

A Century in Images

100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY //
THE ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO

By Anastasia Karpova Tinari



[THE SEEN]

The Arts Club of Chicago was founded a hundred years ago with a mission to promote Modernism, preceding like-minded institutions such as the Société Anonyme, Inc., Barnes Collection and Museum of Modern Art in New York, and was the first in Chicago to exhibit works by Brancusi, Alexander Calder, Jackson Pollock, and Robert Rauschenberg, among many others.

The Club's interdisciplinary member programming has featured an incredible array of the avant-garde: literary figures Margaret Anderson and Harriet Monroe, Gertrude Stein, Carl Sandburg; musicians Igor Stravinsky Prokofiev, Leonard Bernstein, John Cage; and dancers Adolph Bohm, Ruth Page, and Merce Cunningham. Yet through the years the visual arts exhibition program has remained at the institution's core. Its original mission expanded as Modernism gained acceptance, and Chicago's museums embraced contemporary art, but The Arts Club has always remained forward-looking and interdisciplinary in its approach. Since 2000 alone, the Club's galleries have hosted impressive installations by internationally renowned artists including Pedro Cabrita Reis, Josiah McElheny, Marcel Broodthaers, Marlene Dumas, and many more.

NOVEMBER 3, 1915

The 1913 Armory Show in Chicago highlights the divisive nature of avant-garde art in the United States. Even as Modern Art becomes institutionalized with the first Picasso hung in a U.S. museum, public outrage at the affront on classical ideals culminates in art students burning Matisse's *Blue Nude* in effigy. In the wake of that historic moment, Chicago's cultural elite meets at the Art Institute of Chicago to form a club devoted to avant-garde, international art. The Arts Club opens in The Fine Arts Building, 410 S. Michigan Ave., in 1916. Founding members included Mrs. Potter Palmer, Mrs. McGann, Mrs. John Winterbotham, Mrs. Arthur Ryerson, Mrs. Ray Atherton, and others.

FALL 1917

Renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who also had an office in the Fine Arts Building, exhibits his collection of Japanese prints, screens, and baskets, accompanied by a catalogue and related lecture. *The Chicago Sunday Tribune's* Louise James Bargelt writes "The collection of Japanese color prints... is proving to be quite as much of a charmer as even the most fervid enthusiast of this uniquely oriental branch of art could possibly desire. Against the pastel gold of the gallery walls these prints stand out in daring color combinations, effecting a fairylike brightness of hue which is amazingly different from any exhibition of western art ever seen." Notable exhibitions from this early period included Post-Impressionism, Paintings by Joseph Stella, Oscar Bluemner, and Jennings Tofel, and Sculpture by Gaston Lachaise and Stanislaw Szukalski.

1918

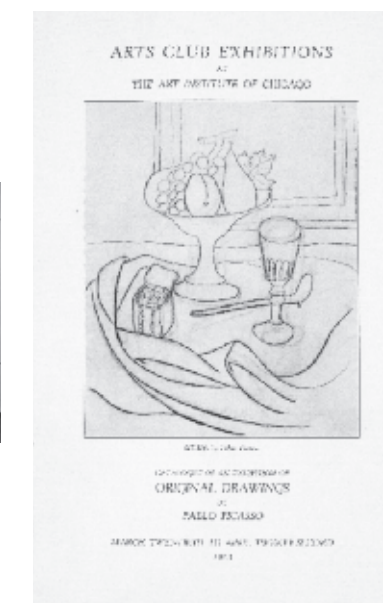
Rue Winterbotham Carpenter and Alice Roullier take the helm as President and Chair of Exhibitions Committee, respectively. The Arts Club moves in to new galleries at 610 S. Michigan Ave., designed by Club member and architect Arthur Heun.



One of The Arts Club's galleries, 610 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 1918/23. Designed by Arthur Heun, William Ernest Walke, and Rue Winterbotham Carpenter. Photo: Frederick O. Bemm. Arts Club Papers, Newberry Library.

