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	JBH	III.1.12

Participants in the Meeting of May 28, 1970

John B. Hightower

June 4, 1970

If all of you are substantially and individually in agreement with it, the following is the request I intend to make of the Board of Trustees. A copy of the Minutes of the meeting is also attached.

1. That artists be allowed to provide lectures to groups throughout the Museum.
2. That a statement by the Museum against death be made.
3. That an exhibition be initiated on either the politicization of art or the artist as social critic.
4. That such a show become a circulating exhibition.
5. That a film loop/slide presentation of the works and statements of various artists be set up in the lobby of the Museum.
6. That a liaison group be set up between the artists and the trustees.

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Special File

The Museum of Modern Art

To John Hightower (copies to all staff present at Thursday's meeting)

From Bill Rubin

Date 1 June 1970

Re Artists meeting, May 28, 1970

In the three days since last Thursday night's artists meeting, I have found myself increasingly disturbed by an aspect of it--not the resultant resolutions, since I personally favor many of these, but the modalities (in the broader sense) by which they were arrived at. After the meeting terminated, the two artists I spoke to on the way out said rather disturbing things. George Segal indicated that he had been so furious--presumably about the tactics and rhetoric of the group as a whole--that he had refused to participate in the discussion. Bob Motherwell said, "It's awfully hard to take a position against a coalition of artists." My reply to Bob was that despite the long-standing tradition of artists' solidarity he really ought to have had the courage--as did Al Held--to say whatever was on his mind.

But what lingered in my mind was the fragrance of intimidation surrounding these remarks of Segal and Motherwell. Personally, I didn't think the discussion was particularly intimidating, though such divisive and rank stupidities as Yvonne Rainer's characterization of the Museum as just a "building with a bunch of old Impressionist paintings" could well have been done without. Rather, if it existed at all, it would seem to have been a question of concerted numbers. All of which reminds me that what I, at least, had thought was supposed to be a smallish meeting of artists drawn from a spectrum of the artists' community, had turned out to be a large meeting dominated by members of the Art Workers Coalition and the Artist Strike Committee. I had thought that the very purpose of the invitations from the Director's office was to keep the meeting reasonably small. The list of those invited gave more than ample representation to the Coalition and to the Strike Committee but it also included a number of artists whose opinions on a wide range of issues are not known. Many of the artists in the latter category surprisingly elected not to come--a disturbing reaction, about which I shall speculate below. Those that did come were a small minority--due, in part, to the "packing" of the meeting--and, if the comments of Segal and Motherwell are any indication, seemed to feel inhibited.

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On what basis were some twenty uninvited members of the Coalition and Artists' Strike Committee present at the meeting? On what basis was it agreeable that Ralph Ortiz bring seven unnamed supporters? This is a pressure tactic of the kind that soured our staff-Coalition meetings on Black and Puerto Rican questions. (After the personnel of a small committee had been agreed upon by the Coalition and the Museum, many new and unexpected "members" showed up without notice at the meetings.) Ortiz is a very intelligent man working for something he very much believes in and he would probably be the first to characterize his démarches as pressure tactics; by the same token, I'm sure that he has nothing but contempt for people who play patsy to them (as opposed to those who might agree with his often extremely cogent reasoning on issues).

One might be very mistaken, I believe, to assume that the conclusions of Thursday night's meeting represent the views of the artists' community as a whole. They might, and they might not. Like the Loeb Center meeting (where very few of the artists over 35 were present), it represented mostly the youngest generation--and, indeed, only a portion of that generation.

As you know, I am probably more in sympathy with most of Thursday's proposals than other members of the Staff Executive Committee. And I am not so frightened of the politicalization of MoMA that I would not support a wide variety of actions and commitments on our part regarding racism and Vietnam. Even if there weren't precedents for them--which there are--I would favor these actions. MoMA has had in the past exhibitions of a frankly political character--notably at a time of great national stress--and it hasn't blown away.

As the only member of the upper staff who saw fit to answer the call of some of the younger staff to hand out anti-war literature in the lobby on strike day, I nevertheless respect the right of my colleagues to the reasoning that led them to refrain from doing that. (I assume it was not the press of affairs since anyone could have gotten at least a few minutes free for a symbolic action). They probably felt that such direct political and social action was out of place in the Museum. Since Thursday night, I have been wondering how much of the artists community might feel that way. What struck me in retrospect about the meeting was the large number of artists--almost all of whom have contributed their work to good causes, and some of whom are very outspoken on politics--who declined your invitation to come and talk. One knew the opinions of the uninvited Coalition artists who came better than those of

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Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Barney Newman and Jules Olitski and others who did not.

