited archival material, architect Julius Clarence Levi and curator Homer Saint-Gaudens attempted to display an exhibition of American achievement vaguely titled *Exposition Artistic American* in 1924. Despite never opening, the exhibition is still worthy of comparison because Paul Léon, who worked as the director of Musée du Luxembourg, recognized the diplomatic implications for the show and saw the same potential in *Three Centuries* a decade later.²⁶ A fourth exhibition, the 1931 *International Colonial Exposition* in Paris, provided the Americans with the opportunity to display their colonial reach to an international audience. Furthermore, it afforded US diplomats with the opportunity to redeem their country in the eyes of their French counterparts after failing to host a pavilion at the 1925 Paris Exposition universelle. In 1932, in an extraordinary act of self-motivated diplomacy, the French authorities conducted talks with both MoMA and the collector and critic Maud Dale for alternative visions of an American art exhibition. The French negotiations with Dale fell through because lending museums questioned her authority to create an exhibition. A sixth display, the 1937 US Pavilion,

is the most artistically and politically significant display to juxtapose with *Three Centuries* because it was on view the year before and it received the support of the US and French governments.²⁷ It was only within a brief window during the late 1930s that French officials were receptive to a completely different kind of display of American art. In part their openness stemmed from what they had seen, or had hoped to see, in the previous American art exhibitions.

In a press release about *Three Centuries of American Art*, MoMA's Goodyear summarized the ambitions of the relatively new museum in its first international show, concluding:

It has never been our intention to direct one-way traffic through the museum, merely showing this country what is happening abroad in art. We feel it fully as important to send a stream of American art in the opposite direction, to show other nations what American artists are achieving.²⁸

In a private letter to Goodyear, Georges Huisman, the directeur des Beaux-arts, who was charged with representing French governmental interests, responded to MoMA's aspirations, "I am satisfied that this *fine showing of art will serve to strengthen the ties of strong friendship which unite our two countries* [author's italics] and I am very happy to be charged with giving you the assurance of our entire collaboration."²⁹

Three Centuries was not the first exhibition of American art to be shown in France. Yet, its size, with hundreds of artworks, and its comprehensive nature, both in media and chronology, did confirm its potential for changing how Americans and Europeans understood the history of American art. In his letter to potential donors, Goodyear expressed his hopes for the display by proclaiming, "This will be by far the most important exhibition of American art that has ever been held abroad."³⁰ The American press reiterated Goodyear's beliefs as well as summarizing Americans' anxiety over how European critics would interpret American art. For example, a critic at the *Chicago Journal of Commerce* complained, "It will be to the credit of our country to show only the best examples of the best artists. Other nations should know that we too can accomplish things in art."³¹ This self-consciousness regarding American art was not a new phenomenon after decades of mixed reviews regarding American production at International World's Fairs, especially the Expositions universelles de Paris of 1889 and 1900.³² Returning to the Chicago journalist's quote makes clear that Americans felt anxiety about the international responses to the exhibition and hoped that the vetting process—"only the best examples of the best artists"—would enable a canonical history of American art to emerge and to be displayed.

MoMA's loose association with the US government in organizing the exhibition was perhaps a result of the close relationship between MoMA and Holger

Cahill, the national director of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project (FAP). Indeed, Cahill had been interim director of MoMA in 1932 when curators developed the exhibition after Goodyear's initial negotiations with French officials in 1930.³³ Under Cahill's direction, Goodyear traveled to Paris in 1932 to nurture relationships with governmental and curatorial contacts. Even after leaving MoMA, Cahill continued to serve as an advisor to Barr, Goodyear, and his own spouse, Dorothy Miller, fielding questions relating to paintings, prints, and folk and popular art as well as assisting MoMA staff in locating artworks. However, in the decision to lend, MoMA and FAP had competing interests. MoMA wanted to have FAP listed as a lender, thereby maintaining a cordial relationship with this important government agency and continuing to benefit from Cahill's expertise. For their part, FAP leadership wanted to have as many artworks on view as possible to promote the success of their program and further their own definition of contemporary American art.³⁴ This relationship was well maintained and Cahill was pleased with the result. At the end of the exhibition, he wrote to Goodyear that "I want to number myself with those who think *the Paris exhibition is one of the best things that has happened to American art in a decade* [author's italics]"³⁵

