



NEW MEMORIAL ART GALLERY EXHIBITION CELEBRATES THE MACHINE AS A SUBJECT IN AMERICAN ART

We must look to the artist brain, of all brains, to grasp the significance to society of this thing we call the Machine...
– Frank Lloyd Wright, 1901

ROCHESTER, NY, January 24, 2012 — An exhibition opening February 3 at the Memorial Art Gallery explores how American artists from the last 100 years have responded with awe and ambiguity to technological changes and innovations. *Modern Icon: The Machine as Subject in American Art* brings together 25 objects, mostly works on paper, by such masters as Charles Sheeler, John Marin, Louis Lozowick and Charles Burchfield. Most of the works are from the Gallery's permanent collection.

Modern Icon remains on view in MAG's Lockhart Gallery through May 6.

This exhibition is sponsored by Eastman Kodak Company.



The Machine as Muse



In the early 1900s, as American technological and manufacturing prowess transformed modern life, some spoke of industry as a new religion and the machine as an object of worship. Technologies like the steam engine, light bulb and telephone seemed supernatural and all-powerful. Writer Henry Adams first witnessed electrical generators at the Great Exposition of 1900 and said he felt “the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross.” Photographer Paul Strand called the camera the “New God.” And writer E.B. White noted, “The church merely holds out the remote promise of salvation: the radio tells you if it's going to rain tomorrow.”

For 20th-century artists seeking a break from tradition, the machine's potential to reinvent the world made it an ideal symbol. Industrial complexes, urban architecture and machine-crafted forms became potent subjects. Still, an undercurrent of anxiety (and at times outright protest) has a tangible presence in this work. Artists—always the emotional barometers of culture—were sensitive to concerns that unchecked technology might suppress the artistic impulse and ultimately devastate humanity.

What's Up Talk (included in Gallery admission)

Sunday, March 11 at 1 pm, Jessica Marten, MAG assistant curator and curator of *Modern Icon*, speaks on the exhibition. Her informal talk is followed by the opportunity to ask questions.

MAG on the web:

mag.rochester.edu

Press contacts:

Meg Colombo, 585-276-8934 mcolombo@mag.rochester.edu

Patti Giordano, 585-276-8932 pgiordano@mag.rochester.edu

#

Above left: Charles Sheeler, *Ballet Mechanique* (1931). Drawing.

Above right: Louis Lozowick, *Aeroplane, Image Thrown on a Screen* (ca. 1926-27). Graphite and black ink with white paint.