

# The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release

## CHUCK CLOSE EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

January 30, 1996. . . . Glenn D. Lowry, Director of The Museum of Modern Art, announced today that the Museum will present a major retrospective of the work of the American artist Chuck Close (b. 1940) in spring 1998. A leading figure in contemporary art since the early 1970s, Close is best known for his monumentally scaled portrait paintings, based on photographs of the faces of fellow artists.

Organized by Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator, and Robert Storr, Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, the exhibition will offer a selective survey of the artist's work from every phase of his career. It will include his prints and photographs as well as paintings and drawings and will be accompanied by a substantial publication. It will be shown from February 18 to May 26 of 1998, and is expected to tour to several other venues.

Recently, Mr. Close cancelled plans for a retrospective of his work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1997, citing disagreements with the administration over the proposed arrangements for the show. The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition is a separate and freshly conceived project.

Mr. Lowry explained that "Chuck Close has had a long and happy association with The Museum of Modern Art. His first print was the focus of a PROJECTS exhibition here in 1973, his work appeared in our DRAWING NOW exhibition in

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1975, and in 1991 the artist organized a widely acclaimed exhibition, HEAD-ON/THE MODERN PORTRAIT, as part of the ARTIST'S CHOICE series. The Museum's recent acquisition of a major 1995 painting, *Dorothea*, adds to our already rich holdings in Close's work in all mediums. We are delighted to be able to organize a retrospective which we know will be eagerly awaited and enthusiastically received."

Mr. Varnedoe stated, "The apparently single-minded focus of Chuck Close's work for the past thirty years has actually included an amazing range of experiment in different formats and mediums, and has yielded a body of work whose inventiveness and intelligence are exceptional. With the passage of time, we have become aware how the shifting faces of these seemingly deadpan, mug-shot portraits and self-portraits can encompass a cumulative meditation on individual identity in our time, and deepening emotive and expressive dimensions. This exhibition should make clear the quality of Close's response, over almost three decades, to a series of artistic challenges both embraced and imposed. I can think of few contemporary artists whose work has a comparable combination of respect among peers and accessibility for a broad public."

Robert Storr, who was the coauthor, with Lisa Lyons, of a monographic study, *Chuck Close* (Rizzoli, 1987), added, "Since the advent of the modern camera, representational painters have feared that photography would rob them of their purpose while critics enthralled by such reproductive technologies have eagerly anticipated the 'death' of painting altogether. Instead, more than a hundred years after its invention, photography has offered painting a greatly extended lease on life and many previously

unimagined perspectives. It has also provided painters and photographers with a new subject: the mesmerizing disparities between what the mechanical eye and the human eye see. No artist in either discipline has explored this perceptual gap with more rigor, flair, or sensitivity to the aesthetic opportunities and psychological enigmas it encompasses than Chuck Close. In all its formal variety, Close's work registers the mirror image of our compulsive need to make and look at pictures."

Chuck Close commented, "I am thrilled to have my retrospective organized by The Museum of Modern Art. It feels comfortable and right that it be at an institution with which I have had a long and happy association, and with curators who have played such an important role in contributing to the understanding of my work."

Born in Monroe, Washington, Chuck Close received a B.A. degree from The University of Washington, followed by postgraduate work at Yale University from 1962 to 1964. Though his work has often been associated with Photo-Realism, his disciplined way of building images from grids of small, modular units is more strongly grounded in the Minimalist aesthetics of the late 1960s.

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