1922–1927

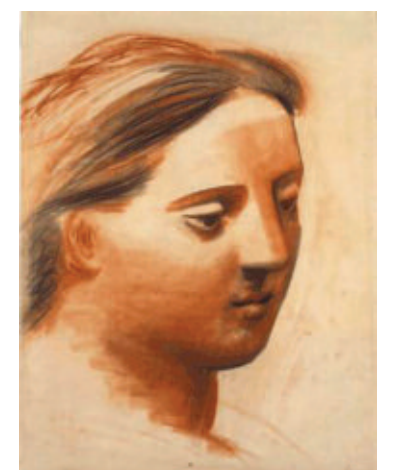
The Arts Club occupies a gallery of Art Institute of Chicago. Exhibitions Chair Alice Roullier works with dealers, institutions, and private collectors to bring exhibitions by Picasso, Matisse, Braques, Laurencin, Chagall, Rodin, and more. Because The Arts Club exhibitions feature works for sale, they also become an important source for important Chicago collections.



Cover of *Original Drawings by Pablo Picasso* exhibition catalogue, March 1923. Arts Club Files.

1923

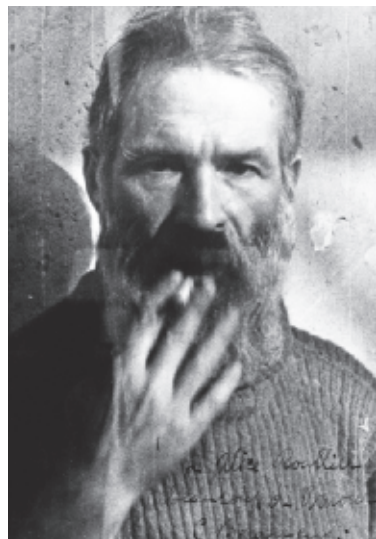
Among the most important of the exhibitions arranged at the Art Institute was North America's first show to focus solely on Pablo Picasso's drawings. The Arts Club starts a Purchase Fund and acquires Picasso's *Tête de Femme* as the inaugural work in its collection.



Pablo Picasso, *Head of a Woman (Tête de Femme)*, 1922. Red and black chalk with chalk wash on tan laid paper, laid down on lightweight Japanese paper; 24 7/16 x 19 in. Collection of The Arts Club of Chicago.

1927

Marcel Duchamp organizes an exhibition of work by Romanian artist Constantin Brancusi, the artist's first in the United States. From the exhibition, The Arts Club acquires *Golden Bird* for \$1,200. The sculpture becomes central to the collection and later saves the Arts Club from ruin when its sale to the Art Institute allows the Club to purchase land for its current headquarters.



Constantin Brancusi smoking a cigarette, 1933. Inscribed "to Alice Roullier with much love, C. Brancusi." Arts Club Papers, Newberry Library.



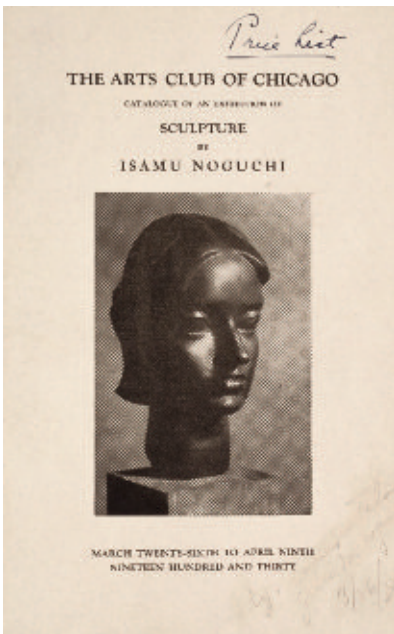
Constantin Brancusi, *Golden Bird*, 1919/20. Bronze, stone, and wood; 86 x 11 3/4 x 11 3/4 inches. Installation view at The Arts Club, c. 1951. Arts Club Papers, Series 10, Newberry Library.

