

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
October 1989

SESAME STREET: THE FIRST GENERATION

November 11 - December 31, 1989

The twentieth anniversary of the revolutionary children's program Sesame Street is celebrated in a film exhibition opening at The Museum of Modern Art on November 11, 1989. SESAME STREET: THE FIRST GENERATION surveys highlights from twenty years of programming, with a special emphasis on animated and live-action segments directed by independent film and video makers. Created by the Children's Television Workshop in 1969, Sesame Street teaches preschool children basic cognitive and social skills through the medium of television. Continuing through December 31, the exhibition features weekend screenings of foreign and American segments, a special Christmas program, and a feature film starring Big Bird.

SESAME STREET: THE FIRST GENERATION opens on Saturday, November 11, at 12:00 p.m. with four programs that run during the day and repeat on Sunday, November 12. Included in the presentation are two programs of animated films and live-action clips, introduced by muppets Telly Monster and Oscar the Grouch and created by such independent filmmakers as Sally Cruikshank, Jeff Hale, and Michael Sporn; a compilation of segments from foreign-language versions of the program, including Arabic, Dutch, German, Hebrew, Filipino, Portuguese, Spanish, and

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Turkish; and the feature film, Sesame Street Presents Follow That Bird (1985), with Jim Henson's Muppets, Sandra Bernhard, John Candy, and Chevy Chase. Alternating programs are shown at 12:00 p.m. on weekends for the remainder of the exhibition (see schedule attached).

On December 16, 17, 22, and 23 at 12:00 p.m., Christmas Eve on Sesame Street (1974) features Jim Henson's Muppets, the cast of Sesame Street, and skaters from "Holiday on Ice." In addition to the weekend film screenings, a documentary on the program, The Sesame Street Experiment, can be seen daily at 11:00 a.m. in the Museum's John Edward Noble Education Center.

Sesame Street began as an experiment in using the medium of television to educate children. The focus is to help prepare preschoolers for the transition between the home environment and school, with special emphasis on the needs of children from low-income families. Sophisticated "selling" techniques used in television advertising were adopted by Sesame Street's producers in order to effectively hold the attention of young children. Research shows that the ground-breaking program has been successful in reaching and teaching the show's target audience.

The hour-long programs are comprised of twenty to thirty segments on topics ranging from numbers and letters to social and cultural issues to science and reading. Each segment is written and filmed to communicate specific learning goals. Themes are updated annually to reflect contemporary concerns. The twentieth season included subjects such as environmental issues, career

awareness, music, measurement, and lessons in prenatal care and fetal development.

Aired for the first time on November 10, 1969, Sesame Street is presently broadcast nationally on most member stations of the Public Broadcasting System. In an average week it is viewed in more than eleven-million households. The English language version of Sesame Street is currently broadcast in over seventy countries; in addition there are fourteen foreign language co-productions. Over the years, Sesame Street has won thirty-six Emmys and more than sixty national and international awards.

Children's Television Workshop (CTW) was created in 1968 as a nonprofit experimental center to explore television's capabilities as an educational and artistic medium. With the creation of Sesame Street, CTW became the first broadcast organization to develop programs that combine quantitative educational impact with mass entertainment appeal. The Workshop's activities include diversified educational enterprises serving adults as well as children.

SESAME STREET: THE FIRST GENERATION has been organized by Laurence Kardish, curator, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art, in association with the Children's Television Workshop.

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No. 111

For further information or film stills, please contact Sarah Eaton, film press representative, Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.