

RESEARCH ARTICLE

“Modernism, Formalism and Politics: The "Cubism and Abstract Art" Exhibition of 1936 at the Museum of Modern Art”

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The "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition, held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City during the spring of 1936, and subsequently traveling to six other cities, profoundly affected understanding of the history of modernism and established, in particular, the idea of the central and dominating role that Cubism played in early twentieth century art. The exhibition links two eras: before the exhibition analysis of modern art in the United States, by such writers as Katherine Dreier, Alfred Stieglitz and Walter Pach, were complex, individual and often contradictory. It depended on the writers' personal prejudices and sporadic interaction with European publications and artists. Categories, styles, and motives were developed anew for each publication in books such as Katherine Dreier's *Modern Art* and Pach's *Masters of Modern Art*. Following the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition, Cubism was established as the central issue of early modernism, abstraction as the goal. These ideas dominated understanding of the early twentieth century developments in modernism for decades. The effectiveness of the exhibition and its catalog from the perspective of our jaded, satiated late twentieth century art world is startling. Yet, when the exhibition is dissected in terms of its contents, the basis for its interpretations and, in particular, how it developed within the context of the political events of the 1930s, the reasons for the impact of the exhibition emerges clearly.

In March of 1936, as visitors entered the exhibition "Cubism and Abstract Art" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City they were immediately confronted by *The Dancer* by Pablo Picasso., juxtaposed to an African figure (fig. 1). Henry McBride, the urbane and witty critic of contemporary art in the early twentieth century, commented that in the painting: "the artist was trying to incorporate some of the demonic fury of the African carvings into his work and succeeding so well that the picture is now likely to send any unsuspecting American lady who encounters it into what we call 'the jitters.'" In another room, the bronze titled *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* by Umberto Boccioni was paired with a plaster cast of the *Winged Victory of Sam Thrace*. (Fig. 2) Alfred Barr, the curator of the exhibition, created juxtapositions of modern art and its sources in both the familiar classical tradition and the less understood art of primitive Africa to educate viewers to the revolutionary development of modern art as well as to its historical roots in the familiar art of the classical era. Barr, part showman, part scientist, expert in the history of military tactics and ornithology, as well as art history, presented in the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition an absolutely systematic version of the development of Cubism combined with what he saw as its sources, precursors and descendents. This grand scheme was presented in an evolutionary chart that traced the ancestry and families of Cubism (fig. 3). The chart was posted throughout the exhibition as a reference to the visitor, and used on the dust jacket of the exhibition catalog. Divided into five year increments, the chart presented a genealogy of modern artistic styles that demonstrated that Gauguin, Van Gogh, Redon, Rousseau and Cezanne were

the parents of Cubism, that Cubism was part of a flow of style (only Brancusi in the twentieth century escaped anonymity) and that this genealogy ultimately resolved into "geometrical abstract art" and "non-geometrical abstract art."

The exhibition demonstrated these premises by its order and sequence. On the first floor, immediately after the entryway with the *Dancer* and the African figure, Barr grouped precursors in a source room that included Rousseau, Seurat, Cezanne, Redon and Van Gogh. Next followed a step by step development of early Cubism, paired with appropriate works by Cezanne, African sculpture and other comparisons (fig. 4,5). Later Cubism was represented with works such as *The Table* of 1919-1920 (fig. 6), as well as styles that Barr saw as related to Cubism such as Futurism, early Delaunay, and Leger's imposing *Luncheon*. This section culminated with Picasso's *The Studio* and *The Painter and his Model* which were given entire walls to themselves. Barr divided Cubism, distinctly and unequivocally into two phases "analytic" and "synthetic," terms which had appeared frequently in literature on Cubism, almost since its inception, but with varying connotations. Here, for the first time, those terms were used to define clear cut stylistic events in the history of Cubism. Other sections of the exhibition included the orphism of Delaunay, the development of neoplasticism in the work of Mondrian, the Suprematists (Malevich's *Black Square and Red Square* was hung upside down and reproduced that way in the catalog.) and the constructivism of Tatlin and Popova, represented by photographic reproductions. Finally, "Abstract Expressionism," the term Barr used for the works of Kandinsky, appeared near the end of the exhibition as well as "Abstract Dadaism," and "Abstract Surrealism" .

In addition to the traditional media of painting and sculpture, the exhibition presented abstract film, photography and the application of the modern vocabulary to architecture , chair design and small household objects such as plates and cups(fig. 7.) This monumental exhibition included altogether almost 400 objects. It was the first effort to display Cubism as a historically completed style, with a step by step development that derived from earlier sources and led, inevitably , to the later styles of abstraction. Barr significantly enhanced the dignity of the work by his spare installation. Such touches as the exhibition of Malevich's *White on White* between two windows on which the white window shades had been lowered exactly half way made a point about the painting and enhanced its own understated elegance. One astonishing omission from the panoramic sweep of the exhibition was all twentieth century American art with the exception of Alexander Calder and Man Ray. This omission will be returned to at the end of the article.

The exhibition, by its size and its location in the already respected Museum of Modern Art, made Cubism and its related styles and descendents into a completed history, at the same time that it removed that style from its own historical, social and political context, a significant contradiction .

Barr accompanied the exhibition with a catalog. In the text he systematically and factually laid out a history of Cubism . The emphasis throughout the essay was the development of the styles of modern art, rather than the details of the individual artists' careers. Only one artist, Brancusi, remained outside the classifications of style that Barr set up . He repeated the juxtapositions of the exhibition in the catalog, and filled in works that he considered crucial that did not appear in the exhibition such as the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* for which the *Dancer* was probably the stand in. Each style was given a

chronology, a summary and a pictorial documentation. The book concluded with a list of the works, carefully cataloged as to size and source, and a bibliography., compiled by Beaumont Newhall, who was also asked to take the installation photographs of the exhibition.

The curator of the exhibition , Alfred Barr, as first director of the Museum of Modern Art from its founding in 1929, had formulated preliminary versions of the exhibition in the early years of the 1930s. Even before he became director, Barr, as a professor of modern art in the 1920s, frequently combined teaching with modern art exhibitions .Even these early efforts indicate some aspects of his understanding of modernism. In creating the "Cubism and Abstract Art " exhibition he was functioning more as a teacher for the general public than as a scholar, a teacher who had been experimenting with instructional surveys of modern art for more than a decade. Thus, the exhibition of 1936 was an end product and distillation of this concern.