While some of the ^{se}abstentions can be put down to apathy or to the holiday eve, it may well be that something else was functioning as well--that at least some of these artists were taking a position in not coming. The telephoned invitations which, as I understand it, asked artists to come to discuss what MoMA should do about various social and political questions, assume a priori that the recipient believes that MoMA should do something about them; in not coming, some of these artists may have been trying to tell us something. There is a German proverb which, translated literally, means "No answer is also an answer"; this is often faultily equated with the English "Silence gives consent." But does it? Silence in some cases might easily mean dissent.

What I am saying, then, is that a part of the artists community may conceivably not consider the Museum the proper place for the expression of their unquestionably strong feelings on racism and Vietnam. (Those MoMA staff members who would not go as far as you and I in certain directions may very well have their counterpart in the artists' community.) I hope that these unheard from artists will organize a forum so that we can know what they think. Certainly--as they are, by and large, the more established ones--it will not be possible for some eminently desirable and really productive goals, like refusal to participate in government-sponsored shows, to be achieved without them.

Which brings me finally to a request: that over the coming year you have a series of conversations with small groups of artists of all ages and artistic persuasions, not only about racism and Vietnam but about other ways in which MoMA can be improved and made more responsive to the community--that of the artists and otherwise. This is the sort of thing I thought was supposed to take place Thursday; there is still much to be gained by such meetings.

cc: WG, EJ, JL, ES, AD

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MEETING, MAY 28, 1970 WITH MEMBERS OF THE ARTISTS COMMUNITY

Mr. Hightower opened the meeting by saying he had asked the artists to attend in hopes of learning from them ways in which they felt the artists and museums could better deal with the ^{critical social and human} issues facing all of us today. One thing he is ^{committed} doing is to establish an Education Department within the Museum, the announcement of which would be made shortly. He asked the artists for their suggestions.

One of the artists presented a request that the Museum give over the first floor to the Artists Strike Committee who would mount a display in the form of a large sandwich board on which, front and back, would be printed a statement by the Museum Board of Trustees concerning their policy concerning war, racism, and repression. One of the artists later said the statement they were seeking from the trustees need not be political but could be a statement coming out against death. There would also be two projectors; one continuously showing views of war atrocities and the other the reactions in America to these atrocities. They would distribute pamphlets with statements by the artists and there would be guerilla action group performances. The request for this space is made for from now until the war ends. Mr. Hightower suggested that a feedback station for comments by Museum visitors and staff be incorporated.

Several other suggestions were made. Briefly, and in no special order, they are as follows:

That the Museum, or more specifically some more appropriate museum, hold an exhibition on Cambodian art so that people can see what it is that is being destroyed. As an addition, it was suggested that the exhibition include ~~an up-to-date~~ an up-to-date

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and positive view of what is ~~now~~ happening in IndoChina.

That the lecture tours be given by artists who would relate art to life and ~~and~~ therefore as opposed to death. Museum staff could also give tours if they wished.

That rather than remove their works artists have a black placard placed next to it with their statement about current issues.

That artists stand by their work and engage the public in discussion.

That an exhibition be held on pure art vs. political art, or on the politicization of art. Work as social comment as well as pure art would be shown. There would be votes by the public as to their reactions and whether they felt art should be social and political; there would be a forum for reactions from visitors. A circulating show in conjunction with this should be established.

That a collection box be placed in the lobby to support activities against war, racism, sexism, and repression.

That the Museum close the restaurant, bookstore, and other profit making areas of the Museum.

That a liaison be established between the artists and the trustees.

Mr. Hightower tried several times to elicit what the artists plans were for their own art activity in addition to their demands on the museums. Many said art was not possible in today's society; that they have shown they are articulate and therefore must now turn to political action. One said that the display and activities in the Museum's first floor

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is their art.

Several artists felt they would prefer to present the request to the trustees themselves rather than have Mr. Hightower as their spokesman. He said that could be arranged but he felt they were then more concerned with the presentation than the results.

Several artists also felt they couldn't wait until June 17th for the trustees meeting for an answer to the display request. They said they had to have an answer immediately. Mr. Hightower replied if that were the case the answer was no.

After considerable discussion it was the sense of the meeting that Mr. Hightower prepare a review of the meeting to be approved by those who attended. The review would be the basis of his presentation to the trustees at the June 17th meeting. If they were not willing to make a statement, it was requested that they prepare a letter which would be placed on the ~~stand~~ display and stand as their statement.

