

NEW INSTALLATION IN MoMA's CONTEMPORARY GALLERIES TRACES COMMON THEMES ACROSS GENERATIONS AND NATIONALITIES

Large-Scale Installations and New Media Works among Recent Acquisitions on View

Take Two. Worlds and Views: Contemporary Art from the Collection

Contemporary Galleries
September 14, 2005-July 3, 2006

New York, August 26, 2005—*Take Two. Worlds and Views: Contemporary Art from the Collection*, the second installation in The Museum of Modern Art's galleries for contemporary art since the reopening of the Museum last November, will open on September 14. The second-floor Contemporary Galleries, a block-wide, column-free space with nearly 22-foot-high ceilings, will be completely reconfigured to feature both small rooms and large, open environments, ideal for the display of works in a wide variety of mediums. The Contemporary Galleries will be reinstalled annually, allowing the Museum to show more of its vast collection of contemporary art and providing continuous opportunities to explore different viewpoints on the art of today.

The approximately 50 works in *Take Two* will be combined in unexpected cross-generational groupings and thematic ensembles. The striking variety of works—video, audio pieces, photography, painting, multi-part works on paper, and large-scale installations—together will propose a series of conversations and confrontations among the works and will accentuate important innovations in art made between 1965 and the present. *Take Two* will address three significant preoccupations in contemporary art: shifting perceptions of identity; explorations of the political landscape; and the notion of the sublime and the dematerialization of the art object. The installation is curated by Klaus Biesenbach, Curator, Department of Film and Media, The Museum of Modern Art, and Chief Curator of P.S.1 Contemporary Arts Center; and Roxana Marcoci, Associate Curator, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art.

Take Two will feature a number of significant recent acquisitions that have not previously been exhibited, including works by Marina Abramovic, James Lee Byars, Janet Cardiff, Mona Hatoum, Gary Hill, Rudolph Schvartzkogler, and Yinka Shonibare.

"This presentation is not organized chronologically; rather it cuts across the last 40 years, combining startling 'ahistorical' clusters with more historical and contextual displays," said Ms. Marcoci. "This intersection allows different positions to coexist, making curatorial practice less singular in voice."

Mr. Biesenbach adds, "The exhibition deals with artists' views on the world. Reflections of the political and historical reality are as much part of these perspectives as the visualization of sublime beauty."

Among the issues explored by artists during the last four decades are those pertaining to shifting perceptions of identity, of both the self and others. These investigations include

experimentation with the body to test conventional notions of individuality, probing the act of looking and being looked at, and the artist as performer in art, with results that may be provocative, humorous, unsettling, or solemn.

Marlene Dumas's (South African, b. 1953) gouache *Chlorosis* (1994) is a multipaneled drawing of 24 portraits arranged in a grid. Culled from fashion photographs and film archives or pictures that she took herself, the portraits are distressing, fascinating, haunting, and ambiguous. Identity is examined in an entirely different manner by Nicholas Nixon's (American, b. 1947) *The Brown Sisters* (1975–2005), a photographic series of 31 portraits of the artist's wife and her three sisters. Once each year since 1975, Nixon has photographed the four women in the same order from left to right, creating a frank and moving testimony to four linked lives.

Gary Hill's (American, b. 1961) *Viewer* (1996) is a wall-size video of a group of blue-collar workers, placing the Museum visitor in the unusual position of being the "viewed." *Mirror of Light* (1974), a six-by-six-foot mirror with a red light glowing on its flawless surface, by Waltercio Caldas (Brazilian, b. 1946), allows viewers to look at an object that "repeats the world," duplicating everything by its reflection.

With the idea of the artist as performer, artists incorporate themselves into their works. For example, Charles Ray's (American, b. 1953) *Plank Piece I and II* (1973), two large-scale photographs in which the artist is portrayed pinned to the wall by a large plank of wood, extending his body into a sculptural object. Marina Abramovic's (Yugoslav, b. 1946) *Art Must Be Beautiful, Artist Must Be Beautiful* (1975), is a suspended video projection that shows the artist with a metal comb in one hand and a metal brush in the other, aggressively combing and brushing her hair while continuously repeating, "art must be beautiful, artist must be beautiful," until she injures both her hair and face. A more diaristic approach is taken by Dieter Roth (Swiss, 1930–1998) in *Solo Scenes* (1997–98), an installation of 131 video monitors and players stacked in a grid, with each screen presenting different continuous footage of the artist going about his daily routine during a period in which he was convalescing after a severe illness. Roth died shortly after the period shown in *Solo Scenes*, unexpectedly making it a self-portrait of a dying artist.

Current and historical political issues are a second recurring preoccupation in contemporary art since 1965. Ilya Kabakov's (American, born Russia, 1933) *The Man Who Flew into His Picture* (1981–88), a room-size installation of a wooden chair facing a wall, was made in response to the repressive milieu of life before the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. With its small entrance, low ceiling, and claustrophobic environment, it serves as a satirical and metaphysical parable of the constrictions in the U.S.S.R. and the prevailing desire for escape.

Johannesburg-based artist William Kentridge (South African, b. 1955) often reflects on the apartheid and post-apartheid era in South Africa. Made prior to the African National Congress's landmark election victory, his eight-minute video *Felix in Exile* (1994) is a richly nuanced exploration of social memory, in which recollections of the devastatingly violent rule of apartheid are rendered visibly to the fictional character Felix through the eyes of a black South African woman.