For laypersons MoMA's decision to display the whole exhibition only at the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris—and not at its own museum in New York—might have seemed an unusual move. Yet, this decision is unsurprising because MoMA was in the midst of erecting a new museum at its current location. Nevertheless, it must have been frustrating to staff, who had devoted so much time to its conception and development. Equally important when choosing the French capital, Paris, was MoMA staff's understanding that the city was, as Goodyear concluded, "the center of European art," and French curators undoubtedly reveled in this affirmation.³⁶ Though the international public would not have known it, this exhibition would see the end of Parisian dominance as the art world recentered around New York City after World War II. In many ways, it was one of the French public's last opportunities to be the judge and jury over the merits of American art.

Recreating the United States through the Organization and Display of American Art

The objects the curators chose to encapsulate their departments prove central to supporting two premises about artworks on display: first, that art is fundamentally performative in nature, and second, that a single object is obligated to represent a medium and/or an artistic style. As such, the artwork changed meaning as curators emphasized aspects of it when they grouped and arranged objects in support of pre-existing artistic or historical narratives. An unidentified photographer documented *Three Centuries* as it was being finalized in the rooms at the Musée du Jeu de Paume. The eighty-five photographs in the MoMA archive detail the curators' decision to organize the exhibition by materials. On the ground floor, the curators installed the architecture and film sections as well as housing the seventeenth- and eighteenth-

century painting and sculpture and the folk and popular art. After climbing the grand stairs to the second floor, visitors would have encountered photography as well as nineteenth-century and contemporary painting, sculpture, drawing, and prints. The chronological organization of the exhibition created a teleological view of American art in which contemporary art developed from the previous centuries. Thus, MoMA's American art history had its origins in the mid-sixteenth century—before the country had even been founded.



Figure 3. Entry installation photograph, *Three Centuries of American Art* (1938). Unknown photographer.

The museum's entry proved to a locus point to acknowledge the complex history that they set out in the museum with representative examples of all five categories. Their intent was self-evident—upon entering the Musée du Jeu de Paume, visitors would have immediately understood that this exhibition was unlike any other they had seen. Text near the cornice of each wall labeled the divisions. Goodyear and Barr selected a copy of Charles Willson Peale's *George Washington at Princeton* and three of Jean-Antoine Houdon's sculptures—of Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson—that were not included in the exhibition catalogue and were loaned from French collections (see Figure 3). Doorways on either side of *George Washington at Princeton* led to different sections of the exhibition. If the viewer passed through the doorway on the right, he or she entered

the “historical section” represented by the label “Peinture 1670–1860.” If the viewer passed through the doorway on the left, he or she entered the folk and popular art section represented by the wooden figurehead of Henry Clay. Thus, the history of American art had alternative origins bound to the nation’s relationship with Europe in the “historical section” or alternatively a nativist tradition with vernacular art. In the entry, *Snowy Owl* by John James Audubon denoted the prints on view throughout the museum. The curators represented the whole of American architecture by juxtaposing an aerial photograph of New York City’s Central Park with a wooden model of the 1683 Parson Capen House. The curators represented cinema with a film still from the Babylonian scene in D. W. Griffith’s 1916 epic silent film *Intolerance*, meant to showcase the grand potential of film. Photography was likely represented on the fourth wall, but was not documented by the unknown MoMA photographer. Through the display of American art in the entry, the vision of the United States that visitors encountered was that of a nation built from revolution and from human will, a nation comprised of a wealth of natural resources, and a nation that was both essentially American and global since its inception through European colonization. From this entry room, visitors were guided by one large, three-foot arrow and ten smaller wooden arrows through the exhibition.³⁷ Some doors were closed to increase wall space and prompt the visitor along a prescribed path. MoMA chose to limit text explaining the artwork for visitors with the expectation that the artworks could succinctly relay their meanings to visitors. Curators provided both English and French texts and the American films had French subtitles.³⁸