Mr. Hightower attempted to tell the meeting about a panel discussion he had been asked to chair for the American Association of Museums on Monday June 1st at 8:00 at the Brooklyn Museum. He had decided on the title of War, Racism, Sexism, and Repression. He suggested that two representatives each from the AWC, the Artists Strike Committee, W.A.R., Black and Puerto Rican artists join him and that those organizations choose their representatives and let him know Monday morning who they would be.

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Meeting May 28, 1970 5:00 p.m., Trustees Room

Carl Andre RI 9-3500
Box 540
Cooper Station

Romare Beardon WA 5-5375
357 Canal Street

Vinnette Carroll 924-7820
302 W 12 Street

Alan D'Arcangelo EN 2-3571 76 West 69th Street
127 Columbus Avenue, 724-0903 (Studio)

Ken Dewey 586-2040

Abby Gerd
504 La Guardia Place, NYC 10012
473-6685

Al Held 914 657-8006

Sol Lewitt
117 Hester Street
CA 6-4917

Robert Morris
186 Grand Street
925-8811

Robert Motherwell
173 East 94th Street
SA 2-0018

Louise Nevelson
29 Spring Street 226-6995 (unlisted)

Barnett Newman
685 West End Avenue
UN 6-0189

Ralph Ortiz 19 W 69
877-5670/ 666-7300

Gordon Parks 889-0290
Essence Magazine
102 East 30th Street

Lauren Raiken
311 East 10th Street
982-1640

Stan VanDerBeek
914 947-1604

Alex Gross
104 Second Avenue

Bill Lieberman
Bill Rubin
Elaine Johnson
Wilder Green
Liz Shaw
Arthur Decker

Adolph Gottlieb
27 West 96 Street

Herbert Ferber
41 Fifth Avenue
NYC 10003

Jon Hendricks
323 Greenwich Street

George Segal
RFD # 4
New Brunswick, New Jersey

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INFORMATION CENTER

In response to your agreement to cooperate with the requests of the New York Art Strike, we will establish an information center. The function of this center is to distribute information concerning racism, sexism, war and repression through all available media.

To execute this project, we request that the museum meet these specific needs:

- 1) That the museum provide adequate ground floor space and any necessary staff.
- 2) That the museum prepare and hang prominently as part of the information center, its statement concerning racism, repression, war, and sexism.
- 3) That the museum make available funds for purchasing audio-visual documentary and other related material.
- 4) That the museum provide the following equipment:
 - 2 projection screens or walls
 - 2 16 mm sound projectors
 - 2 slide projectors
 - 2 tape recorders
 - 2 tables for distributing printed matter
 - sufficient wall space for printed information of all kinds (posters etc.)
- 5) That the museum provide all of the above as a permanent and uncensored installation for the duration of the war.

New York Art Strike

6. LIBERATED ZONE - SPACE

Karl Kutz / DAVID FINE

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Meeting May 28, at 5:00 pm

Confirmed----

Romare Beardon
357 Canal Street
NYC WA 5- 5 3 7 5

Vinnette Carroll
924-7820

Alan D'Arcangelo
76 W 69 St
E N 2- 3 5 7 1
Studio- 127 Columbus Avenue
7 2 4- 0 9 0 3

Abby Gerd
504 La Guardia Place
NYC 10012
4 7 3- 6 6 8 5

Louise Nevelson
29 Spring Street
NYC CA 6- 1 0 9 3

Ralph Ortiz
19 W 69 St
8 7 7- 5670

Adolph Gottlieb
27 W 96 St
R I 9- 1 2 9 8
Studio- 2 2 6- 0 5 8 1

Robert Morris
186 Grand Street
9 2 5- 8811

John B. Hightower
Director
Tel. (212) 956-7502

a number of activities and plans currently underway here
that are attempts to do something positive with the Museum.
I would appreciate your help in doing more.

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Cont'd Confirmed

Mr. Lauren Raiken
311 E 10 St
NYC 982-1640

John B. Hightower
Director
Tel. (212) 956-7502

a number of activities and plans currently underway here
that are attempts to do something positive with the Museum.
I would appreciate your help in doing more.

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Tentative---

Herbert Ferber
9 8 2- 6 1 4 4 / A L 4- 2 6 3 0 (studio)

Gordon Parks
Essence Magazine
102 East 30th St
8 8 9- 0 2 9 0

Robert Motherwell
173 East 94 Street
NYC
S A 2- 0 0 1 8

Barnett Newman
685 West End Avenue
NYC U N 6- 0 1 8 9

Al Held
914/ 657-8006

Jasper Johns
225 East Houston Street
NYC 2 2 8- 1 9 9 3

John B. Hightower
Director
Tel. (212) 956-7502

a number of activities and plans currently underway here
that are attempts to do something positive with the Museum.
I would appreciate your help in doing more.

