

per altro, non ancora portata al Consiglio dei Ministri, ma esistente in una bozza appena accennata, succederanno dei cataclismi, insomma, direi tali da compromettere la sua identità originaria; quindi nessuno di noi è in grado di prevedere che cosa succederà, anche sul piano temporale.

A questo punto, dopo questo breve prelude, vorrei dare la parola per il primo argomento, che è un sottotitolo di museo e collezionismo (anzi praticamente manca il primo termine), al signor J.M. Demettrion di Des Moines Art Center, Jowa, *Collection of 20th Century Italian Art in the United States*.

JAMES T. DEMETRION

*Collection of 20th Century Italian Art in the United States*

The original plans called for me to speak about the collecting of 20th century Italian art in America and also about the forthcoming Giorgio Morandi Exhibition which our museum is organizing. We had been told that there

might be a working lunch and at that time I might say a few words about the image of the small museum in the 1980's, but it turns out that the working lunch apparently is going to be more of an eating lunch and,



I - DES MOINES (IOWA) - ARCHITETTO I.M. PEI - DES MOINES ART CENTER, 1968: VEDUTA DELLA FACCIATA SUD

consequently, I spoke with His Excellency Ambassador Romano yesterday and he suggested that I talk about all three topics today. This is quite typical of what directors in small museums have to do; they have to talk about three topics, whereas directors of large museums only talk about one, but of course, we only get paid one third as much as well. I would like to start off first of all by noting that I am not an expert on 20th century Italian art; I've made a few notes concerning the collecting, and not only the collecting, but the exhibiting of 20th century Italian art in America, because collecting and exhibiting go hand in hand. One of the first, if not the first, and certainly one of the most important exhibitions of 20th century Italian Art ever held in America was in San Francisco in 1915 at the Panama Pacific International Exposition. In that exposition, Italy

was one of twelve countries officially represented and it was represented by 156 works by 117 different artists.

I showed Superintendent De Marchis a list of the artists who were included in the exhibition, for I must confess that none of them were familiar to me, and he told me that approximately eighty per cent of them still had some reputation in Italy, some of them quite important for Italy although they did not have an international reputation. The other twenty per cent have long since been forgotten. In that same exhibition, or exposition, I should say, certain groups of artists were able to show their work independently of their national committees and national commissions, and in the exposition of 1915 in San Francisco there were fifty works shown by the Futurists with a written document typically bombastic as the Futurists were wont to do.



2 - DES MOINES (IOWA), DES MOINES ART CENTER - JOHN SINGER SARGENT:  
THE PAILLERON CHILDREN, 1881, OLIO SU TELA

This was the first showing of the Futurists' work in America; unfortunately, I do not know what the newspapers in San Francisco or other parts of the country reported about the exhibition. I think it would be quite interesting to know that.

