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

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
Josef Albers
Ivan Le Lorraine Albright
Diane Arbus
Frank Auerbach
Richard Avedon
Milton Avery
Francis Bacon
Balthus
Max Beckmann
Erwin Blumenfeld
Blythe Bohnen
Brassai
Paul Cadmus
Alexander Calder
Harry Callahan
Julia Margaret Cameron
Vincent Canade
Eugène Carrière
Paul Cézanne
Marc Chagall
Giorgio de Chirico
Francesco Clemente
Chuck Close
Jean Cocteau
Lovis Corinth
Jean Crotti
Imogen Cunningham
Salvador Dali
André Derain
Jim Dine
Otto Dix
Jean Dubuffet
Marcel Duchamp
Raymond Duchamp-Villon
Alfred Eisenstadt
James Ensor
Hugo Erfurth
Jesús Escobedo
Walker Evans
Conrad Felixmüller
Llyn Foulkes
Lee Friedlander
Paul Gauguin

Alberto Giacometti
Vincent van Gogh
Gianfranco Gorgoni
Arshile Gorky
Emmet Gowin
John D. Graham
Timothy Greenfield-Sanders
Juan Gris
George Grosz
Richard Hamilton
Erich Heckel
David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson
Vernon Hill
Lotte Jacobi
Augustus John
Ray Johnson
Frida Kahlo
John Kane
Alex Katz
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Paul Klee
Oskar Kokoschka
Gaston Lachaise
Dorothea Lange
Marie Laurencin
Alfred Leslie
Jay Leyda
Jacques Lipchitz
Man Ray
Robert Mapplethorpe
Louis Marcoussis
André Masson
Henri Matisse
Alfred Maurer
Joan Miró
Arthur S. Mole and John D. Thomas
G.D. de Monfried
Edvard Munch
Nickolas Muray
Elie Nadelman
Bruce Nauman
Alice Neel
Arnold Newman
Nicholas Nixon
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