The choice of background, whether dark paint, white paint, or plywood (either varnished or untreated), denoted presumed values, thereby helping to unify distinct artworks into chronological groups. The builders at the Musée du Jeu de Paume installed temporary walls painted in dark hues for the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century “historical” art section. To the viewer, the dark color connoted an aged appearance and reinforced the perception of a somber historic interior. The color choice was typical of more established museums such as the Louvre or the installations at the World’s Fairs, including the 1889 and 1900 Expositions universelles de Paris. MoMA’s curators chose white paint for the nineteenth-century painting, sculpture, and drawing section as well as the photography, film, and folk and popular art sections. The stark white was a common choice for MoMA, a museum that wished to emphasize the artwork and remove the swags, gallery hangs, and rich colors of turn-of-the-century museum displays. Consequently, the white paint likely suggested to the viewer that the artwork had entered the MoMA canon.³⁹ In the contemporary art section, MoMA curators requested that the temporary walls be made of a highly grained wood, with large knots, that suggested something experimental was in play—a work in progress, something not quite canonized. The choice recognizes the slow process of inclusion to vet artworks worthy of MoMA’s white walls.

In the rooms of the Musée du Jeu de Paume, artworks shown together became an artistic group—a linear narrative—through intellectual categories conceived by MoMA’s curators. For example, Edmondson’s *Mary and Martha* (see Figure 4 5), with prominent chisel marks of two sisters holding prayer books, ceases to be a display of process that connoted a biblical story when placed beside the portrait *Child with Dog*, the joyful genre scene captured in *The Quilting Party*—both by unknown painters—and Joseph Pickett’s *Coryell’s Ferry in 1776* (see Figure 5), which depicted a revolutionary battle scene. Now, just as Barr had hoped, the viewer joined the two young girls Mary and Martha with *Child* at a quilting party, with *Coryell’s* setting the stage for the festivities to form a definition of rural American culture as inviting. This was in stark contrast to the perceived brutal frontier environment of the United States’ western edge during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This re-envisioning of the social experience during the early national period incorporates four artworks, crosses three centuries, and traverses the mid-Atlantic to achieve its meaning.



Figure 4. William Edmondson’s *Mary and Martha* (c. 1930-1938).



Figure 5. Joseph Pickett's *Coryell's Ferry in 1776* (1914-1918).

Patrons and Lenders

Behind the seemingly static display of objects in Paris, people organized, installed, and promoted the exhibition. *Three Centuries* was unusual in that the head of every curatorial department crafted the history of his or her field instead of a single department generating a comprehensive history and overseeing the whole installation. The complementary installations and exhibition essays permitted a more nuanced understanding and, at times, an inconsistent narrative of American art to emerge.

The exhibition's Patrons and Committee of Honor members supported the exhibition through their contacts and their political and cultural influence. MoMA and the Musée de Luxembourg charged the three patrons—Jean Zay, French minister of national education; US ambassador William Bullitt; and René Doyne de Saint-Quentin, ambassador of France in the United States—with ensuring the success of the exhibition.⁴⁰ That two members were ambassadors and the third responsible for overseeing French education confirms both the diplomatic implications of the exhibition and its importance to the US and French governments. Though not given