Alfred Barr's contribution as an influential interpreter of modernism has been widely appreciated , though little analyzed . Detailed examination of Barr's training reveals that his approach to an instructional survey of modernism was of a particular type, the product of an elite training in the methodologies of art history as they were practiced in the early 1920s. The historians who influenced Barr in his approach to "Cubism and Abstract Art " in 1936 were among the founders of the disciplines of art history and connoisseurship in America. The primary focus in American art history programs was formalist in the early twentieth century _ . Barr attended Princeton, receiving first a B.A. in 1922, then an M.A. degree at Princeton in 1923, He worked primarily with Charles Rufus Morey and Frank Jewett Mather. _

Charles Rufus Morey, in particular, influenced Barr throughout his career. Two aspects of Morey's approach appear to have had particular importance for Barr. First, the idea that all the arts are of equal interest and significance, an attitude that abolished the traditional Renaissance hierarchy. Morey's courses included so called minor arts as well as painting, sculpture and architecture. Barr's catalogs would later include film and design as well as painting and sculpture. Second, Morey, who was initially a classical archeologist, before he turned to medieval art, was a product of the nineteenth century in that he held the classical tradition in high esteem. Yet, Morey, likewise bore the impress of the approach of Alois Riegl, the theorist of late Roman art in his attitude to the importance of all the media, the principle of evolution, and further the idea of growth, flowering and decay _ . Morey characterized art as an abstract flow of form that existed independently of the individual artists. He strongly influenced Barr to conceive of art history as a detached event with its own internal development, rather than as a phenomenon subject to social, political and personal pressures.

In Frank Jewett Mather, Barr encountered a professor of art history engaged with contemporary criticism, as well as with earlier art. Mather's background was in literature rather than art history. _ His historical study echoed the chatty, informal approach to art criticism as it was often practiced in the teens.

Barr began doctoral study at Harvard University in 1924. Among the professors most influential on his later work was Paul J. Sachs. Sachs' methodology was that of the discriminating collector-connoisseur who engaged directly with the individual work visually. Connoisseurship , or examining the style and evaluating works aesthetically,

independent of the artist's identity was the particular emphasis of his courses. Sachs' close friend and even mentor was Bernard Berenson. Berenson's role as the formulator of the methodology of connoisseurship is crucial to an understanding of Barr's later writing.

In 1901 in his early book *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art* Berenson explained his methodology as follows:

The history of art should be studied much more abstractly than it has ever been studied and freed as much as possible from entangling irrelevancies of personal anecdote and parasitic growths of petty documentation. ...the world's art can be, nay should be, and studied as independently of all documents as is the world's fauna or the world's flora. The effort to classify the one should proceed along the line of the others...Such a classification would yield material not only ample enough for the universal history of art, but precise enough, if qualitative analysis also be applied, for the perfect determination of purely artistic personalities._

Berenson built on the scientific approach of the pioneer of connoisseurship, Giovanni Morelli, but added to that writer's quantitative approach "the element of 'quality'"_ It is this scientific, rational, yet, subjective determination of quality in which Sachs trained his students at Harvard. Barr in a seminar presentation for Paul Sach's course on the history of engraving and drawing, in the spring of 1925, attempted for the first time that has been preserved to transpose the methodology of connoisseurship to modern art:

If all artists painted or drew Madonnas as they once did, how conveniently we could compare them -but they don't. So I will show you a series of portraits. . . I will be emphasizing neither personalities nor chronologies, nor nationalities. I will merely propose a series of comparisons from which you must draw your own conclusions._

Barr then presented an overview of modern engraving and drawing by connecting the works on the basis of style elements such as line. Barr thus created an anonymous stylistic history of modernism based on qualitative differences he perceived in the works themselves. In an exhibition that accompanied the lecture, he sequenced and juxtaposed images, to suggest stylistic developments; labels explained how the works related to both earlier, contemporaneous and later works. On Picasso he wrote: "he began with Steinlen...played with negro sculpture; with Braque created Cubism; and deserted that for a return to nature and to Ingres "_ He also commented that "Cubism was the invention of Picasso and Braque but it was inspired by Cezanne who pointed out that natural forms if simplified to geometrical essentials become cubes and cylinders. This was the first stage of Cubism. Having reduced the form to cubes and cylinders and spheres, it is not a difficult step to juggle them somewhat to combine in one picture the front and back of the same figure, to substitute the concave for the convex and to do all of these things according to the aesthetic sensibility of the artist." _

Barr arranged the prints in the exhibition in what he called "an almost mathematical progression from Impressionism to Cubism" Barr's discussion of the individual work revealed his own analysis of the actual Cubist works in the tradition of the connoisseur. His emphasis is formal. He analyzes the line, plane, shape of the works very much in the way he had been trained to analyze Renaissance painting. He indicated that Cubism had been abandoned for a return to Ingres, but Ingres "simplified and continuous in contour, based . . . on profound knowledge."

Even in this rudimentary student exercise Barr revealed his dual allegiance, to the current critical dialog on Cubism and to the methodologies of connoisseurship and art historical analysis. In the spring of 1925, as Barr was presenting his report and exhibition, two aspects of the New York modern art scene stand out. First, the prevailing mood in criticism in American magazines was that Cubism was finished. Barr would have read that of Cubism often in the mid years of the 1920s. The development of the so-called neoclassical style by Picasso was seen as indicating that, as one critic put it, the "game is about up." The critics of art celebrated what they saw as a return to sanity and realism. On the other hand, more sophisticated writing on recent modern art was available in New York by 1925. Three surveys of modern art appeared in 1924, as well as an English translation of Apollinaire's *Aesthetic Meditations*. Thus Barr as a young art historian, focusing on the scholarly approach in which he had been trained, had literary sources on which to draw. At the same time, as he followed the contemporary art scene, he would have found that Cubism was considered already a completed event. His early predilections developed with that attitude, although unlike the more reactionary critics, he could appraise and analyze the tradition itself with his scholarly tools.

Following his training, Barr arranged another exhibition in conjunction with teaching a course in modern art at Wellesley in 1927. This was his first exhibition accompanied by a printed catalog and extensive explanations. It bears a surprisingly close relationship to his activities at the Museum of Modern Art in the early 1930s. The title of the exhibition was "Progressive Modern Painting from Daumier and Corot to Post Cubism." The inclination to seat Cubism in the midst of earlier developments of the mid nineteenth century continues in his later exhibitions, and even the emphasis on Corot and Daumier reappears in early individual exhibitions for each of these artists at the Museum of Modern Art., a different lineage than today's concern with Manet and Courbet as the grandfathers of modernism. Also reappearing later is the categorizing of groups and tendencies, and the filling in of blanks left by crucial works that do not appear in the exhibition by means of accompanying remarks. Thus, Cubism, while skimpily represented by Juan Gris, Jean Metzinger, Fernand Leger, and Marie Laurencin, was acknowledged as a central event with Futurism and Expressionism in what Barr referred to as Period II. The wall label for Juan Gris treats the nature of Cubism by formal analysis of the painting. The discussion reveals that the work was a collage although the term "synthetic cubism" appears nowhere in the discussion. Most important, in light of later developments, is that Cubism is viewed as a pre-war movement that is followed by "the present moment" which is compartmentalized into neo realism, surrealism, classicism and constructivism. Likewise, in Barr's modern art course, much more space was given to the range of approaches in modern art than to the role of Cubism. The course began with forerunners, then "various contemporary movements: cubism, futurism and minor 'isms', the post-war classicists and super realists and the national tendencies. Students study industrial arts, graphic arts and advertising . . . Various recurring themes are stressed, the appreciation of primitive and barbaric art, the psychology of expressionism, the discipline in Cubism and constructivism and the importance of the machine..." Barr's training led to the treatment of modern art in terms of stylistic development, categorization and virtually anonymous formal discussion. Yet, his own experience engaged increasingly with the contemporary art scene.