1930

The Arts Club hosts an exhibition of portrait sculptures and drawings by Isamu Noguchi, initiating a long-lasting, important relationship between the artist and The Arts Club. 50 years later in 1981, Noguchi would deliver a Rue Shaw Memorial Lecture.

MARCH 1931

Bauhaus, Dessau, Germany, organized by Harvard Society of Contemporary Art is one of few Bauhaus exhibitions while the school is running. The exhibition connected Chicago to the Bauhaus and raised the Arts Club's reputation as "unparalleled in its progressive and intrepid attitude."



Cover of *Sculpture by Isamu Noguchi* exhibition catalogue, 1930. Arts Club Papers, Newberry Library

1933

Alongside the "Century of Progress Exposition" world's fair held in Chicago 1933–34, The Arts Club hosts *Special exhibition of Modern Sculpture*, featuring Archipenko, Brancusi, Coubine, Degas, Duchamp-Villon, Epstein, Gargallo, Gerard, Kolbe, Lachaise, Laurent, Laurens, Lehbruck, Loutchansky, Maillol, Matisse, Modigliani, Noguchi, Picasso, Popelet, Rodin, Zorach, and more.

1934

Taking her first ever airplane trip, Gertrude Stein arrives in Chicago to promote her 1933 *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Gertrude tours the city with her partner Alice Toklas, signs books, and gives a lecture titled "The History of English Literature as I See It."



Cover of 1933 Century of Progress Exposition

1936

The Arts Club moves into its Wrigley Building quarters, opening with an exhibition of abstract art by Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner, Piet Mondrian, and Cesar Domela three months before Alfred Barr, Jr.'s *Cubism and Abstract Art* at MoMA.

1939

As part of the Spanish refugee campaign, the Arts Club exhibits Picasso's *Guernica* (1937, Collection Reina Sofia, Madrid).



The Arts Club's main gallery, designed by Arthur Heun, Gilmer V. Black, and Elizabeth "Bobsy" Goodspeed, South Tower, Wrigley Building, 400 North Michigan Avenue, 1937

1941

Rue Winterbotham Shaw, Alice Roullier, and Arts Club member William Eisendrath commission Alexander Calder to create a stabile for Arts Club's octagonal sculpture gallery. *Red Petals* remains on view at the center of the Arts Club today.



Alexander Calder, *Red Petals*, 1942, photographed June 10, 1943. Plate steel, steel wire, sheet aluminum, soft-iron bolts, and aluminum paint, h: 102 in. Collection of The Arts Club of Chicago. Photographed June 10, 1943.

1942

John Cage directs a percussion orchestra of eight musicians playing "on kitchen utensils and washtubs." Among those attending is architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.



From the left: unidentified, John Cage, Rue Winterbotham Shaw, unidentified, Xenia Cage, c. 1942. Arts Club Papers, Newberry Library

1945

Peggy Guggenheim organizes a Jackson Pollock exhibition, marking the first exhibition of Pollock's work at The Club.



Peggy Guggenheim and Jackson Pollock in front of Pollock's *Mural*, 1943. © Photo: George Kargar.

1951

The Arts Club opens a new building at 109 E. Ontario St., designed by Mies Van der Rohe. Jean Dubuffet's *Art Brut*, his first exhibition in a non-commercial space, opens this historic space. Dubuffet begins an important relationship with Chicago and delivers his influential lecture "Anticultural Positions," which gave indispensable validation to Monster Roster artists like Leon Golub, who was sitting in the audience. The talk articulated Dubuffet's preference towards the "primitive" or unconscious mind over "Western" humanism or "Occidental culture." "Painting now can illuminate the world with wonderful discoveries, can endow man with new myths and new mystics, and reveal, in infinite number, unsuspected aspects of things, and new values not yet perceived." —Dubuffet

1958

Chicago collector Joseph Randall Shapiro organizes the exhibition *Surrealism Then and Now*, thereby strengthening a foundation for the Monster Roster and Hairly Who. Shapiro became the Museum of Contemporary Art's first president in 1967.

1960s

During the 1960s, as "Modern" became the establishment, the Arts Club expands its mission. Exceptional music performances and lectures continue; notable exhibitions include the first Chicago shows of Balthus (1964), Marisol (1965), Robert Rauschenberg (1966), a MoMA-organized Victor Vasarely exhibition (1967) and exhibition of sculptures by Louise Nevelson (1968).

1971

Second Talent exhibition by 19th and 20th century writers, including works by Goethe, Victor Hugo, Wyndham Lewis, and others.



Jean Dubuffet with his oil painting *Supervielle, Large Banner Portrait* at the Art Institute, December 1951, © Archives Foundation Dubuffet, Paris

1982

Exhibition Mies van der Rohe: *Interior Spaces*, 1982, highlights the design work of the architect so central to The Arts Club’s history.

1989

The Objects of Sculpture curated by the Art Institute of Chicago’s Neal Benezra features works by Vito Acconci, Joseph Beuys, Jeff Koons, and Tony Tasset.

1992

John Cage returns to The Arts Club to direct a public concert for the 75th anniversary.



Installation view of *Mies van der Rohe: Interior Spaces*, 1982. Photo: Michael Tropea. Arts Club Papers, Newberry Library

1993

“Fluxus Vivus” festival is organized by a group of Chicagoans for the 30th anniversary of Fluxus. The Arts Club partnered with University of Illinois at Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago to celebrate the movement’s living, experimental spirit. “As far as I know, nothing like it has ever been tried elsewhere. It was fantastic.” —Hannah Higgins, Professor of Art History at UIC and daughter of Fluxus artists Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles



Poster for “Fluxus Vivus,” 1993. Design: Thirst. Designers: Rick Valicenti and Mark Rattin. Arts Club Files.

1995

The Arts Club is forced to move, as the 109 E. Ontario St. space designed by Mies van der Rohe is demolished. “I well remember the 1995 exhibition of Richard Pettibone at the... space on Ontario Street, its final presentation in that Mies designed interior. This selection perfectly concluded that chapter by this important, prescient Appropriation artist, whose work consistently offers intelligence, invention and grace. In that exhibition, Pettibone revisited the modernism of art and design, integrating Brancusi (numerous smallish Endless Columns), Ezra Pound (portraits and text) and Shaker designed furniture.” - Richard Rezac, Chicago artist and Arts Club member.

1998

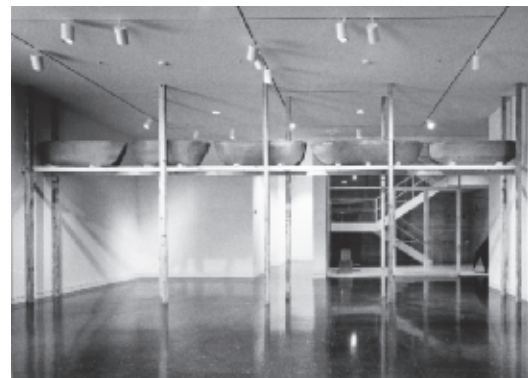
With funds from selling Brancusi’s *Golden Bird* to the Art Institute, the Arts Club moves into new quarters at 201 E Ontario. designed by John Vinci to incorporate the salvaged Mies stair case without changing its proportions. Vinci later reflected on the design, “Several people have commented how the staircase becomes an art object within the space, like it’s an exhibition within a case.”



Gallery area on the second floor of The Arts Club’s quarters, 109 E. Ontario St., designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Showing the floating staircase connecting to the entrance vestibule below on Ontario Street, 1959. Arts Club

1990s and 2000s

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the Club continues to exhibit internationally-renowned artists and bring new artists to Chicago. As Anne Rorimer points out in her essay for the Centennial catalogue, exhibitions by Yayoi Kusama (1997), Wolfgang Laib (1998), James Lee Byars (1998), Mario Merz (2008), and others pushed the material and spatial definition of sculpture. Experimental installations continue with exhibitions like Daniel Buren (2006), Marcel Broodthaers’ *Décor: A Conquest (XXth Century Room)* (2008), Richard Deacon (2009), and Pedro Cabrita Reis (2015).