the title of patron, the forty members of the Honor Committee served as a significant means for American and French curators to extend the influence of the exhibition. Members included well-placed French administrators such as Georges Huisman, who worked directly under Zay as the directeur général des Beaux-Arts; David David-Weill, who had one of the most artistically significant collections in France and served as the president du Conseil des musées nationaux; and Jacques Jaujard, sous-directeur des Musées nationaux et l'École du Louvre, who worked directly under fellow Honor Committee member Henri Verne.⁴¹ Also on the committee were artists, such as painter Walter Gay; collectors, including the politically influential Nelson Rockefeller (whose guidance was felt at MoMA); and representatives of important Franco-American organizations such as l'Association de la presse franco-américaine de Paris and the Comité France-Amérique (including its Section de Propaganda).⁴² Further, Governor General Ollivier, president du Conseil d'administration de la compagnie generale transatlantique, eased the transportation of the nearly ninety crates of American art from the United States to France and facilitated the distribution of posters to promote the exhibition. Finally, the committee included both the president and curator of the Musée de la coopération franco-américain du Château de Blérancourt, a museum that had been founded by Anna Morgan in 1919 to celebrate the relationship between France and the United States and actively promoted its transnational mission through public events.⁴³

The seventy-plus private patrons, thirty galleries, and forty organizations that lent to the exhibition included the American Folk Art Gallery (owned by Holger Cahill and Edith Halpert), Downtown Gallery (owned by Halpert), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, la Société française de photographie, and individuals such as Abby Rockefeller. The latter in particular held an important role in supporting the exhibition by interceding with French officials on behalf of MoMA, by lending to the exhibition, and by financially assisting MoMA when the curators required more money to transport and install the exhibition. Art critics continued to position the Rockefellers, sometimes misidentifying the family's role, in the narrative of the exhibition. For example, the May 27, 1940 issue of *Time* cited Nelson Rockefeller as the “chief angel, genial, [and] glamorless (sic)” backer of *Three Centuries*.⁴⁴ The exhibition also included objects already in the collections of MoMA, the WPA's FAP, the Musée du Luxembourg, and the Louvre.⁴⁵ These loans confirm MoMA's decision to emphasize the diversity of sources from both sides of the Atlantic as a means to showcase the network of entities supporting both the new modern museum and its first international exhibition.

As the exhibition planning proceeded, American and French ambassadors and public officials began to support the exhibition in 1937 by using their political contacts to draw politically or culturally influential visitors—such as the French prime minister—who could extend the significance of the exhibition. Further, the French government invited ambassadors from nearly thirty Asian, European, and South American countries to a preview hosted by the French ambassador to the United

States and the American ambassador to France in May 1938.⁴⁶ As it moved from development to installation to the preview opening, *Three Centuries* took shape as a collaborative endeavor influenced by a multitude of people representing different organizations.

Politicization of Later MoMA Exhibitions

Three Centuries of American Art should be read as a precursor to the globally politicized and well-documented exhibitions of MoMA's later years, such as *Road to Victory* (1942), *The New American Painting* (1958), the 1950s *Family of Man*, and *50 Ans d'art aux États-Unis* (1955)—the last of which served as a remarkable bookend to the ambitions of *Three Centuries*, with both having been displayed in Paris.⁴⁷ It should also be understood in the broader context of art as a diplomatic tool between the wars instead of being viewed purely as a post-1945 phenomenon. In that sense, this article builds on scholarship first initiated by Eva Cockcroft and Serge Guilbaut when they examined the CIA's implementation of abstract expressionism in the 1950s.⁴⁸ Unlike the American art exhibitions organized by the State Department in 1946 and later by the CIA, *Three Centuries*, as the first interaction between the museum and the US government, struggled to fulfill the same diplomatic goals because curators and diplomats fumbled to “properly” deploy American art to halt World War II.

The inclusion of Pueblo and Mexican imagery and architecture in *Three Centuries*, including the aforementioned San Francisco de Asis Mission Church at Ranchos de Taos, predated MoMA's art exhibitions in and of Central and South America, including *Advancing American Art* (1946-1948).⁴⁹ In the 1938 exhibition, the artworks expanded the perceived borders of the United States, yet the curators either historicized the cultures into a distant past or institutionalized their people by choosing scenes of trials or moments of moral judgment to confine them and thus reduce their agency. By the early 1940s, MoMA and the US government's Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, fearing the spread of communism to Central and South America, created exhibitions to document a shared cultural past.⁵⁰ This article extends the scholarly conversation surrounding MoMA's role in American cultural nationalism. It argues that MoMA's role in formulating a modernist and international vision of the history of American art should be understood not only as a post-World War II phenomenon but also as an interwar collaboration among European nations and the United States.

