

# Minneapolis Museum Opens Today

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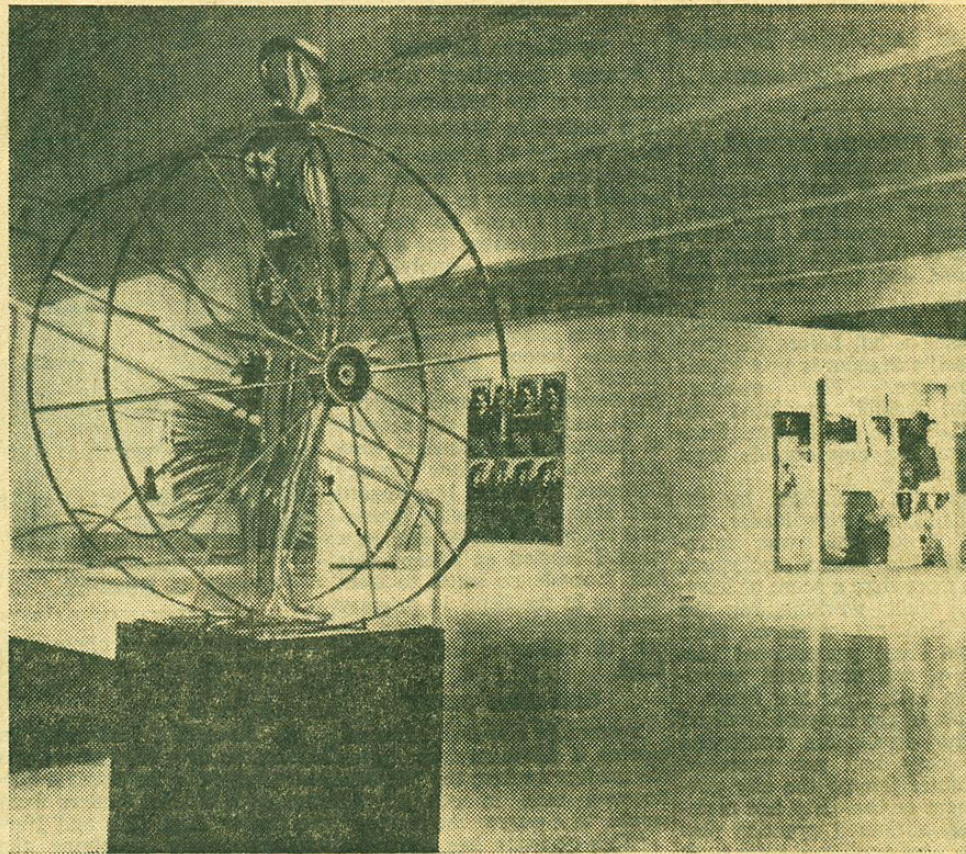
MINNEAPOLIS, May 17—After a weekend of parties, previews, inaugural ceremonies and other festivities—including a Sunday afternoon "pop circus" for children—the Walker Art Center will open its new \$5.5-million building to the general public tomorrow, I suspect it is going to be one of those buildings that will change a lot of minds about what we can and should expect from the architects who design our new museums. For here, amazingly enough, is a new museum building that gives cheerful priority to the works of art it is meant to house.

The new structure was designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes, the New York architect. It is starkly "minimalist" in its exterior appearance, with virtually unbroken windowless walls forming a powerful and, at first glance, anyway, rather forbidding moonlit sculptural mass. But the austerity of the exterior design functions to provide us with an interior that is a miracle of commodious exhibition and work space.

The seven large rectangular galleries, radiating from a core consisting of stairways and an elevator shaft, are at once delightfully simple, unassertive, elegant and extremely sympathetic to their museum functions. The entire exterior of the buildings, which includes three large rooftop terraces for exhibiting sculpture in the open air, is faced with a firm, earth-colored brick. The interior is painted a uniform pure white, enhancing the sense of felicitous space that is an integral part of the design.

In addition to the ample exhibition space in the galleries and the open-air terraces, the structure also contains a 350-seat auditorium, a lecture-information room for films and other audio-visual materials, a small restaurant, a research library, a book shop and sizable offices and workrooms.

For the opening, the director of the Walker, Martin Friedman, has mounted an exhibition called "Works for New Spaces." This exhibition will certainly do nothing to diminish the reputation Mr.



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## Statue overlooking Gallery 4 in the new \$5.5-million Walker Art Center in Minneapolis

Friedman has earned in recent years as a vigorous champion of everything that is farthest out on the current art scene. A large group of artists, including both the famous and the obscure, was invited to create works especially for the museum's interior and exterior spaces.

Thus, among other contributions, we have a corridor, 74 feet long, of blue, pink, yellow and green fluorescent light tubes designed by Dan Slavin; a so-called "Observatory" consisting of sheetmetal, heavy blocks of wood and sandbags, arranged on one of the outdoor terraces by Robert Morris, and an untitled landscape arrangement of sand, thin sheets of glass, and hidden lights, all very delicate and poetic, by Laddie John Dill.

The most spectacular work in the show is an enormous series of 10 macabre black shapes by Lynda Benglis that jut out from the gallery wall—an abstract sculptural en-

vironment that looks as if it had been inspired by Alfred Hitchcock in one of his most menacing moods.

Among the other artists represented in the "Works for New Spaces" are Larry Bell, Sam Gilliam, Robert Irwin, Don Judd, Robert Rauchenberg, Richard Serra, and the "Pulsa" group, which staged another of its boring strobe light entertainments in a park across the road from the museum.

For many visitors, however, the chief interest for the moment was in seeing how the Walker's own permanent collection of modern painting and sculpture looked in its new architectural setting. In my opinion, it looked splendid. Mr. Barnes has served his client supremely well, and the Walker staff has responded by installing the collection with an eye to its special strengths.

The collection itself, however, cannot be said to be one of the finest of its kind. It is strongest in works of

the last decade, which has been Mr. Friedman's principal interest during the term of his directorship. It is weak—indeed, in many areas nonexistent—in major works from the earlier history of modern art. One can only hope that the opening of the new building will now inspire some energetic collecting of such works. The Walker is now in possession of one of the finest contemporary museum facilities in the world, and it ought to have a collection that is equal to it.

The building occupies the site on which the old Walker Art Center structure was razed two years ago. It adjoins the Tyrone Guthrie Theater, and there are several points of easy access to the museum from the theater building. The two buildings thus form a small cultural complex that has already established itself as one of the nerve centers of artistic activity in this part of the country.