In 1927-1928 Barr went to Europe with his Cambridge roommate, Jere Abbott. On that trip Barr made contact with contemporary artists throughout Europe. Many of the contacts were based on his close friendship with the German art dealer, I. B. Neumann, recently immigrated to New York. Neumann provided him with letters of introduction to most of the major figures of German contemporary art, such as the Bauhaus group, the Neue Sachlichkeit and the dealers and critics that supported them. _ He went beyond even Neumann's contacts, however, by visiting Russia in the spring of 1927. There he met Diego Rivera as well as members of the Russian avant-garde. His introduction to the extremely politicized artists in Russia had a permanent effect on his awareness of the interaction of art and politics that directly affect the creation of the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition in 1936. Thus Barr became a strange amalgamation of the detached connoisseur theoretician and the engaged art critic aware of the impact of Marxism and politics in general on the arts. Even as he was meeting Russia's revolutionary artists, he was also engaged in a pioneering study of the anonymous Byzantine icons of Russia. _

After his return from Russia, Barr resumed teaching at Wellesley. In a five part lecture series in the Spring of 1929, Barr presented his more fully developed analysis of modern art starting with "Modern Painting: The Ideal of a "Pure" Art: The Important Tendencies in painting of twenty years ago.: the neo renaissance in Derain; the decorative in Matisse; the cubistic in Picasso; the formalist attitude toward Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque painting, the immediate antecedents of Cubism: Degas, Gauguin and the "angle shot"; Seurat and the theory of pure design; Cezanne's natural geometry; abstraction in primitive art. The development of cubism in Paris. Kandinsky and abstract expressionism in Germany. The final purification of painting: Mondrian in Holland; the Suprematists in Russia. Andre Lhote and the new academic. The influence of abstract painting upon architecture, the theatre, the films, photography, decorative arts, typographical layout, commercial art. Conclusion: the demon of the absolute." Subsequent to this phase was "The disintegration since Cubism: The pseudo classic mannerist(Picasso), the 'new objectivity' (Otto Dix), new adventures in appreciation, the child, the savage, the lunatic and the dream. . (t)he fantastic and grotesque. The surrealists (sic) as the ultimate devotees of spontaneity." Barr included three more parts in his compartmentalization of modernism "Modern American Painting: A Cross Section," "The Bauhaus" and "The Lyef Group of Moscow : the Artist and the Marxian deal" _ Cubism was thus, buried in the early stages of the lecture series, followed by the multiplicity of subsequent developments. Part I was to be the prototype for the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1936.

The Museum of Modern Art was founded in the spring of 1929 by Lizzie P. Bliss, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Mary Sullivan. Barr was appointed the first Director on the recommendation of Paul Sachs. Between 1929 and 1936, during his early years as director of the Museum of Modern Art, Barr arranged more than twenty exhibitions. Among the more than twenty exhibitions that he organized, several have specific references to Cubism and its current situation. Some can be seen as preliminary versions of the 1936 exhibition.

The first exhibition following Barr's appointment as director of the Museum of Modern Art that outlined the history of early twentieth century art was "Painting in Paris from American Collections." As in the Wellesley exhibition of 1927, the disparities between what Barr perceived as the central issues and artists and the actual artists in the

exhibition as available in American collections, were compensated for by the introductory essay. Barr's greater awareness of recent art was reflected in his statement that "contemporary art... is not however chaotic, it is merely so extraordinarily complex that it defies generalization." _ Barr then continued with excuses for his methodology. "Any attempt to classify modern artists must lead to treacherous simplification. But it may not be too misleading to suggest a chronology and some description of terms, trusting that the paintings themselves will contradict inevitable error." _ Barr here is both the connoisseur and the trained historian: even as he created order with the exhibition, he suggested that the final document was the work of art itself .

His systemization included the Fauves, Cubists and Surrealists . Cubism is seen as having "passed through three or four distinct phases each more complicated in appearance and in explanation. But by 1917 a distinct clarification occurs. . . The influence of Cubism has been immense, but its nearly complete elimination of naturalistic imitation has brought about equally extreme reactions... It is noteworthy that almost without exception the original members of both the fauve and cubist groups have in their recent work given far more recognition to the values of objective representation." Barr's bias was most clearly revealed in his next statement that the "puritanical exclusion of all sentimental and 'human' values by the cubists of 1908...has induced in the last generation a reaction which has produced painting of extraordinary originality...Surrealism." Barr's focus on the history of style was his heritage from Harvard and Princeton, but the emphasis on surrealism is based on his moment of maturing in the mid 1920s and his familiarity with recent developments.

In the spring of 1932 Barr created "A Brief Survey of Modern Painting." The exhibition was divided into several parts that echo but expand the subdivisions of the 1927 Wellesley exhibition. The historical section had two parts: "Painting Fifty Years Ago" and "Cezanne and the Post Impressionists." Twentieth century painting was also divided between Part I which included Expressionism, , Psychological and Decorative, Fauves, and School of Paris and Part II which included Picasso and Cubism, Futurism, Abstract Design, Superrealism. Cubism was presented as a gradual "removal from realism. . . The Cubists . . . step by step extended it until there were few traces of any recognizable objects in their pictures...their chief interest is in the design, in aesthetic qualities of line, color, texture. . . " "Abstract Design" is the art of Kandinsky, Mondrian and Rodchenko. This catalog, unlike the statements of 1927 or 1931 claimed that " the principles of Cubism and Abstract Design. . . spread all over the world and influenced many of the artists in this exhibition, for example the Germans, Marc and Klee, the Americans, Marin, Demuth and Dickinson, the Italians, Chirico and Severini. Cubism and Abstract Design have also had an immense influence upon 'modernistic' furniture, textiles, architecture, painting and advertising."_ Even more significant is Barr's conclusion that the Surrealists or "Superrealists . . .came as a violent reaction to the Cubists' exclusive interest in the problem of aesthetic design and color. The Superrealists asserted the value of the astonishing, the fantastic, the mysterious, the uncanny, the paradoxical, the incredible." Barr repeated his earlier statement that a "gradual, but widespread return to the realistic representation of nature has been in progress since the War." The reason for the confusion of contemporary art, he adds, is that the artist "picks and chooses" from "the whole history of art as well as much scientific and psychological knowledge."_ Barr's statement expanded on the earlier

essays: it gave Cubism more emphasis, but it also gave emphatic and detailed discussion of the new "superrealism." and suggested that there was a multifaceted complexity