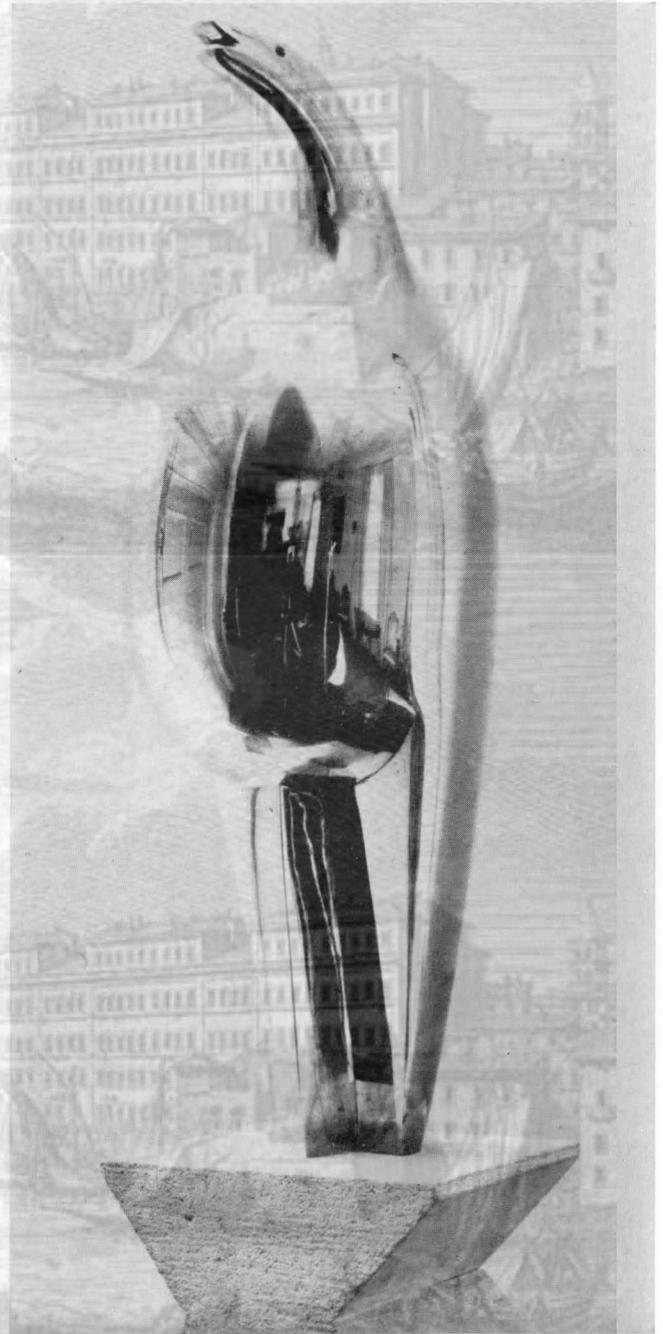
Saverini, of course, was included as were the others; I single him out because two years later, in 1917 Alfred Stieglitz, the very famous photographer and gallery director in New York, gave him a one-man exhibition and we know that Severini was included in Stieglitz's own private collection.

In the 20's, Katherine Dreier, a very important figure in 20th century art in America, formed the *Société Anonyme*, and important avant-garde collection which now resides primarily at Yale University, and she was most instrumental in helping to form the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Katherine Dreier began developing her remarkable collection and it included Italian works by Boccioni, De Chirico, Depero, Dottori, Marasco, Panaggi, Prampolini and Severini. The Museum of Modern Art was formed in 1929, and that museum undoubtedly has the most important collection of modern Italian art (and not only Italian, but other countries as well) in the United States.