Conclusion

Three Centuries of American Art was new both in its conception and ambition by drawing together over five hundred artworks to create a complex American art history for Europeans. Despite having not received significant scholarly attention, the exhibition should be remembered for what it achieved: it strengthened MoMA's

position in the international art scene; it served as a manifestation of the United States on French soil; it attempted to invest artworks with political rhetoric; and it defined American art to include contemporary art history. At a moment when MoMA was still a relatively new museum, its curators propelled the museum onto the international stage in Paris. Compounding the desire by MoMA curators to craft a canonical history of American art that incorporated multiple media and contemporary art to solidify its significance, the hopes of politicians to invest art with diplomatic meaning further charged the rooms of the Musée du Jeu de Paume. While it may have been unable to fulfill these weighty diplomatic goals, the impact of the exhibition continued to be felt by Americans when portions of the exhibition went on view throughout the United States during the 1940s and 1950s as part of the new Department of Circulating Exhibitions.⁵¹ In sum, the exhibition enabled a broader American culture to be on view in 1938—a time when the very notion of the United States and its people was in flux.

Notes

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¹ *Gazette de Charleroi*, May 30, 1938, trans. Lillian Fugarini (Assistant in Publicity Department), untitled document, 4, *Three Centuries of American Art*, Correspondence, etc.—Publicity, REG 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York City.

² The building is now referred to as the Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, and its interiors have been extensively renovated.

³ *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 4, no. 4-5 (April-May 1938): 2.

⁴ In his chapter on the Paris exhibition, Goodyear lists 1932 as the starting point, but a 1930 letter does confirm an earlier interest between the two museums. As directeur of the Musée National and of l'École du Louvre, Henri Verne represented French interests in the show and began to discuss its specific elements with Goodyear in 1930; André Dezarrois, conservateur of the Musées nationaux, facilitated the installation and Rose

Valland acted as registrar. Both Goodyear and Verne would retire after completing this exhibition marking a change in methodology at MoMA and increased instability in the French government respectively. To read about the Paris exhibition in Goodyear's own words, see "Paris Exhibition 1938," in A. Conger Goodyear, *The Museum of Modern Art, the First Ten Years* (New York City: Vest Orton), 73-82; *Trois siècles d'art aux États-Unis*, iv; G.J. Gros, [untitled], *Paris-Midi* (Paris: May 24, 1938), trans. Lillian Fugarini (Assistant in Publicity Department), untitled document, 4, *Three Centuries of American Art*, Correspondence, etc.—Publicity, REG 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York; Emmanuelle Polack Catel and Claire Bouilhac, *Rose Valland* (Marcinelle, Belgique: Dupuis, 2009); and François Marlin, *Jean Zay, un Republicain* (Orléans, France: Éditions Infimes, 2015).

⁵ Edward Alden Jewell, *Have We an American Art?* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co, 1939).

⁶ For more information, see Caroline M. Riley, "American Vernacular Art in 1938 Paris: Its Categorization and Reception at MoMA's *Three Centuries of American Art* exhibition on Display in 1930s Paris," *Athamor*, Florida State University Journal, 2015.

⁷ Wanda M. Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 3.

⁸ Jules David Prown, "Art History vs. The History of Art" *Art Journal* 44 no. 4 (1984): 313–314.