The next exhibition of "Modern European Art" was discussed by Barr in the bulletin of the Museum in the fall of 1933. The essay referred to a summer exhibition, arranged by the trustees while Barr was on leave in Europe, which was continued into the fall. _ Following Barr's year away in Germany, a year that coincided with Hitler's rise to power and the beginning of the oppression of the avant-garde in Germany, a subtle shift occurred in Barr's discussion of the historical survey of modern art. Barr now praised the "Abstract paintings" including the Cubists, Kandinsky, and Mondrian as "the most striking ." In his consideration of the "Romantic Reaction" he spoke of Klee and Chirico separately as pioneers against "pure design," then the "Superrealists . . . who insist fanatically upon the exclusive validity of the imagination." Barr here introduced a negative judgment in the discussion of Surrealism in the reference to fanaticism _ the exhibition once again relied on American collections. Barr promised, in conclusion, upcoming shows of "Cubism and Abstract Painting illustrating prototypes and analogies, sources, development, decadence, influence and recent revival" and "Post War Romanticism" illustrating Dadaism, superrealism and other movements concerned with the mysterious, fantastic or sentimental together with their ancestry and analogs " _

Thus by the fall of 1933 Barr had developed a thesis giving Cubism central importance in relation to a major group of artists. One year later the Museum celebrated its fifth anniversary with an exhibition called "Modern Works of Art." It was accompanied by a much longer essay by Barr, as well as expanded coverage of sculpture and American art. All of the work, as in the previous exhibitions came from private collections in New York., and most of the artists had been shown in previous exhibitions. Barr carefully analyzed the development of Cubism :

Under the influence of Cezanne and primitive Negro sculpture they [Braque and Picasso] had begun about 1907 to reduce landscapes or figures to block-like forms with surfaces of flat planes. Two years later they had broken up these block-like forms, shifting their planes about, mingling the planes of foreground objects with the background . . . Gradually in this process of disintegration and re-integration, cubist pictures grew more and more abstract, that is abstracted from ordinary resemblances to nature. . . As a natural consequence of the elimination of subject they began to vary the surface of the painting by pasting on bits of newspaper...." _

This discussion is the first instance of the stages of Cubism that focus on the use of pasted paper, what would in the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition become the important phase of "synthetic cubism." Barr went on to comment that "Meanwhile outside of Paris, Cubist tendency towards geometric form has been carried to an extreme by the Suprematists. . . .Abstract art flourishes in London. Davis and Gorki lead the Cubists in New York. Bauer thrives in Berlin. Even futurism has won official recognition." _ He further characterizes surrealism as "less esoteric and more traditional" and speaks of "Post -War Painting as having "more relaxed and traditional styles . . . [which] to the extreme advance gardists . . .seemed, as indeed they were, reactionary." _Barr has subtly shifted his emphasis from the idea that realistic currents are primary, and Cubism finished, as he did in his early writings on modern art, to saying that Cubism has led to abstraction which is still vital throughout the world. Moreover other more realistic directions are seen as traditional and even reactionary.

This essay is the last published prelude to the greatly expanded treatment of Cubism and abstract art in the 1936 exhibition, an exhibition which also included Dada and Surrealism as the descendents of Cubism. Yet, one other interim step does appear in an undated and unsigned memo from the advisory committee to the Trustees. In it Cubism was directly linked to industrial design, which was seen as a dead end. "The thesis might end at this climactic point or it might continue with an account of the various paths by which painters of abstractions emerged from their blind alley into other kinds of painting, dadaism, constructivism, counter-relief, purism, compressionism, architecture, photography, photomontage, typography, etc." _ the argument was then made that America needed an exhibition of these artists because commercial galleries rarely exhibited them. Thus the argument hinged on the need to expose the public to Cubism. This memo was a joint effort of the advisory committee, rather than Barr's, but it provides one interesting argument used to create the exhibition. One other archival document, an undated chart in Barr's handwriting (fig.) places Cubism at the top of a genealogical chart with branches showing its three descendents as Mondrian, Kandinsky and Malevitch, then several steps leading finally to topography, stage arts and architecture. _ Thus Cubism was not one stage of modern art that was concluded, but the lynchpin of all aspects of early twentieth century art.

The 1936 catalog for "Cubism and Abstract Art" starts with a generality that has a different character from Barr's earlier essays. Barr lucidly identified the major premise of early modern art: artists were "obsessed by a particular problem" that of abstraction. Barr compared this problem to concerns of earlier artists for the "meticulous observation of external detail " in Flemish painting and the use of a "profounder science to discover the laws of perspective " of the Italian Renaissance . "In the early twentieth century the dominant interest was almost entirely the opposite . . . the more adventurous and original artists had grown bored with painting facts. By a common and powerful impulse they were driven to abandon the imitation of natural appearances." _ the artists wished, said Barr, to avoid "adulterating the purity of the art." He admitted that this led to impoverishment by " an elimination of the connotations of subject matter, the sentimental, documentary, political, sexual, religious, the pleasures of easy recognition and the enjoyment of technical dexterity . . . but the abstract artist prefers impoverishment to adulteration." _ The emphasis on the idea of purity here is a significant link to earlier writings by Apollinaire on Cubism and by Berenson on the Italian Renaissance.

In the section on Analytic Cubism Barr reiterated some of the ideas of the 1935 catalog. The new section on Synthetic Cubism expands on the earlier explanation. " Their texture . . . adds to [the] independent reality so they may be considered not a breaking down or analysis, but a building up or synthesis. ... pasting strips of paper... was a logical culmination of the interest in simulating textures and a further and complete repudiation of the convention that a painter was honor-bound to achieve the reproduction of a texture by means of paint rather than by the short cut of applying the texture itself to his canvas." _

This detailed discussion of individual Cubist works established with a new clarity the terminology of Cubist discussion and the historical perception of the importance of abstract art as a purification coming out of Cubism that represented a specifically twentieth century goal. Barr's bias toward the post-Cubist return to realism, so clearly

spelled out in earlier stages of his writings on Cubism has altered in favor of elaborate and specific analysis of Cubist work, and the establishment of its heritage, abstraction, as a major part of the contemporary scene. Moreover the catalog and the exhibition specifically excluded realism, even when it was a logical aspect of a style, as in Dadaism and Surrealism. The catalog thus represented a distinctly new set of priorities from Barr's earlier displays, that of the ordering, clarifying and justifying of Cubism and abstract art.

Also significant is that the exhibition itself was of a different type from all but one of the previous displays at the museum: it was a , comprehensive loan exhibition that drew on the work from the artists' studios, private European collectors, Paris art dealers and other new sources, rather than simply the New York collections that had been the centerpiece of previous exhibitions. _ Thus Barr's show was a campaign and a carefully ordered strategy to present what he called in a letter to Jerome Klein, a young art historian , "an exercise in contemporary art history with particular reference to style. " Yet in the same letter he goes on to say ,intriguingly: "I was very much interested in Cubism and abstract art ten years ago, but my interest in it has declined steadily since 1927." _

If Barr had lost interest in Cubism, why did he shift his emphasis from seeing Cubism as an early and completed stage of modern art, and embracing realism in the late twenties and early thirties to an all out campaign for Cubism and its heirs, with an emphasis on their continued vitality ? One possible explanation lies in Barr's plan of a series of exhibitions that would consider other aspects of modernism. _ . But that series of exhibitions does not explain the radical change in the nature of his support for Cubism and abstract art. One clear answer to the vehemence of the catalog is found in its statement that

This essay and exhibition might well be dedicated to those painters of squares and circles (and the architects influenced by them) who have suffered at the hands of philistines with political power. _

In 1936 as Barr was writing the catalog the reactionary forces of Stalinism and Nazism were becoming increasingly virulent in their attacks on avant-garde writers and artists. _ More specifically, though, as early as 1927 ,and again during a year in Germany in 1932 and 1933 , Barr himself had witnessed first hand the danger that totalitarianism posed to the avant garde artist .