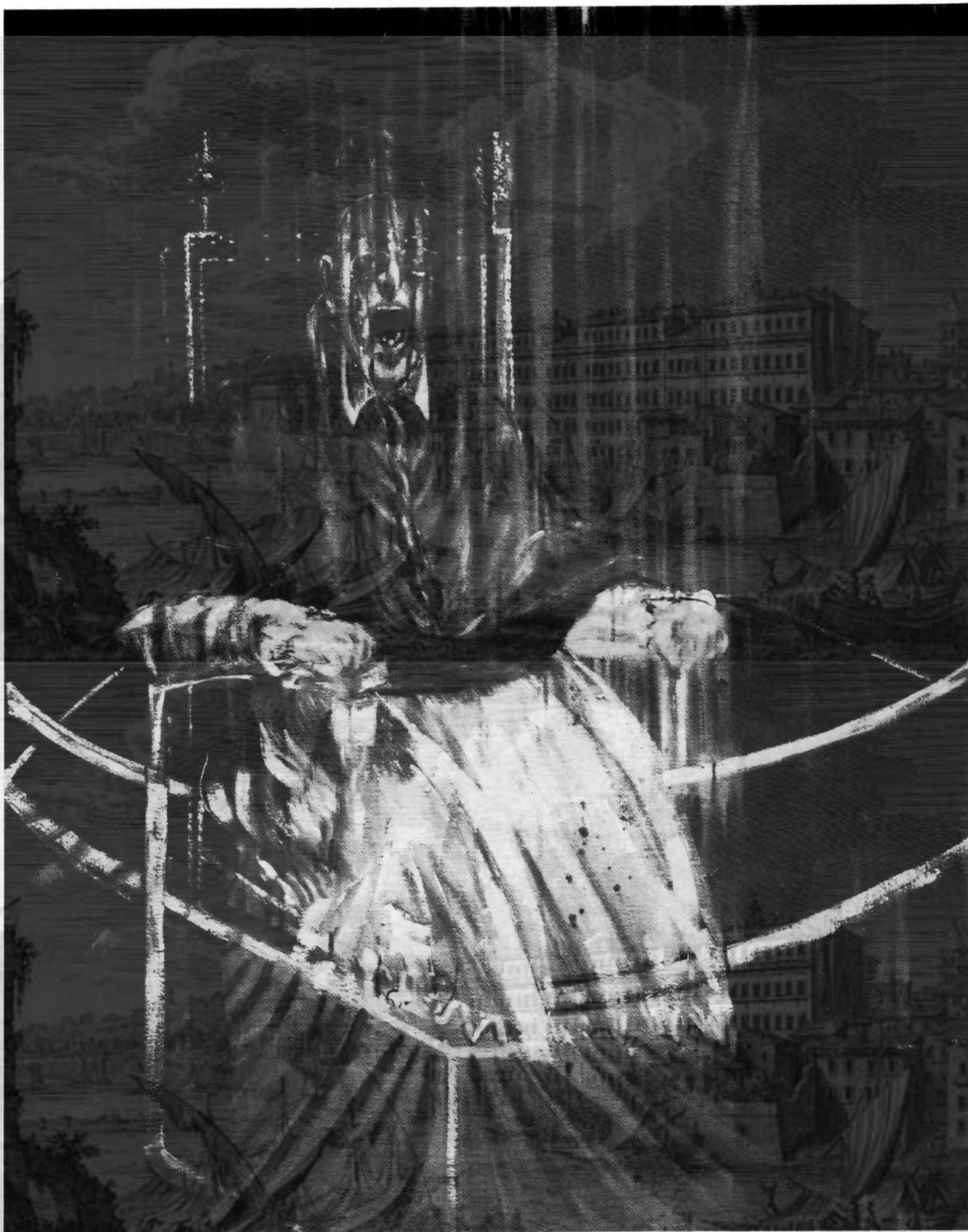
There are other museums in America which also have significant holdings of Italian art; I'll single out just three or four: one is the museum of art at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. This was due primarily to the international exhibitions which the Carnegie had been showing for many, many years (which was shown I believe annually for quite a long time and then biennially, triennially and now, unfortunately, not at all). Their collection includes works by Afro, Cremonini, Carrà, Marini, Pirandello, Birilli, etc., etc.

The Hirschhorn Museum in Washington has quite a few works of Italian sculpture in particular and the Guggenheim Museum as well, and a very important collection is at the Albright Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo. However, to my knowledge there has been no systematic collecting of 20th century Italian Art by American museums. I might note that as I read these names of museums, I am unfortunately, excluding the graphic arts since we are talking basically about painting and sculpture. In 1949, shortly after the war, the Museum of Modern Art in New York organized a major exhibition of 20th Century Italian art, and I believe this exhibition inspired perhaps Mr. and Mrs Winston of Detroit to form what is probably the most important collection of modern Italian art in the United States; that collection has to do primarily with Futurism, although not exclusively. They do include various contemporary Italians such as Sironi, Scanavino, Somaini, Tancredi and Prampolini among others. I might note that the Philadelphia Museum of Art just within the past year, organized a significant exhibition of Futurism in the international avant-garde for which Germano Celant, who will be speaking later this morning, contributed the essay. Another important collection of Futurist art in America is that of Mr. and Mrs. Slifka, also in New York. In 1960, at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome, there was an exhibition which was organized by, I believe, Palma Bucarelli with the assistance of the Museum of Modern Art called *Modern Italian Art, from U.S. collections* and that helped indicate some of the richness of the various public and private holdings in the United States. There had been, of course, various other exhibitions: the Futurism show at the Museum

