

Presence

Objects have presence just by being in the world. In depicting them, artists seek to capture the here and now of tangible existence that gives objects their powerful effect. Modern artists, especially, grappled with figurative representations that could lead viewers to contemplate the nature of being human. Many of these artists were influenced by Eastern thought and traditions, such as Buddhism and Sufism, which sought an experience of transcendence beyond the purely physical or material realm. Artists were also drawn to modern philosophers, who were trying to discern meaning in the midst of a world that appeared to be rapidly changing. Through powerful portraits and bodies, artists asserted the fact of existence and the persistence of the human spirit.

Energy

Modern artists sought to represent the emotional and psychological energy of their interior experience through physical gestures and dynamic juxtapositions. They created art objects that capture movement, harness it, and represent change. By simultaneously communicating and mirroring the relationship between action and stasis, artists give outward expression to the energy generated by the inner life of things. The artists in this section of the exhibition developed a visual vocabulary to illuminate the many energetic forces that shaped the twentieth century: explosive social movements that challenged political institutions, elemental discoveries in physics that suggested colliding realities, and unsettling redefinitions of self and the body that reflected psychological theories of the unconscious and identity.

Line

The artists in this section of the exhibition rely on line when making their artworks. Line often serves as a beginning, defining the forms and contours through which artists see the world. Nimble and agile, line can suggest shifts in movement and depth perception. Line hugs and wraps itself around volumes and shapes, establishing the relationship between artists and objects.

Aggregates

Some of these artists were concerned with using the concept of “aggregates” as a way to cluster and collect separate units or forms into a whole. Sometimes this was emphasized as the tension between disequilibrium and stability through pronounced arrangements. In other works this becomes evident as the pull of the periphery towards a certain centrality, an arrangement that begins to present cohesive systems and relationships. This set of relationships begins to point to the notion that a part can play a role in a much larger aggregate relationship presaging late 20th Century developments such as information systems, data analysis, neural networks, and a collective consciousness.

Biomorphism

Biomorphism was the term given to a certain kind of abstraction that developed in the 20th Century that emphasized a visual language based on biomorphic shapes – including forms that accentuated a

sumptuous and sometimes lush approach that indicated a relationship to amorphous forms one finds in nature. These works sometimes suggest a malleable state that is in the process of mutating or something that cannot be objectively defined. They also point to a response against the rationality and precise formalism of modernism suggesting manifestations of evolving or dream states.

Spirituality

Much like Presence spirituality in modern art represented the artists search to connect with a higher sense of self or meaning. Many of these artists looked to spirituality as way to capture a sublime essence that could represent higher states of being. They sought to express in their work in ways to connect to spiritual energies or tendencies or present moments of contemplation that could open up to higher truths towards freeing ourselves from constraint and self consciousness.