

# Contemporary voices : [brochure] works from the UBS art collection

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primary documents, installation views, and an  
index of participating artists.



# CONTEMPORARY VOICES

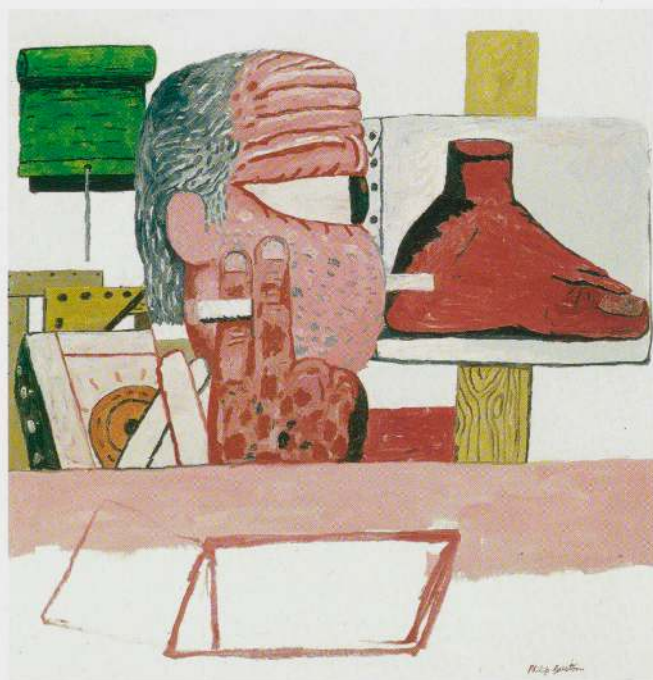
Works from The UBS Art Collection

# CONTEMPORARY VOICES

Works from The UBS Art Collection

The exhibition *Contemporary Voices: Works from The UBS Art Collection* has as its core a group of about forty works of art promised as a gift to The Museum of Modern Art joined by about thirty additional works that further reflect the quality and diversity of The UBS Art Collection. The works in this exhibition are drawn from the former PaineWebber Art Collection, which was assembled under the leadership of former PaineWebber Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Donald B. Marron, a longtime Trustee, former President, and current Vice Chairman of MoMA, as well as a member of The UBS Art Collection Advisory Board. The PaineWebber Art Collection became the core of The UBS Art Collection in 2001, when UBS acquired PaineWebber.

*Contemporary Voices* presents paintings, sculptures, drawings, and photographs by about fifty artists making important work during the second half of the twentieth century and today, installed in a generally chronological order that reflects the historical and stylistic links between artists. The artists range from the Abstract Expressionist generation to several who have emerged within the last decade—although the majority rose to prominence in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. UBS's gift to MoMA was selected by the Museum's curators based on what would complement the Museum's existing holdings from this period. In the interest of exploring the breadth and depth of the period, the curators then chose additional works from The UBS Art Collection, not included in the gift, to appear in *Contemporary Voices*.