of Modern Art and quite a number of one-man exhibitions have been shown in the United States museums. Enrico Baj, for example, and Alberto Burri just had an exhibition a couple of years ago which has travelled to a number of American museums. De Chirico has had at least two one-man exhibitions in America that I am aware of and I know that a third one is being planned in the not too distant future. Piero Dorazio, Fontana, Manzù, Modigliani, Pistoletto, Medardo Rosso are among others whose works have been shown in one-man ex-



3 - DES MOINES (IOWA), DES MOINES ART CENTER  
COSTANTINO BRANCUSI: MATASTRA, 1912, BRONZO POLITO



4 - DES MOINES (IOWA), DES MOINES ART CENTER - FRANCIS BACON: STUDIO SUL RITRATTO DI PAPA INNOCENZO X DI VELASQUEZ, 1953

hibitions in the U.S. In terms of recent Italian art, there has been considerable interest shown in New York, in particular, and there will be an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum either next year or shortly thereafter which will include the art of some of the contemporary Italians, especially art of the past 20 years. At this moment, I do not know which artists will be included but, undoubtedly people like Manzoni and Mario Merz, Gnoli, Clemente, Paladino, Cucchi, Chia etc., will certainly be considered. In addition to what I have mentioned in terms of museums, I would not wish to overlook the very important role that commercial galleries in America have played, because it is through their efforts to a very large extent, of course, that collections tend to be formed.

I would like to shift gears at this moment, if I may, and go on to one of the other topics. Yesterday we heard Professoressa Borea speak about the use of computers at the Uffizi and some of the remarkable answers that computers can give back to us. Mr. Edelstein also spoke of the use of computers and I'm reminded of the anecdote that a friend of mine told me about the Director of an art museum in a large Eastern city whose museum had just acquired a very large and quite sophisticated computer. This Director was getting on in years and he loved his work very much, and one night when he was at the museum alone, he fed into the computer just one question which was troubling him very much, and the question was: "Are there art museums in Heaven?,". The computer made the appropriate noises and then came forth with the answer, and the answer was. "There is good news and there is bad news. The good news is that there *are* art museums in Heaven, and that you will be a museum Director there; the bad news is that you have a meeting scheduled with your Board of Trustees there next Tuesday., ... I thought about that anecdote and I would like to put a different ending on it. If the computer says there is good news and there is bad news, the good news is that there are art museums in Heaven and that you will be a museum Director there. The bad news is that you will be the Director of a small museum in Iowa that no one in Italy has ever heard of and that you will be required to do a Giorgio Morandi exhibition. We have had quite a number of problems with the exhibition, but I'm really quite proud of the distance that we have covered in finally putting this exhibition together. I do not know very frankly, why there has not been an exhibition of Morandi's work in American museums — a number of his things I might add, were exhibited in the late 1960's when the Mattioli collection was shown throughout the United States, but there has never been a one-man exhibition devoted entirely to his work. I have hinted to various Directors of larger museums in America about such an exhibition, hoping that they, with their greater resources, might take the hint and decide to proceed with the exhibition. For whatever reason, this has not occurred, and I felt it was our responsibility to proceed instead. The small museum also has certain responsibilities in terms of scholarship and certainly in terms of broadening knowledge and awareness of various important artists who might have been unjustifiably neglected for one reason or another in our country. The exhibition has created considerable enthusiasm. It is scheduled to open at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in September, then it will be shown at the Guggenheim Museum and then finally at the Des Moines Art Center