⁹ Additionally, Barr argued Robert Fulton and Samuel F. B. Morse were examples of "artist-scientists" thus embodying the diversity of skills, but in a different formulation, than that found in the eight contemporary American artists. Further, Barr noted Morse's transportation of the French daguerreotype to Americans. *Trois siècles d'art aux États-Unis: Exposition organisée en collaboration avec le Museum of Modern Art, New-York. Musée du Jeu de Paume. Paris, Mai-Juillet, 1938* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1938), 22.

¹⁰ *Trois siècles d'art aux États-Unis: Exposition organisée en collaboration avec le Museum of Modern Art, New-York. Musée du Jeu de Paume. Paris, Mai-Juillet, 1938* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1938).

¹¹ When displaying vernacular art in Paris, Barr categorized twenty-five works as examples of "folk" and "popular" art yet extended his definition to include ceramics by Carl Walters, Henry Varnum Poor, and Russell Barnett Aitken as well as chromolithographs and a screen by Charles Prendergast. For more information on the vernacular art section of the exhibition, see: Caroline M. Riley, "American Vernacular Art in 1938 Paris: Its Categorization and Reception at MoMA's *Three Centuries of American Art* exhibition on Display in 1930s Paris" *Athamor* 33 (Florida State University, 2015): 99-105.

¹² Curators from the Musée de Luxembourg were charged with overseeing the purchase and display of all foreign artists in the collection of the French government. The Musée de Jeu du Paume was the site for these displays.

¹³ A. Conger Goodyear, Letter to Louise H. Burchfield, Assistant in Paintings at the Cleveland Museum of Art, February 12, 1938, *Three Centuries of American Art* [MoMA Exh. #76a, May 24-July 31, 1938], Correspondence C-D, Registrar Files 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

¹⁴ "American Art will be Shown Soon in Paris," *Buffalo News* (Buffalo, NY: May 3, 1937), untitled document, Public Information Records, *Three Centuries of American Art* [MoMA Exh. #76a, May 24-July 31, 1938], mf 8;552, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

¹⁵ Past World's Fairs displayed only recently finished artworks that proclaimed the United States' current status as a world leader rather than attempting to create a comprehensive history of American art. A selection of readings include: Michael Barker, "International Exhibitions at Paris Culminating with the Exposition Internationale Des Arts et Techniques Dans La Vie Moderne - Paris 1937," *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1850 - the Present* no. 27 (January 1, 2003): 8; Annette Blaugrund, *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition*, (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1989); Lois Marie Fink, "American Art at the 1889 Paris Exposition: The Paintings They Love to Hate," *American Art* 5, no. 4 (October 1, 1991): 38; Marilyn F. Friedman, "The United States and the 1925 Paris Exposition: Opportunity Lost and Found," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 13, no. 1 (October 1, 2005): 94-101; Erik Mattie, *World Fairs* (New York City: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998); Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "American Visions at the Paris Exposition, 1900: Another Look at Frances Benjamin Johnston's Hampton Photographs," *Art Journal* 57, no. 3 (October 1, 1998): 61-68; Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ Jennifer Marshall, *Machine Art, 1934* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); and Kristina Wilson, *The Modern Eye: Stieglitz, MoMA, and the Art of the Exhibition, 1925-1934* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁷ The references to Austria, the conference in Evian, and the Munich Agreement were all drawn from the Holocaust Encyclopedia on the US Holocaust Museum website. <https://www.ushmm.org/learn/holocaust-encyclopedia>.

¹⁸ R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 814.

