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Michael D. Levin, *The Modern Museum: Temple or Showroom*. Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Dvir Publishing House, 1983, 206 pp., 207 illus.

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eral public and many artists had of viewing this art. Neither Braque nor Picasso was represented at this exhibition; so the public, unaware of the movement's origins, thought they were seeing true Cubism. The authors, in their attempt to redress this initial misapprehension, fail to take note of whatever legitimacy or notoriety the little masters may have given the movement; they insist upon the primacy of the true Cubists.

The selection of paintings, *papiers collés*, drawings, and sculpture is stacked in favour of the best and the best known, Gris and Léger ranking alongside the seminal Picasso and Braque. Attempts to paint true Cubism made by artists such as Gleizes, Metzinger, Marcoussis, Hayden, Villon, Lhote, and Le Fauconnier are dismissed in the authors' words as "pathetic" and consequently only a few of their works are represented.

The catalogue notes accompanying these works are often principally concerned with separating Cubist from non-Cubist, as if the authors were trying to weed out the undesirables from an exclusive club. Gleizes's *Portrait of Jacques Nayral* (1911; no. 222) is described as "a conventional portrait painted in a post-Cézannian idiom, which involves elementary facetting and cubification derived from Braque and Picasso." The figure of Nayral, to be sure, lacks the multidimensional analysis of Picasso's *Man with a Violin* (1912; no. 132). On the other hand, it is not all that different from the earlier *Nude Woman in an Armchair* (1909; no. 118) whose features and torso are neatly and legibly rendered in prismatic forms. No one will dispute that Picasso, Gris, and Braque took the Cubist language as far as anyone could take it or that alongside the masters Gleizes's efforts are indeed "conventional"; but if post-Cézannian cubification exhibited in 1911 as Cubist art is not a form of Cubism, the reader may be excused for not having another interpretation immediately at hand.

The attention the authors give to Léger as one of the Big Four is rather surprising, as in their opinion he was only a true Cubist for three years (1910-1913). The *Woman in Blue* (1912; no. 97) with its tilted planes and linear framework certainly resembles synthetic Cubism as then practised by Braque and Picasso; but the emphasis on rounded forms and in particular the predominance of red, white, and blue areas against the more neutral tans and greys announce a personal adaptation of the aesthetic, "a state of mind" significantly altered. Held up next to the Gleizes, Léger's *Woman in Blue* is certainly the work of choice, but it is not immediately clear why Léger is more of a true Cubist than Gleizes except that he is a better painter.

Another essay devoted to the "Early Purchasers of True Cubist Art" proves more satisfactory, although the bombastic claim that this is a previously unexamined field is unkind to previous authors. Collectors such as the Steins, Morosov, and Shchukin are well known and a full discussion of the dealers and collectors who championed this art can be found in Malcolm Gee's 1977 Courtauld dissertation, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting*, published in 1981 by Garland Press. For those unfamiliar with the history of collecting of this period, however, the authors have provided us with a concise, informative summary of the important buyers, the critical sales (notably the Kahnweiler and Uhde sales of 1921-23), and an idea of the prices the works fetched.

The special care with which Cooper and Tinterow treat this corner of history is hardly cause for wonderment. Cooper in particular was on friendly terms with the major Cubist painters and owned a choice selection of their art. Some of that art was on view at the Tate Gallery and is reproduced in the catalogue. It is perhaps here that the organizers of *The Essential Cubism* went astray. While reliable definitions of the "isms" of art are always in short supply, zealous collectors can do much harm by confusing the dictates of a discipline with the limitations of their own personal tastes. The unhappy result is that true Cubism remains an elusive ideal and, like all ideals, more figment of the imagination than reality.

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MICHAEL D. LEVIN *The Modern Museum: Temple or Showroom*. Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Dvir Publishing House, 1983, 206 pp., 207 illus.

The current boom in museum construction across the United States, as Grace Glueck remarked in *The New York Times* (Sunday, 23 June 1985), "makes the building spree of the 1970's, once thought to have abated, look like a practice run." Her observation also reflects the situation in many European countries, especially Germany, and of course in Canada, with the construction (albeit painful) of two new national museums, the new Vancouver Art Gallery and the enlarged Royal Ontario Museum, and the projected expansions of the current structures of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Museum building is currently a glamorous business involving internationally itinerant superstar architects—Philip Johnson, I. M. Pei, Arthur Erickson, Hans Hollein, James Stirling, Richard Meier, Gae Aulenti, Michael Graves—and hundreds of millions of dollars apparently readily available from both governments and private donors. And this, ironically, is at a time when operating funds have become increasingly tight and overall museum attendance, according to the polls, seems to be declining slightly. It is no less interesting that many of the new building projects are dedicated to housing growing collections of contemporary art, which are not traditionally crowd pleasing, while museums are finding it more and more urgent to expand visitor attendance dramatically to impress those same public and private funders so that they can keep their doors open and finance increasingly expensive and, it is hoped, popular exhibition schedules.

