

MUSEUM WILL STAGE UNANNOUNCED EVENT

"Zero is hero" is one of one hundred lines to be dispersed among 1,000 guests, contributing members to the Museum of Modern Art, who will attend the preview Thursday evening, December 17, of the new exhibit "Four Americans in Paris, the Collection of Gertrude Stein and her Family," sponsored by Alcoa Foundation.

This unannounced event will be staged by James Lee Byars, artist, philosopher, and author, who has a record for unplanned, unpredictable performances designed to invite attention and unfamiliar behavioral patterns.

When a signal is given over the loud speaker at 10:30 p.m. - possibly the flexing of a bicep which according to Columbia University Neurological Center should create an instant stimulus - Mr. Byars and ten guests of his choice will whisper to that person standing nearest to him one quotation by Gertrude Stein. Another ten staff members stationed in different rooms of the gallery will immediately start to distribute among the unsuspecting guests strips of paper each containing a Stein line such as "Thanks for all thought" or "There is no real money," or "The United States of America is the oldest country in the 20th century."

The purpose of the "event" is to create an awareness not only of the paintings collected by Miss Stein and members of her family, but also of the work of Gertrude Stein. For, according to Mr. Byars, there are only three geniuses, "Einstein, Stein and Wittgenstein." (Miss Stein thought the three geniuses of her time were Picasso, William James and Gertrude Stein.) He has prepared a book of 100 quotations from Gertrude Stein that will be distributed at the door as the guests depart. He considers her philosophy to be so perceptively visual that he has reduced it to a single column of type. His book consists of one single page.

(more)

Byars is a well recognized contemporary artist, who has three paper constructions in the Museum's collection. He also has been represented in the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, the Carnegie Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum, at the Architectural League of New York, and the Kyoto City Museum in Japan. He has made seven trips to Japan and lived and taught in that country. The oriental mind, he says, is receptive to the succinct poetic style of Gertrude Stein.

Mr. Byars, who considers himself the conceptualizer of the first totally interrogative philosophy, has attained some renown for having created a disposable man in collaboration with the Sanitation Department - 1,000 feet of paper held down by 100 pounds of sugar - the first communal dress for 100 people, a multiple hat to be worn by four heads, the first fire escape exhibit, and the first edible book.

Now abetted by distinguished assistants*, he will make an unexpected appearance in unexpected garb - he usually wears a Puritan hat over his shoulder-length hair and his unrehearsed experiment may provide surprise, if not consternation, among the Museum's guests. They may find themselves acting and reacting to a spontaneous unscheduled "play" that could prove as provocative as Gertrude Stein's comments, to wit: "We are anxious for our contemporaries to be history; "Remarks are not literature;" "In a real masterpiece there is no thought."

In any event the ghost of Gertrude Stein, though not seen, will surely be audible.

* According to Mr. Byars his assistants will include"
Richard Bellamy (Art Dealer);
Walter Sullivan (Science Editor of New York Times);
Roy Moyer (Director (American Federation of Arts);
Alain Jouffroy (French Art Critic);
Richard Castile (Director, Japan Society Art Gallery);
Arne Ekstrom (Art Dealer);
Walter Plaut (Travel Agent);
Robert Landsmen (Architect)
Riva Castleman;(Associate Curator, The Museum of Modern Art).

THE EXHIBIT OPENS TO THE PUBLIC DECEMBER 19TH, AND WILL BE ON VIEW FOR THREE MONTHS.
YOUR COVERAGE OF THE PREVIEW IS INVITED: