

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
July 1987

PROJECTS: TOM OTTERNESS

July 23 - October 13, 1987

The Museum of Modern Art's PROJECTS series moves outdoors this summer with an installation by American artist Tom Otterness in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. Organized by Linda Shearer, curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture and director of the series, the exhibition consists of Otterness's large-scale bronze and Cor-Ten steel sculpture, The Tables.

Otterness's work first began to receive public recognition in the early eighties with his white plaster friezes depicting plump, comical "doughboys" that act out the sociopolitical turmoil of a fictional society. By 1985 he added toylike figures, both humanoid and animal, which continue to explore the artist's favorite themes of love and war, creation and destruction.

The Tables, begun in 1986, is his most ambitious undertaking to date. The work consists of three oversized, steel picnic tables, populated by more than 100 bronze objects ranging in height from three inches to three feet. Although unusually monumental--the entire sculpture is thirty-eight feet long--the familiar nature of the picnic table invites visitors to sit on a bench and enter the sculptural drama of Otterness's fantasy world. Ms. Shearer writes in the brochure accompanying the exhibition, "Like Swift and in similar symbolic language, Otterness gives us a fairy-tale model of a civilization in devolution."

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Ms. Shearer continues, "The struggle between good and evil and, more importantly, the ambiguity with which it resounds, lie at the core of Otterness's work. As we sit down at these bedeviled picnic tables, the feast before us reminds us of the follies and absurdities that have blighted all civilizations, past and present."

Tom Otterness was born in 1952 in Wichita, Kansas, and trained at the Arts Students League of New York and the Whitney Museum of American Art's Independent Study Program. While working as an experimental filmmaker in the late-seventies, he became active with Collaborative Projects, Inc. (Colab), an artist's organization committed to political involvement and social change. Since 1983, he has had three individual exhibitions at the Brooke Alexander Gallery, New York, and one in Cologne, West Germany. His sculpture has also been included in a variety of group exhibitions here and abroad.

PROJECTS, a series of exhibitions devoted to the work of contemporary artists, is made possible by generous grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lannan Foundation, and J.P. Morgan and Co. Incorporated. A second exhibition, PROJECTS: MICHAEL YOUNG is running concurrently in the Museum's Garden Hall Gallery through September 7, 1987.

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