



The Paintings of Moholy-Nagy: The Shape of Things to Come
FACT SHEET

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE:
SBMA, July 5 – September 27, 2015

DESCRIPTION: The proposed exhibition, *The Paintings of Moholy-Nagy: The Shape of Things to Come*, will be the first to explore how the practice of painting served as a crucial means for László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) to imagine generative relationships between art and technology. Featuring a suite of paintings executed on traditional supports as well as on new industrial materials like plastics and aluminum, this exhibition highlights how Moholy deployed painting to synthesize the inter-medial practice for which the artist has become so renowned. Organized chronologically and thematically, this exhibition will show the evolution of Moholy's thought and practice over his career but will attend especially to the profound political and technological impact World War II had on him.

The Shape of Things to Come will feature 17 paintings on traditional and industrial supports, 5 works on paper, 5 large-format photographs, 2 photograms, a color Kodachrome slide projection set, and a kinetic sculpture with an accompanying film. The exhibition seeks to demonstrate how Moholy mobilized painting's seeming limitations to convert materials that might otherwise have been destined for the cockpit of a fighter jet into aesthetic objects made to hone the senses. The exhibition also includes a contemporary re-presentation of Moholy's unfinished work for a futuristic film by H.G. Wells, in the form of a three-channel video projection by the acclaimed Chicago-based artist, Jan Tichy.

NUMBER OF OBJECTS: 33

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- First exhibition to highlight Moholy's sustained engagement with painting throughout his career and attend to its conceptual and theoretical significance
- First exhibition to attend closely to Moholy's application of traditional art-making techniques to new industrial materials and processes
- First exhibition to situate Moholy's work on plastic in relation to his attempts at contributing to the American war effort in WWII
- First major comprehensive exhibition of Moholy's work on the west coast since the 1968-69 retrospective, for which the Santa Barbara Museum of Art was a venue

EXHIBITION STRUCTURE

Exhibition will be presented as suite of five rooms that show the continuity of his concern with integrating industrial materials and practices in his art very different ways throughout his career.

Art and Technology: A New Unity – Moholy at the Bauhaus

- Room 1 examines the emergence of Moholy's abstract painting in the early twenties and highlights his embrace of a new machine aesthetic. It links the style and technique and materials deployed with his tenure at the Bauhaus when the project of unifying art with technology stood at the center of the school's artistic and pedagogical endeavors.

From Pigment to Light: The Light Prop for an Electric Stage, 1928-1930

- Room 2 features the Light Prop for an Electric Stage, a project he worked upon during a period in which he gave up painting to focus on developing industrial lighting prototypes. Showing the work with a film of the machine in action, this room makes explicit a longstanding preoccupation with light projection and movement manifest in other works on view.

Painting after Photography: Painting and Color Reproduction in Exile 1930-1936

- Room 3 explores why painting becomes urgent for Moholy in the thirties during a period of economic and political duress. This section focuses on paintings Moholy made during exile, paying particular attention to a painting first made in the twenties but was repaired and repainted in the thirties. Showing this work in relation to other paintings and color reproductions Moholy made in the thirties, this section shows how painting played surrogate to technologies he no longer had access to as a lone figure, exiled from Germany.

The Plasticity of Painting: Space Modulators in America 1936-46

- Room 4 examines how Moholy's use of newly developed thermoplastics shaped his aesthetic over the course of the thirties and forties, during a period when he served as director of the New Bauhaus and Institute of Design. These objects synthesize the various strains of artistic practice. They are painting, sculpture hybrids, made to activate the viewer and reveal new capacities of color photographic reproduction as well.

Vision in Motion: The Color Slides

- Room 5 comprises a set of color slides that will be shown in a loop. Made as study objects and as images for teaching, the show concludes with these luminous color projections to reveal the links between his painting and photographic practice.
- Room 6 will offer the coda of Jan Tichy's collage of projections based on shots created by Moholy-Nagy in 1936 for H.G. Well's futuristic film, *Things to Come*, which were not included in the movie, thereby offering a glimpse of Moholy's prescient anticipation of a dystopic, technologically redefined world unmoored from nature.