- ¹⁹ Blum pleaded that displays would make citizens more “greatly aware of their profound unity and strength”; quoted in Ihor Junyk, “The Face of the Nation: State Fetishism and ‘Métissage’ at the Exposition Internationale, Paris 1937,” *Grey Room* 23 (Apr. 1, 2006): 104.
- ²⁰ William Bullitt, Letter to A. Conger Goodyear, Spring 1938, *Three Centuries of American Art* [MoMA Exh. #76a, May 24-July 31, 1938], Correspondence A-B, Registrar Files 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- ²¹ Palmer and Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 817.
- ²² [untitled], *Le Journal des débats* (Paris: May 28, 1938) trans. Lillian Fugarini (Assistant in Publicity Department), *Three Centuries of American Art* [MoMA Exh. #76a, May 24-July 31, 1938], Correspondence etc. Publicity, Registrar Files 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- ²³ Goodyear, *The Museum of Modern Art: The First Ten Years*, 81.
- ²⁴ Sophie Lévy, “Transatlantic Complexities: A Traveling Exhibition about Traveling Artists” in *Internationalizing the History of American Art*, Barbara S. Groseclose and Jochen Wierich ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 145; and Jocelyn Rotily, “Politique des Musées du Luxembourg et du Jeu de Paume Face à l’Art Américain: Histoire de Deux Grandes Expositions dans le Paris de l’Entre-Deux-Guerres,” *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts* (Paris: Fondée Par Charles Blanc, 1997): 178.
- ²⁵ Mary Sterner, *Exhibition of American Art* (New York City: Art Patrons of America Inc. 1919)
- ²⁶ Memo, April 5, 1923, Organisation, X Exposition Carton no. 48, Archives des Musées Nationaux, Paris; A. Conger Goodyear, Letter to William H. Fox, Brooklyn Museum Director, March 19, 1934, *Three Centuries of American Art* [MoMA Exh. #76a, May 24-July 31, 1938], Correspondence E-J, Registrar Files 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York
- ²⁷ The author is currently working on an article exploring the display in 1937.
- ²⁸ “American Art at Paris World’s Fair of 1937,” *Springfield Union* (Springfield, MA: May 10, 1936) and “U.S. Show for Paris,” *The Art Digest* (New York City, NY: May 15, 1935), untitled document, 10-11, *Three Centuries of American Art*, Correspondence, etc.—Publicity, REG 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- ²⁹ Georges Huisman, Letter to A. Conger Goodyear [not dated], untitled document, 10, *Three Centuries of American Art*, Correspondence, etc.—Publicity, REG 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

³⁰ A. Conger Goodyear, Letter to George S. Kaufman, January 21, 1938, *Three Centuries of American Art* [MoMA Exh. #76a, May 24-July 31, 1938], Correspondence K-M, Registrar Files 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

³¹ [untitled], *Chicago Journal of Commerce* (Chicago, IL: July 25, 1936), untitled document, 10, *Three Centuries of American Art*, Correspondence, etc.—Publicity, REG 76a, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

³² A survey of publications include: Bronwyn Griffith and Verna Posever Curtis, *Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901* (Washington DC: Musée d'Art Américain Giverny in association with the Library of Congress, 2001), 16; United States Commission to the Paris Exposition, *Official Illustrated Catalogue: Fine Arts Exhibit, United States of America, Paris Exposition of 1900* (Boston, MA: Noyes, Platt & Co., 1900), 53, 55; and Charles H. Caffin, "Our Exhibit at the Paris Exposition" *The Artist: An Illustrated Monthly Record of Arts, Crafts and Industries* (American Edition) 28, no. 246 (July 1, 1900): vii-x.

³³ Wendy Jeffers, "Cahill and American Art" *Archives of American Art Journal* 31, no. 4 (1991): 9. For more information on Cahill see: Jillian E. Russo, *From the Ground Up: Holger Cahill and the Promotion of American Art* (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2011).

³⁴ For more information, see: Patricia Hills, "Works Progress Administration/Federal Art Project," *Grove Encyclopedia of American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 275-276.

³⁵ Holger Cahill, Works Progress Administration, Letter to A. Conger Goodyear, August 2, 1938, A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks [48], Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

³⁶ A. Conger Goodyear, "The World of Art," *The Sun* (Lewiston, ME: November 20, 1937), Public Information Records, *Three Centuries of American Art* [MoMA Exh. #76a, May 24-July 31, 1938], mf 8;552, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

³⁷ Untitled Memo, 1938, 2HH58 (2) Letter Cables, Direction des Musées de France, Archives des Musées Nationaux, Paris.

