

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
January 1991

ARTIST'S CHOICE: CHUCK CLOSE HEAD-ON/THE MODERN PORTRAIT

January 10 - March 19, 1991

An exhibition conceived and installed by the American artist Chuck Close opens at The Museum of Modern Art on January 10 and continues through March 19, 1991. ARTIST'S CHOICE: CHUCK CLOSE, HEAD-ON/THE MODERN PORTRAIT explores the various ways artists build portrait images and emphasizes the Museum's role as a repository of visual information. In this highly unconventional exhibition, Close has chosen approximately 170 portraits, in various mediums, from the Museum's collection and has arranged them in an extremely dense installation.

Organized in collaboration with Kirk Varnedoe, director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, this is the third in the Museum's ARTIST'S CHOICE series, in which contemporary artists are invited to organize small shows based upon the Museum's collection. The ARTIST'S CHOICE series is made possible by a generous grant from The Charles A. Dana Foundation.

Covering virtually the entire wall space of one gallery on the Museum's third floor, the exhibition incorporates works by modern masters alongside those of lesser-known artists (see attached list). On one wall, paintings are mounted salon-style from floor to ceiling; on the surrounding walls, prints, photographs, and drawings are closely arranged on stacked shelves, one work overlapping the next. Eight portrait busts are also displayed in the

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installation, their varying scales adjusted by aligning the eye level of each figure.

The construction of the exhibition, in which the artist has built a complex field from a select repertoire of units, mirrors the process Close follows in making up his own art. By juxtaposing so many similar head-and-shoulder images, the installation also encourages the viewer to see what the artist calls the "syntax," those systems of abstract marks or compositional strategies from which different portrait likenesses are made.

Additionally, by cutting across boundaries of medium, size, and so-called value, the exhibition alters the usual presentation of the Museum's collection. As Mr. Varnedoe writes in the brochure accompanying the exhibition, "By abandoning the normal conventions of selective, well-spaced hanging, by which museums focus special attention on particular works, this show frees--and challenges--viewers to form their own hierarchies of choice and patterns of attention."

Mr. Close states, "Certainly I tried to pick compelling, important images...portraits of people who were significant for the artist--either the artist himself or herself, family members, friends, or other artists. I tried to find what would have been for the artist an important image, as the subjects of my pictures are for me. But by slamming images together in juxtapositions the way I have, I tried to set up a situation which makes it more likely that viewers will also look at how the particular choices the artist made influence our experience of the subject."

Chuck Close is best known for large-scale, confrontational portraits in which photographic realism is tied to a systematic method of construction by modular, abstract units. Born in 1940 in Monroe, Washington, he received his

B.A. (1962) from the University of Washington, Seattle, and his B.F.A. (1963) and M.F.A. (1964) from Yale University. He studied at Akademie der Bildenen Kunste in Vienna on a Fulbright Grant before moving to New York in 1967.

A video is being produced in conjunction with the exhibition and will be shown in the Museum's Edward John Noble Education Center.

The ARTIST'S CHOICE series was introduced in 1989 to present fresh ways of seeing the history of modern art as a resource for contemporary creativity. The first installation in the series was BURTON ON BRANCUSI, followed in 1990 by ELLSWORTH KELLY: FRAGMENTATION AND THE SINGLE FORM.

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For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.

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Artists in the Exhibition

Berenice Abbott	Alberto Giacometti
Josef Albers	Vincent van Gogh
Ivan Le Lorraine Albright	Gianfranco Gorgoni
Diane Arbus	Arshile Gorky
Frank Auerbach	Emmet Gowin
Richard Avedon	John D. Graham
Milton Avery	Timothy Greenfield-Sanders
Francis Bacon	Juan Gris
Balthus	George Grosz
Max Beckmann	Richard Hamilton
Erwin Blumenfeld	Erich Heckel
Blythe Bohnen	David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson
Brassai	Vernon Hill
Paul Cadmus	Lotte Jacobi
Alexander Calder	Augustus John
Harry Callahan	Ray Johnson
Julia Margaret Cameron	Frida Kahlo
Vincent Canade	John Kane
Eugène Carrière	Alex Katz
Paul Cézanne	Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Marc Chagall	Paul Klee
Giorgio de Chirico	Oskar Kokoschka
Francesco Clemente	Gaston Lachaise
Chuck Close	Dorothea Lange
Jean Cocteau	Marie Laurencin
Louis Corinth	Alfred Leslie
Jean Crotti	Jay Leyda
Imogen Cunningham	Jacques Lipchitz
Salvador Dalí	Man Ray
André Derain	Robert Mapplethorpe
Jim Dine	Louis Marcoussis
Otto Dix	André Masson
Jean Dubuffet	Henri Matisse
Marcel Duchamp	Alfred Maurer
Raymond Duchamp-Villon	Joan Miró
Alfred Eisenstadt	Arthur S. Mole and John D. Thomas
James Ensor	G.D. de Monfried
Hugo Erfurth	Edvard Munch
Jesús Escobedo	Nickolas Muray
Walker Evans	Elie Nadelman
Conrad Felixmüller	Bruce Nauman
Llyn Foulkes	Alice Neel
Lee Friedlander	Arnold Newman
Paul Gauguin	Nicholas Nixon

Isamu Noguchi
Emil Nolde
Claes Oldenburg
Otto Pankok
David Park
Max Pechstein
Irving Penn
Pablo Picasso
Arnulf Rainer
Odilon Redon
Diego Rivera
Larry Rivers
William Roberts
Alexander Rodchenko
Rogi-Andre
Jaroslav Rössler
Georges Rouault
Lucas Samaras
August Sander
Egon Schiele
Karl Schmidt-Rotluff

Karl Schrag
Cindy Sherman
David Alfaro Siqueiros
Michael Spano
Edward Steichen
Joseph Stella
Alfred Stieglitz
Paul Strand
Pavel Tchelitchew
Mark Tobey
Joann Verburg
Jacques Villon
Maurice de Vlaminck
Wolf Vostell
Edouard Vuillard
Andy Warhol
William Wegman
Edward Weston
Neil Winokur
Theo Wujcik
Anton Zverev