In 1928 during Barr's trip to Russia he had seen the beginning of oppression of the avant-garde when he attempted to visit the Museum of Abstract Art in Moscow. He found it closed. Guides referred to modern art as examples of bourgeois decadence. _ By 1932 and 1933 Barr was confronted during a stay in Stuttgart with the early days of the rise of Hitler and its immediate effect on the visual arts. Margaret Barr describes these early events with frightening clarity in her recently published memoir. She conveys the sudden enthusiasm for Hitler among the residents of the pension where the Barrs were staying. She further recounts the sudden disappearance of a Schlemmer exhibition, the redesigning of modern flat roofs with gables, and the derogatory labeling of modern art works in art museums . _ Alfred Barr, angered with these events, wrote a series of articles titled "Hitler and the Nine Muses" in order to call the American public's attention to the then little known events in Germany with respect to the dangers to the avant garde. Only one of these articles was accepted for publication. _ Thus, Barr, more clearly than

others, saw the threat to avant garde art that totalitarian regimes posed. He saw the same threat in America, as evidenced by his footnote reference to the holding at customs of much of the sculpture for the exhibition.(fig . 8) _ The point at which Barr began to increasingly emphasize Cubism and abstract art, and to downplay realism was in his 1933 essay written the fall after his return from Germany . That article also promised a comprehensive exhibition of "Cubism and Abstract Art."

In arranging for the exhibition, Barr made important contacts with European collectors, critics and writers, visiting such people as Henry Moore, Joan Miro, Piet Mondrian, Alberto Giacometti, Fernand Leger, Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, and , perhaps most dramatically, Larionov and Gontcharova who had emigrated from Russia since Barr last saw them in Moscow in 1927. The reunion with the Russian artists was emotional. _ Perhaps fueled by his anger with the situation for avant garde artists in Europe, Barr approached many artists more directly than he ever had before._ He thus circumvented the increased power of the dealers particularly for these now well established artists who had been a considerable obstacle to Barr in earlier efforts to organize exhibitions from European collections.

The "Cubism and Abstract Art " exhibition was assembled almost ferociously in the art season of 1935-1936. Barr wrote the catalog in only six weeks . He drew on his training in scholarly detachment for his genealogical approach , his anonymous treatment of style, and his lucid connoisseurship of particular works. But he also drew on his concern for the threatened condition of the avant garde . The combination of these resources gave the exhibition its breadth, universality , lucidity and permanence. More than just another exhibition of modern art, "Cubism and abstract art" achieved the status of propaganda for a threatened cause.

Barr used the full resources of the Museum of Modern art to promote the exhibition of "Cubism and Abstract Art." It traveled to San Francisco, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Baltimore, Providence and Grand Rapids; Paramount pictures included it in the Movie tone news, newspapers gave it broad coverage. Barr's campaign for Cubism and its descendents was a powerful and successful effort, and much more influential than perhaps he even would have wished or anticipated in the mid 1930s.

Barr's sense of timing about the urgency of the situation was correct. As the exhibition opened in San Francisco in the summer of 1936, the frightening charade of the Berlin Olympics was taking place in Germany. In Moscow, during 1936 the Stalin trials were persecuting a broad sector of the intellectual community. Even in the United States the political scene had an impact on the arts: the leftist Art Front was calling for an art that responded to conditions of life, while at the same time, the Regionalists demanded an art that reflected the American scene._ In most parts of the country the Works Progress Administration was supporting the artists who painted scenes of America with recognizable subjects.

The critical response varied widely according to the predilections of the critics. _ More significant than the journalistic criticism, was the response of artists and historians. One immediate apparently immediate response was the exhibition of the some of the omitted American abstract artists by other galleries. _ Their omission was the result of Barr's conviction that the development of abstraction was moving toward the organic, rather than the geometric, and therefore the American artists who worked in what he saw

as the geometric tradition, were not qualitatively significant enough to be included. He also claimed that the Whitney Museum had covered the abstract tradition the previous year. _ Also related to the omission of the American artists was the formation of the American Abstract Artists Group and the beginning of its exhibition program._

In addition to the impact of the 1936 exhibition itself, the catalog had a separate life and series of results. Barr mailed the catalog to all the artists included in the exhibition, as well as dealers, collectors and libraries. Preserved in the Barr archives are letters from , among others, the dealer Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler, and the artists Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Wassily Kandinsky. These letters range from precise corrections of dates and chronologies to sweeping analysis of Barr's methodology.

Most comprehensive were Kandinsky's letters, and appropriately so, as he was certainly misrepresented in the exhibition as simply a descendent of Gauguin and Cubism. Kandinsky began by complimenting Barr on the "purely scientific" method of tracing the development of art., but emphasized that Barr must have relied on outside sources in order to be aware of activities in so many places at the same time. Kandinsky suggested to Barr that he stressed outside influences too much, when it is inner influences that are more important._ He objected to Barr's concept that he was part of a deterministic march to abstraction, since, in fact, he painted realistic and abstract paintings at the same time. _ Kandinsky hit on crucial issues here. First he questioned the validity of the idea of a common impulse toward abstraction . Second, Kandinsky criticized the principle of an anonymous, purely formal, determination of art's development. By omitting any consideration of religious context, Barr radically misunderstood Kandinsky, as art historians now know. _ While Barr first developed the idea of the outward, collective impulse toward abstraction for the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition, it was based in its conceptualization on his understanding of the nature of style as he had studied it in his graduate work. Likewise his formalist bias, as discussed in connection to his earliest survey of modernism for Paul Sachs' seminar in 1925, was the result of the wedding of his training in connoisseurship based on the methodologies of Berenson via Sachs and Barr's desire to order and understand, not the art of the Renaissance, but that of the twentieth century. These sources took him a long way from Kandinsky's reference points.

Moholy-Nagy , in a letter a few years after the exhibition, corrected Barr's chronology of Constructivism and as well as the interpretation of his own sources, which he emphatically stated were more related to Cubism and Frank Lloyd Wright, than to Constructivism. Most pointedly though Moholy-Nagy spoke , as did Kandinsky, to Barr's methodology , criticizing him for finding a single, central place for each style, when actually events occurred simultaneously throughout Europe. He therefore finds fault with Barr's discussion of certain artists as eclectic._

The letter of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, the dealer most intimately connected to the early events in Cubism, and author of his own book on its development, wrote to Barr respectfully, acknowledging Barr's book as the most serious study of modern art he had read, while adding that he himself saw "Cubism as a much more 'realistic' movement" _

One art historian, Meyer Schapiro, provided a polemic on the weakness of the book in terms of its omission of social history. In his essay reviewing the exhibition Schapiro sharply criticized the idea of the purity of abstraction, the isolation of art from

social context and the exclusion of the subjective concern, such as ideology, of the artist. Schapiro even questioned the centrality of Cubism at several points. These letters and articles provide invaluable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of both the catalog of the exhibition and Barr's methodology for the exhibition itself. They offer perspectives that in many cases have only recently been considered.