Installation view of *Wolfgang Laib: You Will Go Somewhere Else*, January 21–April 4, 1998. Photo by Michael Tropea. Arts Club Papers, Newberry Library.



Artist Yayoi Kusama with her exhibition *Yayoi Kusama: Obsessional Vision*, June 11–July 30, 1997. Photo: Michael Tropea, Arts Club files.

2006

The Arts Club returns to its roots with an exhibition of Picabia’s drawings, held over 75 years after Marcel Duchamp arranged the Club’s first Picabia exhibition and 70 years exactly after another exhibition organized by Gertrude Stein. Another highlight from 2006 is Daniel Buren’s solo exhibition, in which he completely transformed the quarters and infused color with “in situ” Plexiglas panels in four colors.



Francis Picabia, *This Thing is Made to Perpetuate my Memory*, 1915, Collection of The Arts Club of Chicago



Installation view of Daniel Buren: *Crossing Through the Colors*, a work in situ, April 25–July 21, 2006. Photo by Michael Tropea.

2011

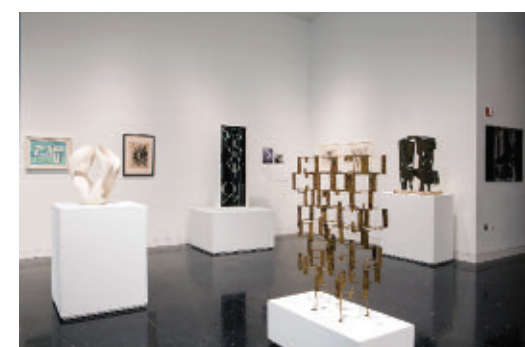
Andy Warhol brings to Chicago a large number of panels from *Shadows*, a work typically on view at Dia:Beacon. Famed painter Kerry James Marshall delivers a lecture to commemorate the occasion.



Installation view of Andy Warhol: *Shadows*, 2011. Photo: Michael Tropea.

2011–12

Bertrand Goldberg: Reflections, installed and designed by John Vinci and Geoffrey Goldberg, intermixes the famed architect's building, furniture, fabrication, and jewelry designs alongside his personal collection.



Installation view of Bertrand Goldberg: *Reflections*, December 17, 2011 – February 8, 2012. Photo by Michael Tropea.

2013

Josiah McElheny's *Two Clubs* presents a glass box (built by John Vinci), with time periods amalgamated by performers dressed in vintage attire in decades from the 1920s–70s. The installation creates hybrids of High Modernist periods and private vs. public space, reflecting McElheny's view of The Arts Club itself. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Fluxus, Alison Knowles hosts a night of performances using sound and paper.



Installation view of *Josiah McElheny: Two Clubs* at The Arts Club of Chicago, September 17 – December 14, 2013. Photo by Michael Tropea.

2015

Claire Pentecost presents "*the force that through the fossil drives utopia drives my greased age*," a 17-foot motor boat crashing into the frame of a geodesic dome, an example of the artist's ongoing investigation into climate change, natural resource use, and ecology. Pentecost's project is part of a new outdoor sculpture series, "Garden Projects," which started "to activate the corner with dynamic installations... to further our mission to make art accessible to the city." – Director Janine Mileaf

2016

As The Club celebrates its 100th anniversary, and President Helyn Goldenberg and Executive Director Janine Mileaf show no plans of slowing down. A new bar is under construction to reinvigorate cultural conversation exchange, and an extensive book with commissioned essays will be published this fall. Mileaf reflects: "The Arts Club centennial encompasses everything that we have stood for over the past 100 years—supporting the creation of new work; working across the disciplines of music, art, and performance; and, bringing challenging ideas both to our members and to the public." On October 22, the Centennial will culminate with a day of artists' talks and performance.



Installation view of *Claire Pentecost: the force that through the fossil drives utopia drives my greased age*. September 4–November 7, 2015.

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