

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
September 1996

FIRST U.S. EXHIBITION OF THE DRAWINGS OF ANTONIN ARTAUD AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper
October 3, 1996 - January 7, 1997

The first American exhibition of the drawings of Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) opens at The Museum of Modern Art on October 3, 1996. One of this century's most influential and compelling literary figures, Artaud is best known for his "Theater of Cruelty," a project based on his vision of cruelty as truth and as a transforming experience. *Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper* reveals that Artaud was also an accomplished artist whose drawings record the harrowing images that populated his troubled mind. The exhibition provides the first opportunity in this country to examine the full extent of Artaud's art, which has had a strong effect on the works of such artists as Georg Baselitz, Jean Dubuffet, Kiki Smith, and Nancy Spero.

"Few graphic expressions in the twentieth century show the power and authentic inner necessity seen in Artaud's drawings," said Margit Rowell, Chief Curator, Department of Drawings, who organized the exhibition. "These works have come to public attention in France only within the last decade. As they are a distinctive phenomenon of our time, it appeared urgent to show them to an American audience before this century comes to a close."

This exhibition was realized with the support of the collections of the Musée National d'Art Moderne-Centre de Création Industrielle/Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

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Exhibition Content

Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper comprises approximately 70 works dating from 1937 to 1948. They include his "spells," or letters to friends scarred with hieroglyphs, burns, and rips; a series of fractured and obsessional drawings, created during Artaud's confinement in a psychiatric clinic in the South of France; and a series of portraits and self-portraits executed after his transfer to Ivry near Paris and his return to the Parisian intellectual world. A small selection of photographs, first editions, and letters providing context for the drawings are also on view.

Artaud's Life

Born in Marseille in 1896, Artaud suffered early childhood illnesses which induced a life-long drug addiction. In 1920 he moved to Paris where his collaborations with André Breton, Balthus, and André Masson, and his experiences as a film actor, stage director, writer, critic, and poet, shaped his artistic vision. Pilgrimages to Mexico and Ireland in the 1930s were marked by periods of creative output as well as psychological instability and fragmentation. Confinements in psychiatric clinics in France marked his final eleven years, yet this was the most productive phase of his life, during which he drew and became a prolific writer.

Publication

The fully illustrated catalogue accompanying the exhibition is the first comprehensive study of Artaud's drawings to be published in English, with essays by Margit Rowell, Ronald Hayman, Agnès de la Beaumelle, and Marthe Robert. Each drawing on exhibit is reproduced in the plate

section of the catalogue. Interviews with Kiki Smith, Patti Smith, and Nancy Spero highlight Artaud's influence within contemporary culture. A chronology of Artaud's life, a bibliography, and a list of exhibitions complete the catalogue. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, it contains 161 illustrations, 38 in color. Distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, it is available in The MoMA Book Store.

MoMA Special Events

- ▶ October 10: Lecture by Jacques Derrida, co-author (with Paule Thévenin) of *Antonin Artaud* (catalogue raisonné of the drawings). 6:00 p.m, The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1. Tickets are available at the Museum's lobby information desk beginning on October 1.
- ▶ November 7: Benefit performance by Patti Smith. 8:00 p.m., The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1. For tickets and information, please call 212/708-9680.

Artaud-related Programs Around New York City

- ▶ October and November: An extensive program of readings, talks, performances, and other events have been organized by The Drawing Center in collaboration with MoMA. For schedule and information, please call The Drawing Center, 212/219-2166.
- ▶ October 24-27: Film series at Anthology Film Archives. For information, please call 212/505-5181.
- ▶ October 18: Panel discussion organized by the Anthropology Department, New York University at La Maison Française. For information, please call 212/998-8750.

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For further information or photographic materials, contact Alexandra Partow, Assistant Director of Communications, 212/708-9756. Visit our Web site at <http://www.moma.org>.