



The Museum of Modern Art Oxford, now called Modern Art Oxford, was founded by architect Trevor Green at the end of 1965. Its primary aim was 'the advancement of education of the general public in the modern visual arts'. Temporary premises were opened off King Edward Street in January 1966. The first exhibition included works by David Hockney, R.B.Kitaj and Patrick Heron. With the help of a team of enthusiastic helpers and influential supporters including Henry Moore and the Warden of Nuffield College, Norman Chester, the gallery moved to its permanent home in Pembroke Street in September 1966. This was the old Halls Brewery premises owned by the City of Oxford who assisted by agreeing a change of use and setting up a lease arrangement. The Arts Council gave a first grant of £500.

Reflected in the name, the original intention was to create a permanent collection as well as present temporary exhibitions of contemporary art. Within a short time however the gallery concentrated on organising changing exhibitions, quickly becoming known for its ambition and international outlook. Alongside Trevor Green, who was not paid, the first exhibitions organiser was Barry Lane (1967-1970). Trevor Green left for an architectural post in America in 1969 and was followed by Peter Ibsen as Director from 1970 to 1973. Under Ibsen and then Nicholas Serota (Director 1973-1976), the gallery became one of Europe's leading progressive spaces, exhibiting the newest developments in contemporary art, alongside important shows of twentieth century and post-war art and photography.

David Elliott (Director 1976-1996) consolidated and enhanced this reputation. Elliott invited artists from all over the world to exhibit in Oxford, notably from outside Western Europe and North America. This was a pioneering approach and the programme included exhibitions of work from India, Argentina, Japan, South Africa, Brazil, Poland, and China. Elliott also researched and presented a number of landmark exhibitions exploring key figures and movements in Russian twentieth-century art. In the 1980's MOMA Oxford also led the way with a series of exhibitions devoted to artists working with film and video long before these mediums attained their current status. Throughout this period many exhibitions toured internationally to other notable museums and galleries. Since Trevor Green's time, education events and community projects had been at the heart of the gallery's life, with special programmes organised around each exhibition.

In 1996 American curator Kerry Brougher was appointed Director. Among exhibitions 'Open City - Street Photographs since 1950' and 'Ed Ruscha' were especially notable, both collaborations with international institutions. Brougher returned to the USA in 2000.

In 2001, Andrew Nairne, the current Director, was appointed. In 2002 the admission charge was abolished and the Upper Gallery was stripped back to its original proportions. A new Entrance Space for talks and events was created and a new staircase built down to the Café. The original name was simplified to Modern Art Oxford to better reflect the role of the gallery as a contemporary 'Kunsthalle'.

Modern Art Oxford is proud to be one of the UK's leading public galleries. MAO aims to continue to present the best contemporary art from around the world and be at the forefront of developing policies to engage the widest possible audience. Oxford City Council and Arts Council England provide essential core funding, while the generosity of hundreds of institutions and individuals over a forty year history have enabled the gallery to thrive.