

Self-Guide

ART
INSTITUTE
CHICAGO

Modern Wing Highlights: Curators' Picks

Housing over 800 works in 65,000 feet of gallery space, the Modern Wing is a true treasure trove of 20th- and 21st-century art, architecture, design, and photography. Take in highlights from the new building's stunning array of artworks as this guide features curators' picks from their various collections.



GALLERY 396

Time Transfixed (1938) by René Magritte

One of great icons of the Art Institute's Surrealist collection, René Magritte's *Time Transfixed* was commissioned by Edward James, a famous patron of the Surrealist movement. In his collaborations with such artists as Magritte and Dalí, James sought to make his home literally a "Surrealist dream." Magritte hoped his painting would be placed at the bottom of James's spiral staircase so that the train would "stab" guests on their way down. But, much to Magritte's dismay, James ironically hung the painting over his fireplace instead. In the Modern Wing, the painting is installed in a suite of galleries that celebrate Chicago's legendary Surrealist collectors.



GALLERY 291

Untitled (1994-95) by Robert Gober

Over the last two decades, Robert Gober's sculptures have mined the psychological tensions of domestic space. His handmade objects initially look quite familiar, but these re-creations are unsettling, functionless versions of their originals. *Untitled* exaggerates and combines two seemingly dissimilar elements: an everyday domestic object, the tissue box, and a nondescript industrial object, a culvert pipe. Like many items in Gober's works, these elements are linked through their connection to water—human tears are associated with the tissue box and plumbing to the pipe. Through Gober's manipulation and juxtaposition in *Untitled*, these two components, basic hygienic devices typically taken for granted, are deconstructed and suggest an abstract anxiety of disease.



GALLERY 283

The Titanic (1978) by Stanley Tigerman

With this fanciful photomontage of Mies van der Rohe's Crown Hall sinking into Lake Michigan, Chicago native Stanley Tigerman made a bold statement about the end of modernism in Chicago. The spare simplicity of Miesian modernism saw a worldwide backlash in the 1970s as young architects rediscovered an appreciation of elaborate architectural drawings, ornamentation, and historical styles. Tigerman led this postmodern push in Chicago, embracing architectural diversity and cultural responsiveness in his writings, exhibitions, and designs. Longtime director of the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Tigerman was also responsible for organizing the Chicago Seven, a group of diverse and prominent Chicago architects.



GALLERY 188

***Untitled (Fashion Helmet)* (1982) by Richard Prince**

Whether termed stolen, copied, appropriated, or recycled, the “rephotographs” of American artist Richard Prince have certainly provoked controversy and questioned the definition of art making. Prince began photographing existing advertising images in the 1970s while working in the tear-sheet department of Time Life. Extracting details from elaborate layouts of furniture, jewelry, and pens or focusing on models’ poses, Prince produced series that at once expose the falsity of the advertising world and reveal an unsettling sameness among different brands. Prince’s subsequent work in various styles and media continues this relentless challenge of comfortable cultural narratives.



VITALE FAMILY ROOM

***Illustration from the book A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams* (2008) by Melissa Sweet**

Inaugurating the brand new galleries in the Modern Wing’s Ryan Education Center are Melissa Sweet’s thoughtful illustrations for the Caldecott Award–winning *A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams* by Jen Bryant. A family doctor by day, Williams delighted in the quiet moments of late evening when he was able to do what he loved most—write poetry. In this spread from the illustrated biography, a flattened book jacket frames the focus of the picture: an illuminated window highlighting the writer opposite colorfully decorated passages from Williams’s poem “The Descent of Winter.” These hand-drawn verses, the decorative papers of celestial skies, and the painted scenes of a sleeping town relay the energy that the writer welcomed and found encouraging when he practiced his art late into the night.



What’s your favorite work in the Modern Wing?

Beginning opening day, May 16, and continuing through May 22, admission to the museum is free. It’s the perfect time to explore the new galleries and find your personal favorites. Visit our Facebook page and let us know what’s on your Modern Wing must-see list and why. The most popular work will be announced in our July e-newsletter, so make sure you’re signed up to receive this free monthly subscription and find out if your favorite gets top billing. And check back at our Web site for upcoming self-guides—you might see your selections and comments featured in a new guided tour.