A large gallery space in the exhibition features Yinka Shonibare's (British, b. 1962) *How Does a Girl Like You Get to Be a Girl Like You?* (1995), a seemingly Victorian tableau of mannequins in elaborate period dresses posed on a raised platform. The costumes are made of fabrics that replicate traditional African textiles, however, subverting the viewer's expectations and serving as a commentary on European colonialism. Also in this large space is Dana Schutz's (American, b. 1976) *Presentation* (2005), a mural-size painting in the artist's characteristically expressive style that references motifs from art history as diverse as Gustave Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* (1888) and James Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels* (1849-1850), and reflects the artist's views on current political events by striking uneasy associations with images of war. *Presentation* was recently included in the *Greater New York 2005* exhibition at P.S.1.

Chéri Samba's (Congo, b. 1956) large-scale painting *Condemnation without Judgement* (1989-90) is rendered in acidic colors and draws on the biting wit of caricature and the narrative style of film to attack social and political injustice in the world.

The third focus of the exhibition deals with how artists have sought to render the ethereal and the sublime by dematerializing their mediums, working with such elements as sound and light. While their predecessors may have represented notions of ethereality in painting, sculpture, drawing, and photography, artists in this installation create works that immerse the viewer in a total space as a means to provoke a sensory feeling and body-conscious response.

40 Part Motet. A reworking of Spem in Alium by Thomas Tallis (2001), by Janet Cardiff (Canadian, b. 1957), is an audio installation of 16th-century English composer Thomas Tallis's *Spem in Alium nunquam habui*, a choral piece for four male voices (bass, baritone, alto, and tenor) and child sopranos. The 40 separately recorded voices are played back through 40 speakers arranged in a large circle, allowing visitors to wander among the speakers to hear the distinct voices and experience the different combinations and harmonies as they progress through the work.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres (American, born Cuba, 1957–1996) was known for combining the impulses of Conceptual art, Minimalism, and political activism. His two works in *Take Two* are *Untitled (for Parkett 39)* (1994), a screenprinted billboard of footprints left in the grains of sand, traces of an absent human presence; and *Untitled (Toronto)* (1992), a string of lightbulbs that hangs from the ceiling to the floor, their cords intertwined, symbolizing two lives threatened by loss, "as one light must burn out before the other." A room within the galleries houses James Lee Byars's (American, 1932-1997) *The Table of Perfect* (1989), a six-by-six-foot solid marble cube covered in gold leaf that addresses the utopian idea of perfection.

A more idiosyncratic approach to the sublime is provided by Alighiero e Boetti's (Italian, 1940–1994) *The Six Senses* (1973), a series of ballpoint drawings done in code. When the letters of the alphabet that are laid out on the left side of the paper are combined with the commas that are laid out horizontally, one can read in Italian the five senses—*vedere* (to see), *gustare* (to taste), *toccare* (to touch), *dire* (to hear), *odorare* (to smell)—and one added by Boetti: *pensare* (to think).

The installation concludes with James Turrell's (American, b. 1943) *A Frontal Passage* (1994), a light installation of sensual power that fully dematerializes the art object. After one passes through a darkened entryway into a chamber, a radiant wall of red light extends diagonally across the space and ends abruptly as though it had density, instead of diffusing softly. The work's power lies in the paradox in which nothingness gains physical presence.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Klaus Biesenbach

Curator, Department of Film and Media

Klaus Biesenbach is a Curator in MoMA's Department of Film and Media and also serves as the Chief Curator at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, a MoMA affiliate. He was the Founding Director of KW (Kunst-Werke) Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin. Mr. Biesenbach was a member of the international jury of the biennale in Venice (1997), co-organized the "hybrid workspace" of Documenta 10 in Kassel (1997), directed the Berlin Biennale (1998), and co-curated the Shanghai Biennale in 2002, among numerous other international touring exhibitions of contemporary art, such as *Disasters of War* in 2000, *Loop* in 2001, and *Mexico City* and *Video Acts* in 2002. He also co-curated the Greater New York exhibitions at P.S.1 in 2000 and 2005 and the P.S.1 presentation of *Roth Time: A Dieter Roth Retrospective*, held at MoMA QNS and P.S.1 in 2004. Most recently, he co-curated *New Works/New Acquisitions* at MoMA with Ann Temkin, Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture. Mr. Biesenbach is currently working on a large-scale exhibition of the work of Scottish artist Douglas Gordon, to open at MoMA in June 2006.

Roxana Marcoci

Associate Curator, Department of Photography

Roxana Marcoci joined The Museum of Modern Art in 1999 as Curatorial Assistant in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, became Assistant Curator in 2003, and was promoted to Associate Curator in 2005. Ms. Marcoci is a member of Phi Beta Kappa for Excellent Achievement in Liberal Scholarship, and holds a Ph.D. in 20th-Century Art History and Criticism from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. For MoMA, Marcoci was the curator of *Counter-Monuments and Memory*, part of *Open Ends* (2000); co-curator of *Projects 73: Olafur Eliasson—Seeing Yourself Sensing* (2001); and curator of *Projects 80: Lee Mingwei—The Tourist* (2003); *Projects 82: Mark Dion Rescue Archaeology—A Project for The Museum of Modern Art* (2004); and of the retrospective *Thomas Demand* (2005). She also organized *Clockwork 2000* (Clocktower/P.S.1, 2000), and was curator of *Here Tomorrow* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 2002). Ms. Marcoci is currently working on the exhibition *Comic Abstraction*, opening at The Museum of Modern Art in October 2006.

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