³⁸ "Architectural Exhibition," *Dayton Journal* (Dayton, OH: Apr. 24, 1938), Public Information Records, *Three Centuries of American Art* [MoMA Exh. #76a, May 24-July 31, 1938], mf 8;552: 34, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

³⁹ The black-and-white installation photographs record that the paint color for the architecture section was neither white nor dark paint, suggesting McAndrew's flexible display aesthetic.

⁴⁰ *Trois siècles d'art aux États-Unis*, iii-iv.

⁴¹ George Blumenthal, president of the Trustees at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was also singled out to head the group. *Trois siècles d'art aux États-Unis*, iii-iv.

⁴² The 30-year-old Nelson Rockefeller was the son of Abby and John Rockefeller and in 1940 would become the US Government's coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. In total the committee members included: Gouverneur General Ollivier, president du Conseil d'administration de la compagnie generale transatlantique; Percy J. Philipp, president de l'Association de la presse franco-américaine de Paris; Walter Gay; Gabriel Hanotiaux, president du Comité France-Amérique; and Louis Jarvy, president de la Section de Propagande du Comité France-Amérique. Ibid., iii.

⁴³ Delouche de Noyelle served as president and Andre Girodie worked as curator of the Musée de la cooperation Franco-Américain du Château de Blérancourt. Ibid.

⁴⁴ Nelson Rockefeller responded with a letter to the editor and a letter to Goodyear. A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks 48, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

⁴⁵ A. Conger Goodyear quoted in "Avertissement" in *Trois siècles d'art aux États-Unis*, ix-x.

⁴⁶ Letters, May 17-18, 1938, X Exposition 2, Direction des Musées de France Archives des Musées Nationaux, Paris.

⁴⁷ Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995) and *50 Ans d'art aux États-Unis. Collections du Museum of Modern Art de New York* (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1955).

⁴⁸ Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum* 15, no. 10 (June 1974): 39-41 and Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

⁴⁹ Though not a MoMA exhibition, *Advancing American Art* was an exhibition organized by the State Department and displayed from 1946 to 1948; in recent years, much scholarship has been devoted to it. For example, Taylor D. Littleton, Maltby Sykes, and Leon F. Litwack, *Advancing American Art: Painting, Politics, and Cultural Confrontation at Mid-Century* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005) and *Art Interrupted: Advancing American Art and the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy* (exhibition catalogue) (Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, 2012).

⁵⁰ Darlene Sandler, *Americans All: Good Neighbor Cultural Diplomacy in World War II* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012).

⁵¹ The Circulating Exhibitions Department extended the life of *Three Centuries* in the viewing of the film and photography display. From *Photography: 1839–1937* and the display at *Three Centuries* developed two circulating exhibitions that traveled to forty-two venues in the two years after the Paris exhibition closed. *A Brief Survey of Photography, 1839–1937* provided an overview of at least some of the themes Newhall described but without any of the same artworks. The Circulating Department displayed

the exhibition twelve times, but never at MoMA. After being on view at the museum, an abridged version of *Photography: 1839–1937* traveled to nine other venues. The 1938 exhibition's film section had a continued legacy both in Paris and the United States. Unlike the other sections, MoMA organized a special film session on June 13, 1938, led by Verne, which publicized the historical and artistic significance of American film. The exhibition paved the way for the still-active International Federation of Film Archives, an organization formed four days after the film session by Abbott, Barry, and representatives from Berlin, London, and Paris in the hopes of preserving "artistic" film. The display, *The Making of a Contemporary Film: The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, had been created for Paris but placed on view at MoMA before traveling to Europe. After its return to the United States, the Circulating Exhibitions Department sent it to eighteen other venues over just two years—thus becoming one of MoMA's most popular traveling exhibitions. Haidee Wasson describes Barry's advocacy in *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 137; and "Circulating Exhibitions 1931-1954" *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 21, no. 3/4 (Summer, 1954): 3-30.

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