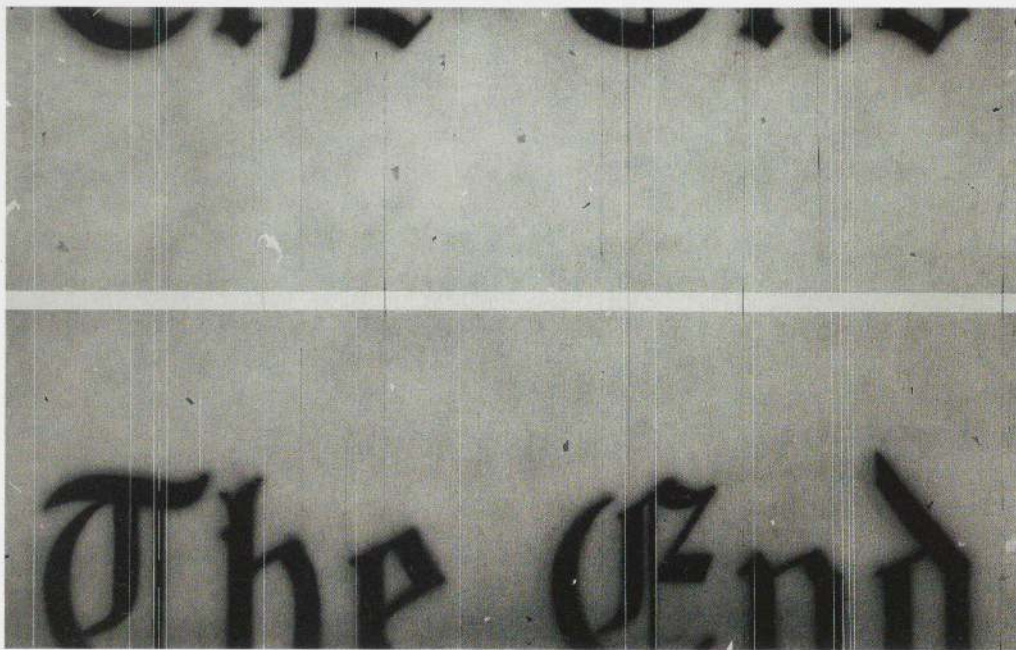




Philip Guston and Willem de Kooning, the oldest artists in the exhibition, developed distinctly late styles for which they are justly celebrated. Both artists first became known for their work in the 1940s, and contributed to the classic flowering of Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s. In 1969 Guston astounded friends and colleagues with a new style that resumed the figurative direction that he had taken as a young man, newly invested with an exaggerated, cartoonlike character. Like many works of his late period, *In the Studio* (1975) is a wry reflection on the myth of the artist as an inspired and lofty being. Here we confront Guston in the form of a bulbous, disembodied head, unattractively wrinkled and unshaven, with an oversized eye. In his one dirty-fingernailed hand he clutches not a paintbrush or palette but a cigarette, ready reinforcement for the one already between his lips. The painting on the easel portrays a clunky red foot, a visual pun on the artist's flat-footed attempts at high art.

De Kooning's final decade of painting does not represent the profound turnaround that Guston's does, but his works of this period offer a comparable example of the extraordinary renaissance of a master. *Untitled III* (1982) reflects his reduction of a lifelong vocabulary into a language in which color and line merge into one, as do references to the human figure and to landscape. The artist confined his palette to the primary and secondary colors and to white, whose newly dominant presence lends his compositions an airy openness that defies their material nature. The effortless appearance of *Untitled III* suggests rapid execution, but the process of building up the canvases of this period actually involved many layers of extremely thin paint and much sanding and scraping. The result was a surface that seems more glazed than painted, almost transparent in its lightness yet as firmly anchored in the composition as de Kooning was in his five decades at the easel.





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*Contemporary Voices* represents the next generation most beautifully in works on paper, drawings by such artists as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, Andy Warhol, and Claes Oldenburg. Ed Ruscha, a pioneer of Pop art in California, is the member of this group most extensively represented in the collection. Ruscha has lived in Los Angeles since arriving there from Oklahoma in 1956, and the city permeates his sensibility. In his most recent work in the collection, *The End* (1989), Ruscha takes his material from film, the industry that defines Los Angeles. One of an extensive series, this painting applies the artist's lifelong interest in the formal behavior of letters to a literal situation: the conclusion of old movies in the words "The End." The image is marked by illusionistic scratches evoking deteriorated celluloid, and the lettering is divided as if the film were out of sync. As in much of Ruscha's art, the curious power of *The End* derives from the contradiction between the perfectionism applied to the task at hand and the apparent lack of a logical reason for that task. The apocalyptic cast of the words and the vaguely medieval lettering give the picture an air of quiet doom.

Parallel to the innovations of Pop art in the early to mid-1960s, a group of artists was reinventing the language and purpose of abstract painting and sculpture. Like the Pop artists,



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this group—associated with the movement that later became known as Minimalism—was reacting against the overblown image of the angst-ridden Abstract Expressionist artist, whose works flaunt brushwork and gesture. Donald Judd so strongly saw his work as a departure from tradition that he termed it not “sculpture” but “specific objects.” Like his friend Dan Flavin, he rejected established parameters for both material and process. Beginning in 1964, Judd no longer made his work himself but had it handled by a commercial fabricator not far from his studio. His galvanized-iron artwork of 1967 in The UBS Art Collection (untitled, like all of his art) belongs to a category of his work known as the “progressions” because of the sequential dimensions that mark both negative and positive elements. In this example, six rounded elements, separated by five intervals, project forward in a horizontal progression. Starting at the left, the first element is five inches long, the interval half of that. The elements decrease by a half inch as they move rightward, while the intervals grow by the same amount. The spangly surface of the galvanized iron is visible through thin layers of red Harley-Davidson paint, chosen for its emphatic contemporaneity. This surface reveals the closet sensualist behind the rigorous artist, who indulged in the joy of rich texture and high color at the same time as he devised strictly mathematical structures.

