

## The Museum of Modern Art

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### BRUCE NAUMAN

March 5 - May 23, 1995

A comprehensive retrospective devoted to the work of Bruce Nauman (b. 1941), one of the most rigorously experimental and influential American artists of his generation, opens at The Museum of Modern Art on March 5, 1995. **BRUCE NAUMAN** comprises more than sixty works -- including walk-in environments, video installations, neons, sculptural objects, and sound pieces -- exploring all aspects of Nauman's thirty-year career. Widely recognized as one of the most innovative contemporary artists, Nauman probes complex emotional and psychological states while examining the very premises of art making.

The exhibition, which remains on view through May 23, 1995, was jointly organized by Kathy Halbreich, Director, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Neal Benezra, Chief Curator of Exhibitions, Twentieth-Century Painting and Sculpture, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; it was coordinated for The Museum of Modern Art by Robert Storr, Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

Major support for **BRUCE NAUMAN** has been provided by the Lannan Foundation, The Bohen Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. Additional support for the New York showing has been provided by the Lannan Foundation and by the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with gifts from Lily Auchincloss, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, and Mr. and Mrs. Ronald S. Lauder.

"At times cryptic, at times funny, and always intellectually and emotionally challenging," writes Mr. Storr, "Nauman is fully revealed as an

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artist whose work is essentially contemporary and central to understanding the complex issues and interdisciplinary nature of art today. In all dimensions of his activity, Nauman touches the raw nerves of contemporary life while making private feelings and hidden doubt publicly accessible."

**BRUCE NAUMAN** is installed in two roughly chronological parts. Occupying the René d'Harnoncourt galleries on the Museum's lower level, Part I presents Nauman's works from 1965 to the early 1970s. Part II, in the Museum's third-floor contemporary painting and sculpture galleries, continues with works from the mid-1970s to 1994.

The retrospective opens with Nauman's early works, after the artist had abandoned painting and had begun exploring the very process of artistic creation in such mediums as sculpture, performance, film, video, audiotape, and holograms. *Neon Templates of the Left Half of My Body Taken at Ten-Inch Intervals* (1966), for example, reveals the artist's developing interest in his own body as both sculptural medium and primary subject matter. At the same time, Nauman deftly manipulates commonplace words to expose their fundamental strangeness and intensity. He relays messages, simultaneously disconcerting and comic, in the form of one-liners, rhymes, repetition, flipped syntax, mismatches, palindromes, and clichés. Titles are often a punning reference to the work itself. *Bound to Fail*, the first in a series titled *Eleven Color Photographs* (1966-1967/1970) shows the artist with his arms tied to his sides with rope. From the same series, two hands polish red letters H, O, and T in *Waxing Hot*.

In the 1970s Nauman further tested individual powers of perception and movement by placing the viewer in the work as both audience and subject. For example, cameras track viewers as they enter the narrowly spaced walls in

*Corridor Installation (Nick Wilder Installation)* (1970). What appears on the monitors and what viewers actually experience are conspicuously different.

Darker components of human emotion and behavior enter Nauman's oeuvre during the 1980s, typified by the buzzing neon *Violins Violence Silence* (1981-82), the billboard-sized *One Hundred Live and Die* (1984), and *Carousel* (1988), a nightmarish merry-go-round whereon mannequins of animals dangle as in an infernal circle.

One of the most challenging and disturbing of his environments is the video installation *Clown Torture* (1987). On entering an enclosed room, the viewer encounters large-scale images projected directly on two lateral walls, as well as two pairs of stacked monitors on pedestals. Five sequences play simultaneously creating a cacophonous assault of image and sound.

Recent works recall past themes with new acuity. *Ten Heads Circle/Up and Down* (1990), a wax and wire sculpture, summons early Nauman themes of violence and dismemberment. In the videotape installation, *Poke in the Eye/Nose/Ear 3/8/94 Edit* (1994), Nauman returns to his body as central subject in an exploration that is humorous but ultimately physically and psychologically painful.

Born in 1941 in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Bruce Nauman received a B.A. degree (1964), with a major in art, from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he also studied mathematics, physics, and, informally, music and philosophy. In 1966 he received his M.F.A. from the University of California at Davis. Nauman was awarded the Max Beckmann Prize in 1990, the Wolf Prize in Arts-Sculpture in 1993, and the Wexner Prize for 1994. The citation from the Wolf Prize noted that Nauman is "clearly one of the great artists of this century." His first one-person exhibition was in 1966 at the Nicholas Wilder Gallery, Los Angeles; his first solo museum exhibition, coorganized by the Los Angeles Museum of Art

and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, was held in 1972. **BRUCE NAUMAN** is the artist's first museum retrospective in the United States in more than two decades. Nauman's work is also represented in numerous museum and private collections internationally. Despite much critical acclaim -- particularly in Europe where his work has been more widely shown -- he has only received significant public exposure in this country in recent years. Nauman lives in New Mexico.

**BRUCE NAUMAN** opened in November 1993 at the Museo Nacional Reina Sofia Madrid, and continued its tour at the the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. After New York, the exhibition travels to the Kunsthaus, Zurich (July 14 - October 15, 1995), for its final showing.

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**PUBLICATIONS**

*Bruce Nauman*, with essays by Neal Benezra, Kathy Halbreich, Paul Schimmel, and Robert Storr. 216 pages. 155 illustrations; 93 in color. Published by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; distributed by Distributed Art Publishers, New York. Paperbound, \$35.00; available in The MoMA Book Store.

*Bruce Nauman: A Catalogue Raisonné* (including complete *Bruce Nauman* exhibition catalogue), compiled by Joan Simon. 400 pages. 729 illustrations; 229 in color. Published by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; distributed by Distributed Art Publishers, New York. Hardbound, \$110.00; available in The MoMA Book Store.