Despite criticism of the book and the exhibition, both had immense influence on later art history. The catalog for the exhibition became a widely used source on the history of modernism for generations of students. Standard texts incorporated its interpretations of the significant artists and events as well as its impersonal approach to style, that fit so easily with the traditions of earlier periods of art history. The development of modern art as we currently teach it is still descended from the analysis of Barr, although later scholars have broadened and deepened those central outlines. Even in a recent exhibition such as "The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1980" the heritage of Barr's exhibition is present. Although the catalog of the exhibition provides major new insights into the roles of symbolism and mysticism as central concerns of early twentieth century artists, the exhibition's arbitrary title limiting those insights to the "abstract" is the heritage of the bias of the last fifty years descending from the interpretations of the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition,

Barr succeeded then in preserving the tradition that he saw threatened. He raised Cubism and what he saw as its descendants to the status of an absolute by eliminating spiritual, political and historical contexts. He placed the art on a utopian plane of activity, comparable to the art of the Italian Renaissance using the tools of his art historian training. In thus achieving autonomy from the artistic and political tensions of the mid 1930s, he was able to establish the traditions of Cubism and abstraction as timeless and universal. He made modern art part of the ongoing traditions of art from the earliest eras, providing continuity by the use of both the methods of stylistic analysis learned in graduate school and by eliminating what he saw as less qualitatively important.

Important to note in concluding however, is that the program that Barr presented in the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition and catalog seen in the larger context of the role of art in society in general as a statement of the human spirit. Most moving is his discussion in a 1943 book *What is Modern Painting* in which he refers to Picasso's *Guernica* :

Picasso employed these modern techniques not merely to express his mastery of form or some personal and private emotion but to proclaim through his art his horror and fury over the barbarous catastrophe which had destroyed his fellow countrymen in *Guernica* - and which was soon to blast his fellow men in Warsaw, Rotterdam, London, Coventry, Chungking, Sebastopol, Pearl Harbor. . .the work of art is a symbol, a visible symbol of the human spirit in its search, for truth for freedom, for perfection." _

Barr himself did not see that search as only taking place within the context of "Cubism and Abstract Art," although that particular style and his interpretation of it was particularly conducive to the type of rational and scientific analysis in which Barr had been trained. An accident of history caused that particular exhibition to fall on such fertile ground, at a seminal moment in the development of criticism and art history in America. Ironically, the same style that was seen in the 1930s as an emblem of freedom from totalitarianism, came to be seen in the post war decades as a straightjacket for contemporary art. Today we can put the exhibition in its proper perspective as simply

one, albeit brilliant, interpretation of the development of modern art. Cubism now appears to have been less of a lynchpin than Barr claimed in the heated pressures of the mid 1930s. Today, in the era of post-modernism, we see that careful order breaking down and the idea of plurality established. Styles are no longer seen to evolve neatly in an autonomous development, nor do we feel assured that all later abstract styles descended from Cubism or were its ultimate goal. Today, the idea of confining a discussion of modern art to purely formal, linear or even dialectical terms is seen as an arbitrary, intellectual framework. Furthermore, the importance of social, religious and political issues is seen, not as omitted from cubism and abstract art, but as an integral part of them. Yet, even with all of these new perspectives we cannot deny the importance of Barr's contribution in providing the first compelling model of formalist discussion and stylistic ordering for early twentieth century art. His legacy will survive in the artistic subconscious of generations of artists and historians, not only in his stylistic categories, but also in the virtually permanent display of the work in the exhibition in the Alfred H. Barr Galleries at the Museum of Modern Art. A surprisingly large percentage of the works in the exhibition were later acquired by the Museum, making the exhibition almost an agenda for purchase for the next thirty years. It is a tribute to Alfred Barr that his exhibition and particularly his catalog have had such a lasting impact.

_The other cities were San Francisco, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Baltimore, Providence and Ann Arbor.

_Katherine Dreier, *Modern Art, 1926*, The Brooklyn Museum was initially an exhibition catalog for her large exhibition of modern art. The exhibition was the most comprehensive effort to show modern art to that time, and included all of Eastern European art. The book was organized around six categories invented by Dreier.

Walter Pach *Masters of Modern Art*, (New York, 1924) included chapters on _Henry McBride," Exhibition of Abstract Art at the Museum of Modern Art," as published in Daniel Catton Rich, editor, *The Flow of Art, Essays and Criticisms of Henry McBride*, New York, 1975, pp. 333-336 includes a specific reference to the Picasso and a witty analysis of the exhibition as a whole. The review originally appeared in *The New York Sun*, March 7, 1936.

_ Rona Roob, "Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: A Chronicle of the Years 1902- 1929," *The New Criterion*, Special Issue, [Summer 1987] p. 2. Barr even published notes on ornithology. One example, in the form of a letter to an art magazine, is reproduced in Irving Sandler, *Defining Modern Art Selected Writings of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.*, New York, 1986, p. 238. in the form of a letter to an art magazine.

_ Lynn Gamwell, *Cubist Criticism*, Ann Arbor, 1980, pp. 33-35, 95-100.

6 Barr's contribution is acknowledged in almost every book on modern art. Some examples are Robert Rosenblum, *Cubism and Twentieth Century Art*, New York, 1959 in the Acknowledgements, n.p. ; Herbert Read, "Preface," *A Concise History Of Modern Painting* New York, 1959, p. 8. For an indication of Barr's impact see Read's book published before the exhibition, *Art Now*, New York, 1933, which barely covers Cubism.

7 Barr's correspondence with Erwin Panofsky during the 1930s is preserved in the Alfred H. Barr Papers, Museum of Modern Art, New York; See Margaret Scolari Barr, "Our Campaigns," *The New Criterion*, Special Issue, 1987, p. 28. See also for a thorough and enlightening discussion of Panofsky's contribution to art history Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, Ithaca, 1984.

8 Roob (cited no. 4) pp. 2-5 outlines Barr's early experiences with these professors. Also interesting is Barr's background as son of Presbyterian Minister who was a professor of homiletics as discussed in Dwight McDonald, "Profiles," *The New Yorker*, Dec. 12, 1953, p. 78.

_ Charles Rufus Morey, *Medieval Art*, New York, 1942, p.21

10 *Who was Who in America*, vol. 3, 1960, p. 561,615 outlines the different educational backgrounds of Morey and Mather. Morey had an M.A. in Art History and had been a fellow at the American School in Rome; Mather had a Ph.D. from John Hopkins and formerly was an assistant professor of foreign language and a critic and editor for *The New York Evening Post* and *The Nation*.