Such social conundrums aside, the practice of museum building is more than ever fraught with controversy. Museum professionals heatedly argue the respective virtues of relatively anonymous structures to house their treasures as against more self-assertive and characterful spaces. These may not be new issues for the eighties, but postmodernist architecture, with its challenge to the often bland uniformity of international modernism and its fascination—expressed also in museum building—with metaphor, historicist quota-

tion and regionalist articulation, has given them a new face. The intensity of these arguments is especially felt in the German museum world where directors who wield independent power of a sort that is unfamiliar in North America can agree on little except that lots of daylight is good as long as you can control it; they have been able to commission such distinctively contrasting monuments as the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, designed by Dissing and Weitling, and Sterling's Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, the former striving for severe architectural reticence in its gallery spaces, the latter avowedly expressive inside and out.

In the midst of the current museum building fervour, which seems in no immediate danger of abating, there may be a strong need for a critical analysis of objectives, problems, and respective solutions. Perhaps we need to take stock of what we have learned—often it seems by hit or miss methods—about meeting the various formal, functional, and social requirements of the modern art museum. Michael Levin's *The Modern Museum* would seem to want to provide that, and his subtitle *Temple or Showroom* reiterates the building-type polarities that constitute the terms of the current discussion.

Levin presents the development of the modern museum from the beginning of the century as an evolution from the "temple" type such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art to the "showroom" type epitomized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The former conceives of the museum as a monument conveying tradition through historicist styles, the classical temple with its commanding staircase and portico dominating the first museum explosion just after the turn of this century. It is remarkable that until the mid-1930s, museums built in contemporary styles were rare exceptions. At the International Congress of Art Museums held in Madrid in 1934, the issue of the ultimate form of the modern museum was raised: should it be a display object in its own right or simply a neutral functional frame, "une simple 'machine' à exposer des objets?" The latter, then merely a theoretical idea, became both fact and trend with the 1939 completion of *MOMA*, whose models were not primarily historical but the modern office building and the commercial gallery. *MOMA* was conceived of as a "pedagogical showroom" with storefront windows opening directly onto the street in a downtown business location using standard commercial advertising means to attract visitors. The showroom museum would connect more immediately with everyday life, one's visit constituting a "museum break" from business meetings, shopping, and other daily urban routines, whereas temple museums, especially when they have park locations, remain havens lending themselves to planned leisure weekend "pilgrimages."

On the basis of an analysis of its evolution, Levin distils six essential developments or attributes which define the modern museum. (1) From being a simple collecting institution concerned with acquiring and preserving, it has expanded into a kind of cultural centre with multiple functions including active temporary exhibition programmes, education departments, and the presentation of lectures, films, and concerts. (2) The modern museum has diversified in the material it collects and exhibits, expanding to include, for example, children's art, industrial design, photography, and architecture. (3) The introduction of artificial light has liberated museum design, allowing a variety of alternatives to the traditional single-storey, skylit exhibition rooms. (4) Conservation concerns such as light and climate control have become integral parts of overall museum planning. (5) Modern museum design has sought to provide maximum flexibility of space and display methods. (6) Historicist architectural styles have been rejected in favour of "a new expressive form" specifically designed to meet the needs of the museum. While many of these characteristics may individually or in part be found in institutions from the beginning of the century, Levin identifies the "fulfillment of the modern museum concept" with the founding of *MOMA*.

Most museums of recent decades, as Levin's discussion of a number of individual institutions indicates, architecturally fall somewhere between the opposing poles of the temple and showroom types. For example, the Whitney Museum in New York has *MOMA*'s neutral and flexible spaces and its immediate contact with the street. At the same time it is, especially externally, as formally expressive as the Guggenheim Museum, itself described by its architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, as "more like a temple in a park on the avenue than like a mundane business or residential structure." But even where the temple conception dominates, modern museum building has been in general agreement about coming to terms with the variety of social and functional demands that constitute Levin's criteria for the modern museum. Accordingly, and usefully, a chapter is devoted to such problems as visitor circulation schemes, solutions for museum expansion, approaches to lighting with natural light and/or artificial illumination, conservation and other support services, and the quest for maximum flexibility in the use of floor and wall space. Another chapter addresses the modern museum's expanding conception of its curatorial purview and educational functions as it attempts to address larger and more diversified communities and as it becomes either itself a cultural centre or one component of a larger cultural complex such as the Hayward Gallery on the South Bank in London.

On the whole Levin's book is a welcome comprehensive guide to the multiform aspects of the evolution of the modern museum. It evenly weighs opposing points of view, and illustrates them amply with analyses of a broad spectrum of international art museums of all types, more than adequately supported by plans, diagrams, and photographs. When the book is disappointing it is because it is too evenhanded; too fairly academic when one would wish for a persuasively argued point of view; and too abstract, its theory and analyses not always supported by practical experience. It is well and good, for example, to admire the "enormous variety in display" allowed by the "universal space" of the large upper-level hall of Mies van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie. However, it is so flexible (as a few visits convincingly demonstrate) that for most of its exhibition uses, its space and light are controlled only at evident strain. The transparent Perspex external escalators of the Pompidou Centre may well offer magnificent views of Paris and be a dynamic solution to circulation problems, but these virtues are less confidently appreciated when one is shoved along in a single continuous direction up the

several floors of those escalators by an endless throng of fellow visitors—an experience more like terror. The overly abstract and less than satisfactory approach that Levin too often adopts is perhaps best exemplified by his appendix on sculpture gardens. This appendix inventories duly the various solutions of external courtyards, gardens, and parks, without touching on problems attending the installation of contemporary sculpture and the general failure of museums to cope with outside installations. Nor does he pause to reflect on the nature of those instances, such as the garden of the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, where, save for shelter from rain for the public, it works magnificently.