Much of The UBS Art Collection was formed during the 1980s, and its focus on painting coincided with a revival of painting in the United States and Europe after a period in which sculpture, performance art, and video art had predominated. Certain painters who had been developing under the radar during that time aroused notice as audiences caught up with them. Since the 1960s, Chuck Close had been committed not only to painting but to figuration,



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thought by many to be no longer worthy of serious artists. Close's two self-portraits in The UBS Art Collection represent the later period of his work. They were made after Polaroid photographs—close-up shots of the head that include virtually no background and few external cues to character or status. Like all of Close's later paintings, these self-portraits replace the warts-and-all topography of the face found in his early work with a fictive landscape of colors and shapes. There is an intriguing contradiction between the fact of the face he documents and the gregarious assembly of circles, ovals, and other forms that fill each square of the gridded canvas.

In the 1980s, American collectors became keenly attuned to contemporary German painting. The UBS Art Collection demonstrates this interest with its strong examples of work by Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, Georg Baselitz, and Anselm Kiefer. The UBS Art Collection features a particularly important set of objects by Kiefer, ranging in date from 1978 to 1989. Ways





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of *Worldly Wisdom: Arminius's Battle* (1978) is one of several works the artist fashioned from individual woodcut portraits of figures from German history. The woodcuts, printed on paper, were mounted on canvas and painted over with a skein of black lines linking them to each other and to the fire burning at the center of the composition. The subtitle refers to the German victory over Roman invaders in 9 A.D., which set the stage for the country's independent history. The fire evokes that battle, but also the Nazi book-burnings and the wartime destruction of the German landscape in the twentieth century. Ultimately, *Ways of Worldly Wisdom* is as ambiguous as the question of how to regard great leaders and thinkers whose life and work take on a different cast in the wake of the Nazi regime's use and abuse of historical German culture.

Most of the paintings in The UBS Art Collection were purchased without regard for their ultimate site in the company's offices. The exceptions are two works by Frank Stella, *The Wheelbarrow* (B #3, 2X) and *The Blanket* (IRS-8, 1.875X), and a set of six panel paintings by





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Susan Rothenberg, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, all completed in 1988. In 1987, both artists were invited by Donald Marron to supply paintings for PaineWebber's corporate dining room. For the long entrance wall, Frank Stella chose two works from his recently begun series on the theme of *Moby Dick*. Rothenberg opted to create new works for the architectural columns throughout the room. Each panel shows a dancer captured midgesture; considered together, they suggest a continuous movement. These works reflect the artist's ongoing interest in capturing bodies in action, and are rendered in her typically expressive, gestural style.

Contemporary photography occupies a significant place in The UBS Art Collection. In the 1970s, many women turned to photography for projects with a conceptual basis. Cindy Sherman is among the best known of these; for almost three decades she has photographed herself in scores of guises. Sherman's early work neatly co-opted the hackneyed conventions that have historically governed the representation of women. *Untitled #122A* (1983) belongs to the first of several series of her works that subvert fashion photography. In 1983, retailer Diane Benson commissioned Sherman to make photographs using designer clothes for a spread in *Interview* magazine. Instead of looking glamorous in her tuxedo-cut black dress, the woman in *Untitled #122A*





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is furious, or so it seems from the clenched fists and the bit of face seen through the sweep of uncombed, peroxidized hair. Centuries of painting and decades of photography have conditioned us to expect full complicity between artist and model. Sherman explodes that nice fiction and in so doing alerts the viewer to the fiction it is. By extension, she calls into question all the myths that reinforce established power relations in contemporary society.

As American artists like Sherman repositioned photography, related developments were unfolding in West Germany. Thomas Struth is one of several artists who studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the 1970s and who since then have taken photography in new directions. Struth is perhaps best known for his photographs of museum visitors in galleries, works that implicitly declare the newly realized ambition of photographs to compete in scale and virtuosity with paintings. Struth remembers his schoolboy experiences in the great museums of Cologne as formative, and remains captivated by looking at people looking. He passes

that experience along to us with the six- by six-and-a-half-foot *National Gallery London I* (1989), which positions us far back in the room behind visitors looking at paintings by Bellini and Cima da Conegliano. The photographic arrangement mimics the stepped, frontal symmetry of Cima's altarpiece, and the frozen quality of the photographic moment strangely parallels that of the cinquecento tableau. The photograph sets up a network of startling confrontations: between the painted figures in their biblical robes and Londoners in 1980s winter clothing; between the Londoners and us viewers; between the perspectival space of the painting and that of the photograph.

Struth's photograph reminds us that museums have now become part of everyday life. Contemporary art, even more than that of the old masters, is the subject of unprecedented curiosity on the part of a large and diverse audience. Yet the readings of contemporary works of art remain open to interpretation; the observations they prompt depend very much on what the viewer brings to them. At its best, the museum gallery becomes the locus for open-ended conversations between the works of art themselves and the viewers who encounter them.