_ Paul Sachs makes relatively brief remarks about Berenson's importance to him in his unpublished autobiography, "Tales of an Epoch," Fogg Art Museum Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 276. See also Ernest Samuels, *Bernard Berenson, The Making of A Connoisseur*, Cambridge, 1979, p. 171. Samuels states that the two met just as Sachs was beginning his career in art in 1914. *The Berenson Archive, An Inventory of Correspondence*, Nicky Mariano, compiler, Cambridge, 1965, p. 86, cites that Sachs and Berenson exchanged 86 letters between 1916 and 1955.

12 Bernard Berenson, *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, London, 1903, pp. vi, vii.

13 Berenson, (cited n.12) p. viii. Berenson is also reacting against the approach of his own teacher Charles Eliot Norton, who was primarily an enthusiast.

14 Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Barr Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives*, These archives are available on microfilm at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., Roll 3150.

15 Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Loan Exhibition of Modern Graphic Art," Spring 1925, typed wall labels, Museum of Modern Art Archives.

16 Alfred H. Barr (cited n. 15)

17 "Arch Cubists Recant?" *American Art News*, June 12, 1920. For more information on the American criticism of Cubism in the early 1920s see my book *Modernism in the 1920s* Ann Arbor, 1985, p. 5., 79-83, 87-90.

18 Guillaume Apollinaire, "Aesthetic Meditations," *The Little Review*, Spring, 1922, pp. 7-19; Autumn 1922, pp. 41-59; Winter 1922, pp. 49-60. The three surveys are Sheldon Cheney, *A Primer of Modern Art* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924); Katherine Dreier, *Western Art and the New Era* (New York: Brentano's, 1923); Walter Pach, *The Masters of Modern Art*, New York, 1924. Earlier surveys include Arthur Jerome Eddy, *Cubists and Post Impressionism*, Chicago, 1914; Willard Huntington Wright, *Modern Painting Its Tendency and Meaning*, New York, 1915 and Jan Gordon, *Modern French Painters*, New York, 1923. Of these books the one that appears to have been the most direct source for some of Barr's comments is Wright.

19 Wall labels Alfred H. Barr Papers, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Archives of American Art microfilm 3263:092. Part I was Cezanne, Renoir, Degas, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Les Fauves and Die Brücke.

20 "Wellesley and Modernism," *Boston Transcript*, April 27, 1927, n.p. The article also indicates that color reproductions were used for study; color reproductions of art were just becoming available for the first time in the late 1920s, a striking contrast to the situation today.

21 I.B. Neumann is the subject of a forthcoming book by Lily Harmon. His friendship with Barr is recorded in the letters Barr wrote to Neumann preserved in the I.B. Neumann Papers, Archives of American Art. This friendship was central particularly to the important German exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1931. His impact on Barr is directly seen in the early exhibition of German art at the Museum of Modern Art,

22 The way that the Russian trip came about is briefly described in by Jere Abbott in Sandler (cited n. 4) p. 103 as a virtually spontaneous idea generated by Nina Hammett in London early in the trip. Barr wrote several articles as a result of this Russian trip: "The Researches of Eisenstein," *Drawing and Design* 4 (24), pp. 155-156; "The 'LEF' and Soviet Art," *Transition* 13/14 (14), Fall 1928, pp. 267-270; "Sergei Michailovitch Eisenstein," *The Arts* 14(6), December 1928, pp. 316-321; "Notes on Russian Architecture," *The Arts* 15(2) February 1929, pp. 103-106, 144, 146; "Otto Dix," *The Arts* 17(4), January 1931, pp. 234-251, this article was written in 1929, but Barr withheld it from publication for fear of appearing reactionary. See Sandler (cited n. 2) p. 147; in addition to these articles on modern art, Barr also wrote "Russian Icons," *The Arts*, 17(5), February 1931, pp. 296-313, 355-362.

23 This brochure is preserved in the Museum of Modern Art Archives, . It is also reproduced as "A Course in Five Lectures in Modern Art" in Sandler, (cited n. 2) pp. 67, 68.

24 Alfred H. Barr, "Foreward," *Painting in Paris from American Collections*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1930), p. 11 . The first exhibition was historical: Cezanne, Gauguin, Seurat and Van Gogh; the second was contemporary American art. An interesting discussion of the importance of Painting in Paris in terms

of Picasso in Eunice Lipton, *Picasso Criticism 1901-1939 The Making of an Artist Hero*, New York, 1975, pp. 335 - 336.

25 Barr(cited n. 24), p. 11.

26 Barr (cited n. 24), p. 13,14. The idea of several stages for the development of Cubism was common in the early literature on the style. See for example Jan Gordon, *Modern French Painters*, New York, 1923 ,p.137 which outlines eight stages.

27 Barr (cited n. 24), p. 14. The same essay appeared in a catalog for an exhibition shown in Detroit in the Spring of 1931. "Introduction," *Exhibition of Modern French Painting*, ex. cat. (Detroit: The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1931). It apparently included the same group of works.

28 A. H. Barr, *A Brief Survey of Modern Painting*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art [1932],) unpaginated. This exhibition consisted of color reproductions.

29 Barr(cited n. 28)

30 Barr(cited n. 28)

31 No documents survive on Barr's specific role in the choice of works for the exhibition, but given his detailed correspondence with Goodyear on other aspect of the museum activities during his leave, it seems likely that Barr had some part in the choice of works.

32 A.H.B. Jr., "Summer Show," *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*,(1)2, October 1933, p. 2.

33 Barr (cited n.32) p. 4.

34 Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Modern works of Art," *Modern Works of Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1935)p. 15.

35 Barr(cited n. 34) p. 15.

36 Barr(cited n. 34) p. 16.

37 "Report to the Trustees from the Advisory Committee. An Exhibition "Towards Abstraction." May 3, no year, prepared by Mrs. Russell. The proposed exhibition had five parts: Part I Tendency Toward Abstract Design in Painting 1850-1900; Part II Tendencies Toward Abstract Painting 1900-1910; Part III The Emergence of Abstract Design 1910 - 1914; Part IV The Cul de Sac of Pure Geometry 1914-1920. Museum of Modern Art Archives,

38 Alfred H. Barr Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives. Other proposed titles for the exhibition also in the archives were "Out of Cubism," and "Abstract Design in Modern Art,"

39 Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Introduction," *Cubism and Abstract Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936), p. II.

40 Barr (cited n. 39), p. 13.

41 Barr (cited n. 39), p. 78.

42 The other major exhibition prior to "Cubism and Abstract Art" with a major group of loans from European collections was the Van Gogh exhibition of the previous fall. That exhibition had been a major change for the museum with its record breaking crowds, and admission charges. Organized during the same summer as the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition, some of its background is recounted in M. Barr (cited n. 7) pp. 40-43.