early next year. It is an exhibition which many museums in America have contacted me about. I could have placed this exhibition in quite a number of other important places; however, as all of us know, it is extremely difficult to obtain loans for long periods of time, and we are grateful that it may be possible to do this exhibition in a six or seven month period. Small museums, of course, run into all kinds of difficulties: not only have people frequently not heard of your museum, sometimes they have not heard of your city, which makes things quite difficult and one can understand, I mean, let's face it here, one can understand, that lenders and collectors would be very nervous about lending important works which they love very much, to a place that they are not very familiar with. Consequently, it becomes necessary for the small museum to try to entice larger museums to participate in an exhibition and that's what we were able to do, actually very easily, with the Morandi exhibition. Our museum has also decided to do certain types of exhibitions which other museums, for whatever reason, have not done. In 1973 we organized an exhibition of works by Paul Klee. Certainly there have been scores of exhibitions by Paul Klee in America but ours was the first at that time to focus in on the works of the Bauhaus period and an important essay was contributed by someone at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, an essay which has been reprinted, in several instances. In 1975, we organized the only exhibition of the etchings of Jacques de Bellange, the 17th century French printmaker, the only one ever to be shown in America and I am pleased to say that this exhibition travelled to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Very frankly, it would not have been possible for our museum to organize that exhibition without the very serious and heavy participation of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, in particular, with its very large and fine holdings of works by de Bellange. A member of their curatorial staff, as well as a member of our own, worked together and collaborated on the catalogue which remains the most important work on de Bellange in the English language. In 1978, we organized an exhibition of European post-war art from 1945 to 1955 and the distinguished British and now American critic, Lawrence Alloway, took a view of that particular period. We Americans have tended to become rather chauvinistic about our art after World War II, and we felt it was time to take a look at what was going on in Europe, not only by some of the older masters such as Picasso and Matisse, but younger people such as Asger Jorn and Burri and Jean Tinguely as well as other artists. So we do have a role to play. I feel we have often greater flexibility than larger museums do. Sometimes large museums tend to move rather ponderously because of an overloaded (although they would not think it's an overloaded) staff. Everything is comparative of course, but certainly larger museums frequently have an overloaded bureaucracy, whereas I tend to be the only bureaucrat in my particular museum.

I would like to conclude this short or perhaps longish talk by showing you a few slides of the Des Moines Art Center and some of the works in its collection.

First of all, I should tell you where it is. It's in the middle of the country basically about 350 miles West of Chicago. There are 200,000 people who live in the city itself with another 100,000 in the suburbs directly adjacent to it. Like most American museums, it is a