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The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

John B. Hightower
Director
Tel. (212) 956-7502

May 19, 1970

Mr. Robert Morris
186 Grand Street
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Morris:

My conscience is plaguing me considerably after last night. I admired tremendously what you said and how you conducted what was hardly the most parliamentary responsive group in town.

I think you should know - and I should have had the guts to say so last night - that I am reluctant to close institutions, such as the Museum of Modern Art, which in some way nurture freedom - so essential and fragile a part of the arts - and which provide all of us with a positive form of intensely human communication. That the Museum does so imperfectly, I readily admit.

I feel this particularly strongly now. I also recognize the difficulty, indeed the impossibility, of conducting "business as usual." The only irony, it seems to me, of conducting a strike against arts institutions is that it puts all of us in the same position as that of Brooklyn Congressman John Rooney who has tried for years - and finally successfully - to eliminate any commitment to the arts and artists the State Department would have like to make. Last year, with a single stroke of the pen, he killed the appropriation for the Cultural Exchange Program. I cannot help but think that the idea of closing arts institutions would delight him. His reasons are very different from those which prompt you to call a strike against arts institutions - the very same institutions that are not only most vulnerable to your demands but most sympathetic to your concerns. There are a number of activities and plans currently underway here that are attempts to do something positive with the Museum. I would appreciate your help in doing more.

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The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

Mr. Robert Morris

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May 19, 1970

For want of knowing a better way to proceed, I would consequently like to hold a meeting at the Museum with you and number of other artists to discuss what museums can do that is positive to relieve the intensity of human disregard we all feel so strongly at this time. If it works out for everyone, I will have the meeting at 5:00 on Thursday, May 28th in the Trustees Room at the Museum.

Attached is a list of the people I have invited. I will call to see if there are others you feel should be included.

Sincerely,

John B. Hightower
Director

JBH:ehn
enclosure

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PHONE-O-GRAM

for: J h

M. Jules Olitsky of _____

☒ Telephoned ☐ Please return the call ☐ Will call again ☐ Came in ☐ See me

Message: Cannot come to meeting. If you would like to meet with him at a later time for an 'exchange' he would be "delighted"

Phone: 989-7919 Date 5-27-70 Time _____ By es

~~Carl Andre~~

~~Romare Beardon~~

~~Vinnette Carroll~~

~~Alan d'Arcangelo~~

~~Ken Dewey~~

~~Abby Gerd~~

~~Al Held~~

~~Sol Lewitt~~

~~Robert Morris~~

~~Robert Motherwell~~ - Herbert Ferber (um Rubin) - *might be able to come*

~~Louise Nevelson~~

~~Barnett Newman~~

~~Ralph Ortiz~~

~~Gordon Parks~~

~~Lauren Raiken~~

~~Stan VanDerBeek~~

ADOLPH GOTTLIEB - 27 W 96 St
nyc
Bi 9-1298
confirmed
studios 226-0581

982-6144

home
41 5th ave
nyc 10003

AL 4-2630 studios

Dan Christianson

Bill Peltet

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GEORGE SEGAL - (201)
R.F.D. #4
no Brunswick NJ
TA 1-9217

Jasper Johns - WANA
Jules Olitsky -
802-442-9353
323 W 21 St
nyc 10011
989-7919

ROY LICHTENSTEIN - 30 W 26 St W#4-3900
nyc
KELLSWORTH KELLY (616) 102 925-8609
EN 2-6700 537-3916

List of those invited to the meeting on May 28, 1970 at
5:00 p.m. in the Trustees Room of The Museum of Modern Art

~~Carl Andre~~

~~Romare Beardon~~

~~Vinnette Carroll~~

~~Alan d'Arcangelo~~

~~Ken Dewey~~

~~Abby Gerd~~

~~Al Held~~

~~Sol Lewitt~~

~~Robert Morris~~

~~Robert Motherwell~~ - ~~Herbert Ferber (Wm Rubin)~~ -

~~Louise Nevelson~~

~~Barnett Newman~~

~~Ralph Ortiz~~

~~Gordon Parks~~

~~Lauren Raiken~~

~~Stan VanDerBeek~~

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41 5th Ave
nyc 10003
982-6144
AL 4-2630 studios

Dan Christensen
Bill Reffet