

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
March 1996

PROJECTS: HIRSCH PERLMAN
March 28 - May 21, 1996

A new installation by American artist Hirsch Perlman (b. 1960) is the subject of the next **PROJECTS** exhibition, on view at The Museum of Modern Art from March 28 through May 21, 1996. Organized by Thomas W. Collins, Jr., Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow, Department of Photography, **PROJECTS: HIRSCH PERLMAN** employs videos, photographs, and text to explore the artist's continuing interest in man's inability, or unwillingness, to engage in meaningful or honest communication.

The current project comprises three video pieces with very different tones installed in separate, adjacent rooms. Each room contains a photographic still or stills from the video it houses, with a caption that alludes to the essence of the piece. In "A Nearly Perfect Conversation," a man and a woman (Wayne Allwine and Russi Taylor), seemingly long-time partners, sit at a kitchen table trying to connect with one another through banal comments. They come tantalizingly close to a meeting of the minds but ultimately, the conversation deteriorates into non sequiturs.

In "Acute Conversation," a passive person seeks reassurance from his more dominant, sadistic partner, who refuses to comply. The caption on this still declares "This is for your own good." Three different pairs of actors perform this piece in sequence on the tape: T.J. Paolino and Stephen Vaughn; Martin Barter and Kirk Woller; and A Martinez and Carl Weintraub.

"Complete Conversation," the centerpiece of the **PROJECTS** triptych, features two men (Mervyn Cedarhurst and Arye Gross) who are arrogant but essentially insecure. In contrast to "Acute Conversation," each says what his partner wants to hear, hoping the same will be done for him. The actors in this piece will be featured on separate, synchronized monitors, placed across

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from one another, giving visitors the feeling that they are walking in on an actual conversation.

"I see this exhibition as an opportunity to play out some common ground between interpretations and allegories of acting and interpretations and allegories of the relationships between artworks and their viewers," says Mr. Perlman. Beyond that, he refuses to ascribe more specific meaning to his work. Making the works "as plain as day for the audience," he states, would be "limiting rather than elaborating on what kinds of engagement might occur between the viewer and the work."

Mr. Collins writes in the exhibition brochure that throughout his career, Perlman's "principal strategy has involved confounding his viewers with ensembles of suggestive but enigmatic images and written and spoken texts that continually promise but defer meaning. They stall the interpretive process at the level of self-reflection and initiate critical engagement with flawed communication systems." Perlman has relentlessly challenged speech, writing, and photography, Mr. Collins says, "forcing each of these systems to fail repeatedly and reveal their tenuousness through those failures."

Born in 1960, Perlman received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University in 1982. His work has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including the 1989 BIENNIAL EXHIBITION at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. The artist resides in Los Angeles.

The **PROJECTS** series is made possible by generous grants from the Lannan Foundation, Susan G. Jacoby, and The Contemporary Arts Council and The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art. The next exhibition in the series is **PROJECTS: PIETER LAURENS MOL**, on view from September 19 through November 12.

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