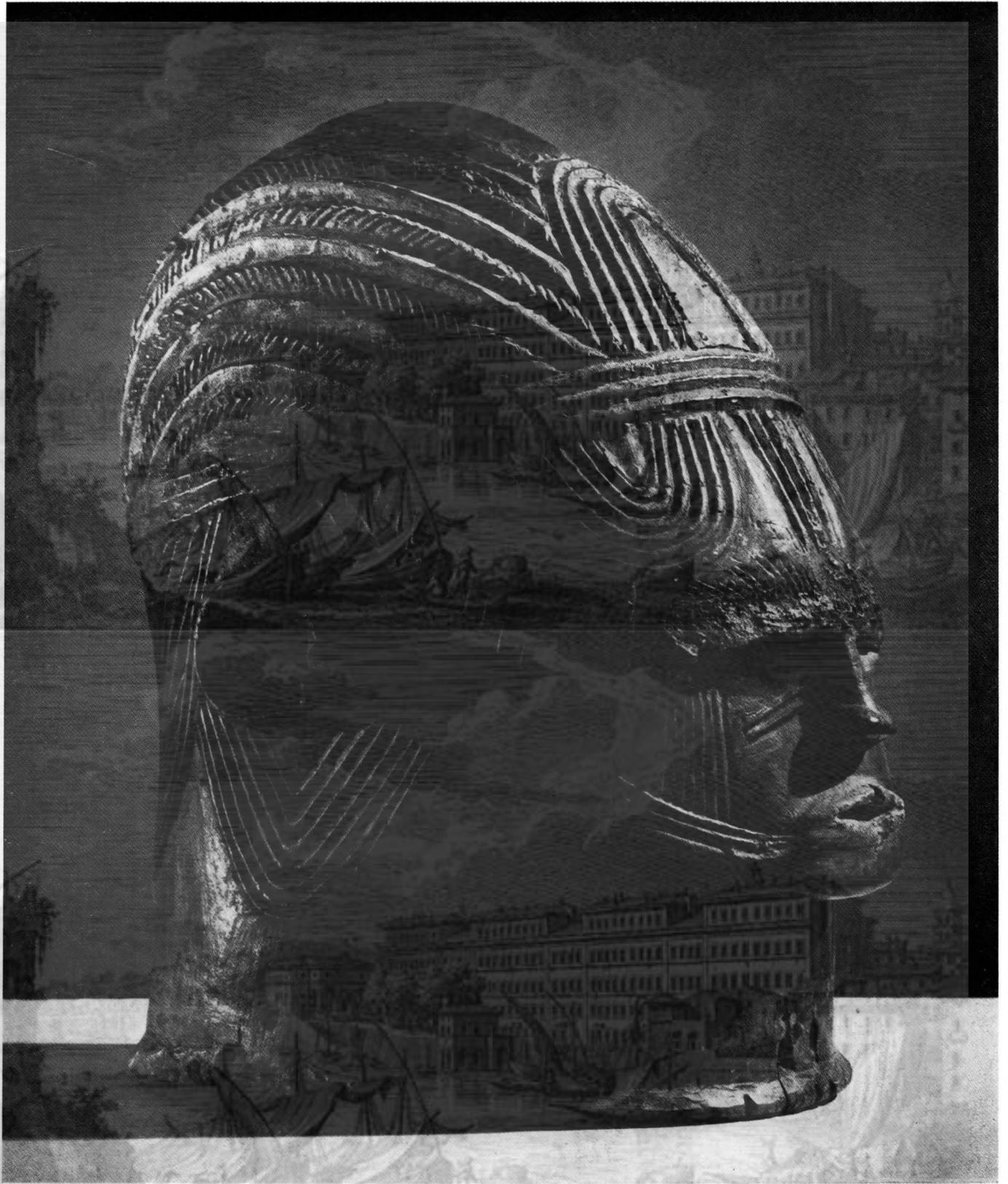
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5 - DES MOINES (IOWA), DES MOINES ART CENTER - TRIBÙ IGALA, NIGERIA: MASCHERA CON ELMO, LEGNO INTAGLIATO E METALLO

private institution, although the city and the suburbs also contribute some monies to the museum for operating costs; the rest of the money has to be raised privately or from an endowment. There were two important factors which I think determined the collecting habits of the Des Moines Art Center: I'll speak about the second one first. In the early 1950's the Kress Foundation was distributing works of art from the Quattrocento, the Cinquecento and the Seicento, especially, throughout America and the Des Moines Art Center, I suspect, was fairly well down the list in terms of priorities and when a group of works was offered to the museum, the Director at that time recommended to the Board of Trustees and the Board of Trustees agreed not to accept this gift. The fact that they did not accept the gift determined to a very considerable extent how that museum was to collect. If it had had a small collection of relatively mediocre or possibly even inferior works of the periods which I had mentioned, there might have been some feeling by the future Directors to "try to fill in gaps",.

We like to think of our museum as one enormous gap with little pockets of pictures and sculptures here and there floating about. The other factor which I think helped shaped the collecting of the museum (in addition to economic factors) was the architecture of the building itself and perhaps we can have the first slide here.