43 A.H. Barr, Jr. letter to Jerome Klein, July 19, 1936. Museum of Modern Art Archives,

44 The concept of a series has been mentioned in various contexts. One is stated in A.H. Barr's Preface, "Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism" exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936) p. which is characterized as second in a series of which "Cubism and Abstract Art" was the first. In M. Barr, (cited n. 2), p. 44. the series is stated to include "Masters of Popular Painting," (1938), "American Realists and Magic Realists," (1943), "Romantic Painting in America," (1943). This corresponds with Barr's early 1930s treatment of the complexity of realism, although none of these exhibitions were curated by Barr, nor were they stated to be part of the series. Furthermore, "Magic Realism" is stated as part of a different series that began with "Artists from 9 States," in 1942, a contemporary survey.

45 Barr (cited n. 39), p. 18.

46 See Jarrell Jackman and Carla Borden, eds., *The Muses Flee Hitler*, Washington D.C. 1983), especially pp. 29-44. The literature concerned with the impact of politics on arts in the 1930s is extensive. One valuable group of essays is found in Herschel Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley, 1971) pp. 456-500.

47 McDonald, (cited n. 8), p. 82, see also Vladimir Kemenov, "Aspects of Two Cultures," as reprinted in Chipp (cited n. 46) pp. 490-496. See also in the same book the essay by Trotsky and Breton, pp. 483-486.

48 M. Barr, (cited n. 7) pp. 31-32.

49 The article that was published appeared as "Notes on the Film: Nationalism in German Films." *The Hound and Horn* 7(2), January/March 1934, pp. 278-283. The journal

was edited by a friend of Barr's, Lincoln Kirstein. Even this article was published on a back page. The other articles were simply refused by the five publications to which they were submitted, a traumatic experience for Barr who previously had had little difficulty in getting his articles published. See Sandler (cited n. 4) p. 102.

50 Barr (cited n. 39), p. 18. Barr stated the reason for the refusal was a ruling that states that sculpture "must represent an animal or human form."

51 M. Barr (cited n. 7) p. 42.

52 Earlier in his career as director Barr had had much difficulty obtaining loans as seen in documents relating to his effort to create a Picasso exhibition in 1930, when he was still an unknown director of the little known Museum. See Museum of Modern Art Archives, not microfilmed. I am grateful to Rona Roob for calling these documents to my attention.

53 One record of some of these controversies is to be found in *The Art Front*, the organ of the artist's union. See especially the issues of November 1934, January 1935 and April 1937.

54 See for example Edward Alden Jewell, "Academicism on the Left," *The New York Times*, March 8, 1936, n.p.; James W. Lane, "Current Exhibitions," *Parnassus*, viii(4, 1936) pp. 26-28. Balcomb Green, "Abstract Art at the Modern Museum," *Art Front*, April 1936, pp. 5-7. "Modern Museum Opens Show Despite Ignorance of U.S. Martinets," *The Art Digest*, March 15, 1936, p. 10.

55 James Lane sites the "concretionist" exhibition arranged by A.E. Gallatin that included Charles Shaw, Alexander Calder, George Morris, Charles Biederman and John Ferren., as well as exhibitions of the work of Joseph Albers, Hilaire Hiler and Carl Holty. The exact dynamic between these exhibitions and that of the Museum of Modern Art has not been located in documents, although Melinda Lorenz, *George Morris, Artist and Critic*, Ann Arbor, 1982, pp. 49-52 makes brief reference to Gallatin's exhibition as a "counter exhibition." p. 42.

56 Barr, (cited n. 39) p. 9. In 1951 the Museum held an exhibition entirely devoted to American Abstract art which by then was the dominant style of the American art world. Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1951). This exhibition clearly uses the 1936 exhibition as its model but with interesting variations in terms of its attempts to create categories, p. 68.

57 Lorenz, (cited n. 56), pp. 49-52. discusses some of the early stages of the American Abstracts Artist Group. The role of Morris as an intermediary between the Museum for which he was on the Advisory Board and buying paintings, as well as lending works to exhibitions, and the American Abstract Artists Group is also briefly touched on by Lorenz, pp. 37-42. Other responses among American artists may be the writing and publication of John Graham's *Systems and Dialectics in Art*, New York, 1937, the writing of which was completed in the Spring of 1936, Also a the new sense of historic

order develops at the Gallery of Living Art, renamed the Museum of Living Art at the same time as the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition.

58 Wassily Kandinsky to Alfred H. Barr, June 22, 1936. Museum of Modern Art Archives.

59 Wassily Kandinsky to Alfred H. Barr, July 16, 1936. This and the other letters from Kandinsky are filled with poetically stated insights into the differences between his approach to art and that of Barr's interpretations.

60 There is some possibility that Philip Johnson influenced Barr in his underrating of Kandinsky. A critical letter (undated) from Johnson to Barr derides Kandinsky's sense of his own importance. Museum of Modern Art Archives. The literature on Kandinsky in the last decade has reinterpreted both his sources and his intentions. See most recently, Rose Carol Washton Long, "Expressionism, Abstraction and the Search for Utopia in Germany," *The Spiritual in Art, Abstract Painting 1890-1980*, exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986.

61 Moholy-Nagy to Alfred Barr, May 23, 1939; although the letter is a few years later, the discussion is based on the catalog for "Cubism and Abstract Art."

62 Daniel Kahnweiler to Alfred Barr, May 6, 1936. See also Gamwell, (cited n. 3) pp. 86-88; Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, *Way of Cubism* (New York, 1949) English translation of *Weg Zum Kubismus*, (Munich, 1920). Also intriguing is the letter from Jay Leyda to Alfred Barr, May 23, 1936, describing the response of Tatlin to the exhibition catalog. Tatlin offers to trade one of his works for a Harley Davidson motorcycle with sidecar. Unfortunately, the museum is not able to take him up on this offer. Jay Leyda to Alfred Barr, June 11, 1936.

63 Meyer Schapiro, "Cubism and Abstract Art," *Modern Art, 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York, 1978.), pp. 185-211. This essay is interesting to compare to Schapiro's essay of twenty years later, republished in the same book, pp. 213-232, in which Schapiro is more formal in his orientation. Barr supported Schapiro's perspective as also valid in a letter to Jerome Klein, July 19, 1936. Schapiro and Barr were, in fact, congenial and mutually respected one another as demonstrated in their correspondence. Museum of Modern Art Archives. Barr occasionally participated in a study group on the issues of modern art that Schapiro organized in the mid 1930s. Schapiro has stated to the author that the exhibition was of immense importance as the first time that all the modern movements were laid out for the New York art world. Telephone conversation, Meyer Schapiro and Susan Platt, March 1987.

64 The chart from the "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition is reproduced in the front of the catalog. "The Spiritual in Art," p. 18., although Barr is seen as simply fostering formalism.

65 Alfred H. Barr, *What is Modern Painting*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1943) p. 41. This enormously successful book re-establishes the plurality of approaches from

Barr's early career as outlined in this article. Later editions of the book add a concluding section on post-war abstraction and more statements on the connection of abstraction and freedom. Alfred Barr, *What is Modern Painting*, Boston, 1974; pp.42-46. revised 1952,1953,1956; also note that over 100,000 copies of this book have been sold since 1943 and it is still in print.