THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

The Met Breuer, the new home for the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s modern and contemporary collection, has opened in New York with a Nasreen Mohamedi exhibition. Andy Battaglia reports on the institution’s new commitment to a global perspective.

There’s a spot in the Met Breuer, a bold and ambitious new addition to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where visitors might find it oddly hard to stand. The floor feels somehow misaligned against the axis of the Earth. Balance is difficult to come by; the walls seem to waver all around.

The cause is not architectural negligence – this is a landmark building designed by one of history’s great architects, after all – but rather the quiet, solemn pow-
er of the drafted line.

Lines are elemental in art, a common language and a recognizable tool that can somehow be suffused with the character of the artist who marked them. So it goes with the hypnotic, mesmerising lines of Nasreen Mohamedi. The Indian artist, who died in 1990, is known for geometric painting and drawing, and is the subject of a new retrospective installed to inaugurate the Met Breuer, one of the most moment-
ous and anticipated museum openings in the United States for years.

The occasion is a big one, for the Met and others who orbit it as supporters of the idea of museums as noble pursuits. The main mothership Met, founded in New York in 1870, occupies a massive Beaux-Arts building on Fifth Avenue, the anchor of Museum Mile and a destina-
tion for more than six million visitors last year. Its col-
lection covers 5,000 years of art from around the globe, with more than two million works in its collection. It is, in the simplest terms, one of the most distinguished museums in the world.

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The new Met Breuer is a few blocks away, in a building that played home for decades to the younger, hipper Whitney Museum of American Art, which moved with great fanfare to a gleaming new location downtown in the spring of 2015. But the Whitney’s new home, the 1939 former Beaux-Arts armory, is a world apart from the Breuer building on Madison Avenue, where the Whitney Museum of American Art operated from 1966 until 2014.

The Breuer building is now the home of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s modern and contemporary collection. Jochen-Martin Gutsch, one of the museum’s most important curators, is overseeing the transformation of the former Whitney into a space dedicated to the art of the last 150 years. For the first time since 1990, when themoved to its present location in the Upper East Side, the Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a building of its own, the Breuer building.

The museum’s collection includes works by some of the most important modern and contemporary artists, from Pablo Picasso and Jackson Pollock to Andy Warhol and Yayoi Kusama. The museum has also commissioned several new works, including a large-scale installation by the artist Jenny Sotelo, which will be on display until the end of the year.

The museum’s new space is designed to be flexible, allowing for a variety of exhibitions and events. The building features a large central gallery, as well as smaller spaces for more intimate displays. The museum’s collection is organized by themes, allowing for a variety of ways to explore the art.

The museum’s first major exhibition, “Pey and the Lady Players of Tennis,” by Adam Chandler in The Atlantic, was held in 2016. The exhibition featured a selection of works by the 19th-century artist Edvard Munch, who was known for his depictions of women playing tennis. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue that included essays by leading art historians.

The museum’s new space is also dedicated to the museum’s educational programs, allowing for a variety of outreach initiatives. The museum has launched a new series of workshops for children and families, as well as a series of lectures and discussions for adults.

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