1. Philip Guston. American, born Canada. 1913–1980. *In the Studio*. 1975. Oil on canvas, 6' 10" x 6' 7" (208.3 x 200.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Partial and promised gift of UBS. © 2005 The Estate of Philip Guston

2. Willem de Kooning. American, born the Netherlands. 1904–1997. *Untitled III*. 1982. Oil on canvas, 6' 8" x 70" (203.2 x 177.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Partial and promised gift of UBS. © 2005 The Willem de Kooning Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

3. Edward Ruscha. American, born 1937. *The End*. 1991. Synthetic polymer paint and graphite on canvas, 70" x 9' 4" (177.8 x 284.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Partial and promised gift of UBS. © 2005 Edward Ruscha

4. Donald Judd. American, 1928–1994. *Untitled*. 1967. Lacquer on galvanized iron, 5 x 40 x 8 3/4" (12.7 x 101.6 x 22.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of UBS

5. Chuck Close. American, born 1940. *Self-Portrait*. 1991. Oil on canvas, 8' 4" x 7' (254 x 213.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Partial and promised gift of UBS. © 2005 Chuck Close

6. Chuck Close. American, born 1940. *Self-Portrait*. 1995. Pencil, marker, and india ink on paper, 60 x 40 1/2" (152.4 x 102.9 cm). The UBS Art Collection. © 2005 Chuck Close

7. Anselm Kiefer. German, born 1945. *Ways of Worldly Wisdom: Arminius's Battle*. 1978. Oil on woodcut on paper mounted on canvas, 6' 5 1/4" x 7' 10 1/4" (63.5 x 132.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Partial and promised gift of UBS. © 2005 Anselm Kiefer

8. Frank Stella. American, born 1936. *The Wheelbarrow (B#3, 2X)*. 1988. Mixed mediums on cast aluminum, 9' 1/4" x 9' 1 1/4" x 43 3/4" (275 x 278.8 x 110.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Partial and promised gift of UBS. © 2005 Frank Stella/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

9. Susan Rothenberg. American, born 1945. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. 1988. Oil on wood, six panels, each 10' 6 3/4" x 46 1/4" (321.9 x 117.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Partial and promised gift of UBS. © 2005 Susan Rothenberg/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

10. Cindy Sherman. American, born 1954. *Untitled #122A*. 1983. Color photograph, 35 1/4" x 21 1/4" (89.5 x 54 cm). The UBS Art Collection. Courtesy Cindy Sherman and Metro Pictures Gallery

11. Thomas Struth. German, born 1954. *National Gallery London I*. 1989. Chromogenic color print, 71" x 6' 5" (180.3 x 195.6 cm). The UBS Art Collection. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York



## CONVERSATIONS: CRITICS, ARTISTS, AND COLLECTING

**TITUS 2** 6:00 P.M.

Art critics engage in dialogue about the creative process with contemporary artists whose work is included in the exhibition, and, in one special session, with former PaineWebber Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Donald B. Marron—also a longtime Trustee, former President, and current Vice Chairman of The Museum of Modern Art, on the following dates: March 9; April 13; and April 20.

Tickets are \$10, \$8 for members, \$5 for students with current ID, and can be purchased at the Information Desk in the Main Lobby of the Museum and at the Film and Media Desk, located through the doors below the piano-shaped canopy just east of the main MoMA entrance on 53 Street.

For more information on Adult and Academic Programs, please call (212) 708-9781, e-mail [adultprograms@moma.org](mailto:adultprograms@moma.org), or visit [www.moma.org/education/](http://www.moma.org/education/).

### PUBLICATION

#### **Contemporary Voices : Works from The UBS Art Collection**

This handsome book, presenting a selection of signature works by European and American artists of the postwar generations, is drawn from The UBS Art Collection, one of the richest and most varied holdings of international contemporary art in the United States. The UBS Art Collection was established in 1970 by former PaineWebber Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Donald B. Marron—also a longtime Trustee, former President, and current Vice Chairman of The Museum of Modern Art. The works reproduced here include paintings, sculptures, drawings, photographs, and mixed-medium works by a wide array of important artists, including Joseph Beuys, Chuck Close, Jasper Johns, Anselm Kiefer, Brice Marden, Robert Rauschenberg, Cindy Sherman, Kiki Smith, Cy Twombly, Andy Warhol, and others. In addition, Ann Temkin, curator of the exhibition, has interviewed eleven of these artists for the book.

264 pages; 125 color ills

089. hardcover \$45.00, members \$40.50



The exhibition and accompanying publication are made possible by UBS.

### **The Museum of Modern Art**

11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019

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