Though Levin does worry about the relation of the modern museum to its community—touching on problems of elitism, the composition of boards, the ethics of admission charges, the relevance to artists, the need to get art to the people—it is all a little too upbeat to be a convincing description of today's situation. The challenges to the viability of the museum in the future are stated from an essentially historical perspective. He describes the challenges the museum has already weathered (note how well, for example, the museum is presumed to have accommodated art which has been critical of it), and from there follows the assumption that if the museum has always found ways of accommodating to previous pressures, it can be equally open to new ones. Therefore, he can end the concluding chapter by saying, "the museum will continue to be a vital institution for many years to come."

It no doubt will, but not if it rests on Levin's somewhat optimistic attitude that although there may be future changes in museum programmes "due to financial, conservation and political considerations," all is more or less well. Can we continue to accept unequivocally his proffering of *MOMA* as an ideal model for the modern museum on the basis of its steps towards greater democratization and a more varied and active role in the community? In giving precedence to the commercial showroom model, *MOMA* has expanded and diversified its collections; emphasized education and didactic exhibition presentations with orientation galleries, slide presentations, and detailed explanatory labels; undertaken a programme of publications, especially catalogues and posters (as a partial realization of Malraux's "musée imaginaire"); and stressed an active changing exhibition programme as a way to attract visitors. These innovations have undoubtedly had an irrevocable and beneficial influence on every museum, young or old, in the Western world. We can agree that such programmes are a measure of the museum's vitality as a social institution and add that they are important vehicles for the expression of the professional staff's creative energies. But in the present decade they have taken priority. As a result, they have also become a threat to the modern museum's scholarly and pedagogical integrity and, increasingly, tools of desperate marketing strategies to make the museum competitive in an overloaded entertainment market. While it may be politically correct to applaud the democratization of museums and their striving for broad popular appeal, at the same time it must be recognized that popularity in a time of financial constraint and political conservatism may often have to be achieved at the expense of the museum's original curatorial and scholarly objectives. It is similarly difficult to concur with Levin's offhand assumption that the Louvre's policy of collecting only dead artists is anachronistic, or the implication that the concept of the modern museum, as he defines it, should be universally applicable. That would blind us to an alternative concept, which prefers a diversity of museum roles and models and posits that we need not advance *en masse* at the same rate in the same direction. This concept would see a healthier museum community as an interdependent network of institutions with different orientations and individual institutions.

In summary, Levin provides a thorough and informed orientation, but he remains somehow distant from the ongoing complexities of building and socially placing the modern museum, even though these are his stated concerns and continue to be troubling issues. To a considerable extent this is perhaps a fault less of the book than of its timing. Its research and compilation were no doubt undertaken in the late 1970s, so that by the time it was published we were into a new and perhaps unanticipated phase of museum building and another economic and political climate. As a consequence Levin's book fails to be timely about issues which today are very timely indeed. That, and the absence of some stronger doses of engaged polemic, are its major deficiencies.

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ROBERT BRINGHURST et al., editors *Visions: Contemporary Art in Canada*. Vancouver and Toronto, Douglas & McIntyre, 1983, 238 pp., 120 illus., $29.95 (cloth).

DAVID BURNETT and MARILYN SCHIFF *Contemporary Canadian Art*. Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1983, 300 pp., 332 illus., $27.95 (cloth), $19.95 (paper).

Both *Visions: Contemporary Art in Canada* and *Contemporary Canadian Art* are wrapped in glossy, black dustjackets bearing white titles and colour reproductions. Although the cover designs seem similar, a closer examination reveals significant differences, differences which embody the two very dissimilar premises upon which the accounts of art in Canada since World War II contained in these volumes are based.

The front cover design of *Contemporary Canadian Art* with Alex Colville's *Dog and Priest* (1978) above and Guido Molinari's *Seriel bleu orange* (1968) below, separated from each other by the title and the names of the authors, becomes an icon of the book's contents: for Burnett and Schiff, contemporary Canadian art is restricted to painting alone. A more extended analysis reveals that, for them, contemporary painting is limited to a linear mode in the Wölfflinean sense, and that although abstract and figurative painting seem to coexist, figuration "comes out on top." Relegating the reproduction of Harold Klunder's abstract-expressionist-inspired *Torque* to the back cover reinforces both aspects of the frontal statement.

The cover of *Visions* includes Don Proch's *Rainbow Mask* (1976) which evokes primitive ritual art yet is obvi-