

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## LEE FRIEDLANDER: LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE

June 16 - September 11, 1994

An exhibition of some 200 photographs by American photographer Lee Friedlander, depicting signs, posters, graffiti, and other public messages, is on view at The Museum of Modern Art from June 16 to September 11, 1994.

Organized by Peter Galassi, Chief Curator, Department of Photography, **LEE FRIEDLANDER: LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE** is conceived as a single work made up of many parts and installed as a dense accumulation of pictures.

Opening with the alphabet, the exhibition moves on to numerals, then to words and sentences. The variety of messages -- commercial, religious, personal, political, sexual, and romantic -- is matched by the wit and versatility of Friedlander's photographic style. The black-and-white photographs, most made between 1979 and 1988, were published last year in Friedlander's thirteenth and most recent book, *Letters from the People*.

The exhibition marks a new stage in this prolific photographer's work. In several of his books and exhibitions over the past two decades, Friedlander has grouped together large numbers of related pictures -- a trend that has culminated in **LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE**. "For the first time," states Mr. Galassi, "the whole is not only greater, but exponentially greater, than the sum of its parts."

In one of the alphabet photographs, the letter "B" remains legible beneath the "A" that has been painted over it. In another, the letter "Z"

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hangs above a sleepy, deserted street in Akron, Ohio. On the seawall overlooking the harbor of Hong Kong is written, "Everyday I calls a phone to her. Every night I dreams of her." From plain to elaborate, from neat to messy, from polite to vulgar, the messages in the pictures suggest the inexhaustible range of what we have to say and of the ways in which we go about saying it.

Born in 1934 in Aberdeen, Washington, Lee Friedlander began to photograph at an early age. The first substantial showing of his work at The Museum of Modern Art was in the 1967 exhibition NEW DOCUMENTS, which also presented work by Diane Arbus and Garry Winogrand. Friedlander is the recipient of numerous awards, including fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. He lives near New York City.

This exhibition is the second in an informal series devoted to bodies of recent photographic work. The first, presented at the Museum last summer, was WILLIAM WEGMAN'S *CINDERELLA*. Following the New York showing, an international tour of **LEE FRIEDLANDER: LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE** is planned.

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PUBLICATION *Letters from the People*, by Lee Friedlander. 96 pages. 213 tritone plates. Published by Distributed Art Publishers, New York. Hardbound, \$125. Available in The MoMA Book Store.

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