

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
March 1994

ARTIST'S CHOICE: JOHN BALDESSARI

March 17 - May 10, 1994

An exhibition conceived and installed by American artist John Baldessari is the fourth in The Museum of Modern Art's series of **ARTIST'S CHOICE** exhibitions. On view from March 17 through May 10, 1994, **ARTIST'S CHOICE: JOHN BALDESSARI** features an original work that the artist has created from objects in the Museum's collection, and explores the ways in which we look at both familiar and less familiar art.

Made possible by a generous grant from The Charles A. Dana Foundation, **ARTIST'S CHOICE** highlights the role of the Museum's collection as a source for contemporary artists. The series is organized in collaboration with Kirk Varnedoe, chief curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture.

For this exhibition, Baldessari has chosen approximately thirty paintings, prints, drawings, film stills, and photographs to use in the creation of his new work (see attached list). Using enlarged photographic reproductions of the pieces, he has selected often unexpected details from them -- for example, the bananas from De Chirico's *Melancholy of Departure* (1914), the mouth of de Kooning's *Woman, I* (1950-52), and a square of grass from Wyeth's *Christina's World* (1948) -- and assembled them into a collage measuring over fifteen-feet long and eight-feet high. By combining what seem to be arbitrary details and odd shapes, frequently altering their relative

- more -

scale and placing them in startling juxtapositions, Baldessari both shows us what we may have overlooked in the works, and demonstrates how such fragments can spur surprising new meanings.

Baldessari's piece, titled e.g. *Grass, Water Heater, Mouths, & etc.* (for John Graham), consists of black-and-white and color photographs and oil stain. It is installed with six of the original works on which it is based; the details the artist selected from these six works are demarcated by a framing projector. Installed on a low ledge are sixteen-by-twenty-inch photographs of the remaining works, from which the relevant details have been excised, leaving a white shape in their place.

As have other **ARTIST'S CHOICE** exhibitions, this show emphasizes the ways that the Museum's collection can inspire contemporary creativity. In the brochure accompanying the exhibition, Kirk Varnedoe says that Baldessari's work "is a particularly vivid demonstration of a crucial way in which modern art has evolved and continues to evolve -- not as a linear baton-race of movements and isms, but through hybrids, mutations, and unpredictable recombinations that are first produced by individual sensibilities and then attract -- as Baldessari's work clearly has -- new 'schools' around them."

In an interview with Mr. Varnedoe, the artist has said that he wanted the exhibition "to provide the ambiance for people to . . . wonder about why I chose this detail or this shape out of this painting rather than that one. And if that happens, if it gets people to start to develop a visual vocabulary, then I think it's been a successful project."

John Baldessari is best known for his Conceptual works that focus on the processes of choice and selection, and that employ a wide range of

nontraditional mediums. Born in 1931 in National City, California, he received his B.A. (1953) and his M.A. (1957) from San Diego State College, and lives in Santa Monica, California, and in New York City.

* * *

No. 09

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

ARTIST'S CHOICE: JOHN BALDESSARI

Exhibition Checklist

Original works on view

- Giorgio de Chirico. *Gare Montparnasse (The Melancholy of Departure)*. 1914. Oil on canvas.
- John Graham. *Harlequin (Self Portrait)*. c. 1944. Oil and pencil on canvas.
- Willem de Kooning. *Woman, I*. 1950-52. Oil on canvas.
- Henri Rousseau. *The Sleeping Gypsy*. 1987. Oil on canvas.
- Andy Warhol. *Water Heater*. 1960. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas.
- Andrew Wyeth. *Christina's World*. 1948. Tempera on gessoed panel.

Photographic reproductions on view

- Artist unknown. *Exquisite Corpse*. Photograph from the Painting and Sculpture archive.
- Thomas Benton. *Homestead*. 1934. Tempera and oil on canvas.
- Marc Chagall. *Birthday*. 1915. Oil on cardboard.
- Marc Chagall. *Homage to Gogol*. 1917. Watercolor on paper.
- André Derain. *London Bridge*. 1906. Oil on canvas.
- Louis Michel Eilshemius. *Afternoon Wind*. 1899. Oil on canvas.
- Paul Gauguin. *Still Life with Three Puppies*. 1888. Oil on wood.
- Burt Gillett. Film still from *Three Little Pigs*. 1933.
- Vincent van Gogh. *The Starry Night*. 1889. Oil on canvas.
- Fernand Léger. *Landscape with Yellow Hat*. 1952. Oil on canvas.
- L.S. Lowry. *Ships Near Cumberland Coast*. 1963. Oil on canvas.
- Henri Matisse. *Dance (first version)*. 1909. Oil on canvas.
- Leo McCarey. Film still from *Ruggles of Red Gap*. 1935.
- Max Pechstein. *Max Raphael*. c. 1910. Watercolor on brown paper.
- Irving Penn. *Still Life with Watermelon*. 1947. Dye-transfer print.
- Pablo Picasso. *Harlequin*. 1915. Oil on canvas.
- Pablo Picasso. *Sleeping Peasants*. 1919. Tempera, watercolor, and pencil on paper.
- Joseph Pickett. *Manchester Valley*. 1914-18. Oil with sand on canvas.
- Diego Rivera. *Agrarian Leader Zapata*. 1931. Fresco.
- Charles Sheeler. *Bucks County Barn*. 1932. Oil and gesso on composition board.
- Georges-Pierre Seurat. *Channel at Gravelines, Evening*. 1890. Oil on canvas.
- Georges-Pierre Seurat. *At the Concert Européen*. c. 1887. Conté crayon on paper.
- Edouard Vuillard. *Still Life*. 1892. Oil on canvas.