

## Heat and Light at the Whitney

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Last year, the Museum of Modern Art celebrated its 50th anniversary. This year marks the first half century of the Whitney Museum. Both have changed greatly since their revolutionary beginnings; both are still experiencing growing pains. But while the Modern was immediately international in its aims, scope and impact, the Whitney selected a more intimate mission. It was to be a museum devoted to American art, and its dedication to the home-grown esthetic gave it an important place and meaning in the art world.

The Whitney is unique in the way it has advanced the careers of aspiring American artists; its galleries have always been open to the young, the experimental, the living practitioners of almost any artistic persuasion. The nurturing of native talents in the critical years of their development is worth celebrating.

That mission has also been the continuing thread

from Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's original museum on Eighth Street to today's imposing building on 75th Street and Madison Avenue. It was on Eighth Street that many New Yorkers first encountered the lonely, light-filled world of Edward Hopper, whose people and places seemed beyond time and solitude. Fifty years are the span between Reginald Marsh's carefree Coney Island blondes and Charles Sheeler's tidy, abstract factories and the world of Warhol soup cans and minimal art. Only the controversies remain the same.

Half a century is long enough for an institution to become a firm part of a city's cultural life. Yet it is short enough for nostalgia and grateful memories. We trust that the Whitney will have another successful fifty years, and more — and that it will remain central both to the creative impulses of American art and to the pleasures of New York.

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