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June 11, 1969

Dear William Rubin:

The undersigned painters and sculptors have received in the mail a statement signed by the "Art Worker's Coalition." All of us are artists who have recently donated works to the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection; and it seems to us that it is our privilege to give away our works where and when we please. In regard to the current gifts by artists to the Museum of Modern Art, it seems that you could be the innocent victim of attack. Therefore, we would like to make clear that the various allegations and innuendoes to the effect that we have been pressured or coerced into donating our works is false. We are aware that we follow historical precedent as artists in giving to museums and public institutions, e.g., J.W.M. Turner, Rodin, Matisse, Picasso, Brancusi, Braque, Giacometti, Miro, and dozens of other illustrious artists, including many Americans.

In making gifts to the Museum, we do so in the conviction that all art ultimately becomes the property of, and accessible to, the people. It is only before history has given specific judgments that art exists as personal property; the best will then enter museums, hopefully.

Instead of being the victim of an ill-considered attack, we feel that you should be honored and respected by the artistic community as a strong advocate of modern American art. We also feel that the program that you are instituting, of recognition for post World War II modern American art, is far-sighted and constructive, and can only be of great benefit to artists and the general public. Your project is one of the most imaginative on the part of a contemporary museum curator that we have witnessed in recent times.

The Art Worker's Coalition implies that it speaks for the art community. It is unsigned, and gives only a post office box as the address. We do not know who comprises the Coalition. None of the undersigned were consulted before the issuance of a statement that pretends to be on our behalf.

Our support for your emphasis on post World War II modern American art, and of the Museum of Modern Art, does not mean that we agree with everything the Museum of Modern Art (or any other institution) does. But The Museum of Modern Art has certainly been a most meaningful institution during our working lives, and we would think, of American artists in general, who are probably the best educated and the best supported contemporary artists in the world, thanks in part to the scholarship and the exhibitions characteristic of The Museum of Modern Art.

We do agree that the exhibition opening on Monday at The Museum of Modern Art is limited, by being restricted only to works actually owned by or promised to the Museum; but the show still promises to be the most remarkable selection of modern American art of this period yet shown to the public as an ensemble.

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An artist's whole life is dedicated to contributions from which other people benefit, and to all of the undersigned, regardless of our individual financial circumstances, the question of outright purchase, desirable as it would be, was a secondary issue. Finally, we are in complete agreement that you may use this letter in any way that you may see fit.

Hastily yours,

Herbert Ferber
Adolph Gottlieb
Peter Grippe
Philip Guston
Seymour Lipton
Robert Motherwell
Theodore Roszak
Mark Rothko
Mrs. Ad Reinhardt

P.S. This letter has the signatures of all artists who have made gifts or promised gifts to the Museum of Modern Art in connection with this program, with the exception of Louise Bourgeois, David Hare, and Richard Pousette-Dart, who wish to make their own statements.

However, they are in complete agreement with this group in refuting the notion that any form of coercion was involved.