In 1933, a gentleman in Des Moines died and left the museum a considerable sum of money (considerable is a relative term) and specified that half of this sum was to be used to build the building, one sixth of the sum was to be used to form a collection and one third of it was to be used for operating costs.

It was 15 years later before the building was actually built, primarily because of the depression and because of World War II and the Board decided to select Eliel Saarinen, the Finnish architect, to build the museum. At that time, that is to say in 1948, museums tended to have a rather neo-classical look. Saarinen however, came up with quite a different type of design, a design that was considered quite modern and even controversial for its time and I think the feeling was that if the building was going to look like that, then perhaps it made sense for the collection not to look back terribly far. So our collecting has been primarily in the areas of 19th and 20th Century painting and sculpture. We have a print collection from all periods and a collection of African art as well. This is the Saarinen building and then in 1968, I.M. Pei added a wing which was designed primarily for the exhibition of sculpture and you can see in this slide that Pei being somewhat immodest (*Fig. 1*) actually 'signed' his building in the design of the fenestration. Note the letters P, E, I formed by the windows of the building. Presently we are raising

funds for yet another addition to the museum; the architect not yet been selected but obviously the architect will face a real challenge.

The strength of the collection is in early 20th century American art although there are a few earlier examples most notably the painting 'The Pailleron Children' by a native Florentine, John Singer Sargent (*Fig. 2*). Edward Hopper's 'Automat' is one of our most requested paintings for exhibitions by other museums. A sense of isolation in a big-city environment (isolation from others as well as from the city itself) is a theme which pervades Hopper's work and which makes his work peculiarly American. European art has not been neglected, although the emphasis has been on work of our own country. Goya, Courbet, Corot, Daumier are represented by oils as are several of the Impressionists including this relatively rare still life by Pissarro. One of the most outstanding works in the collection is this splendid bird, 'Maiastra' of 1912, by Brancusi (*Fig. 3*). Noteworthy is the fact that this sculpture was a gift to our museum by a former resident. There is relatively little private collecting in the community although this situation has begun to improve recently. Over ninety per cent of our acquisitions fund comes from a trust fund which was established by a generous donor specifically for that purpose; consequently purchases comprise the major part of our art acquisitions. This Rodin study for the *Burghers of Calais*, Maillol, Laurens, Henry Moore, etc. have all been acquired through purchase as has the large-scale soft sculpture by Claes Oldenburg. Works such as this invariably create controversy among many of our visitors, but we believe that contemporary art is one area in which we can compete on a more even footing with larger museums. As a consequence, this means that our education program must be able to reach the general public in a direct and meaningful way. Works by Francis Bacon (*Fig. 4*), Kenneth Noland, David Smith and even Giacometti can prove difficult for some segments of our public and it is our responsibility to try to assist those who are genuinely interested.

Because of the nature of the medium, we are able to collect prints from all periods and, largely due to the promised gift of a major collection of African art (about 250 pieces), (*Fig. 5*) we also have been adding works occasionally to our holdings in this field.

As regards Italian art of the past two centuries, we have very little aside from a few examples of contemporary graphics. However, we have been promised a fine sculpture by Manzù and there are two quite beautiful paintings by Morandi in our community. I certainly hope that at least one of them will eventually find its permanent home in the Des Moines Art Center.

Since I began this talk discussing our forthcoming Morandi exhibition, I seem to have come full circle and now would be an appropriate time to end.

GUGLIELMO B. TRICHES: Ringraziamo il signor Demetrios per l'interessante ed esauriente excursus sulla presenza dell'arte contemporanea italiana negli USA, nonché per le esperienze stimolanti che ha avuto come direttore di un non grande museo che progetta un'importante mostra di arte contemporanea e ci complimentiamo con lui per l'illustrazione del museo sia come contenitore che come contenuto.

Adesso dà la parola al signor Brademas, Presidente della New York University, che ci parlerà del Role of the Federal Government in support of Museums.