

For Immediate Release
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The Museum of Modern Art

COMMITTED TO PRINT

January 31 - April 19, 1988

The artists portray the frailties of leaders and institutions, the fear of cultural differences, and the utter depths to which cruelty and barbarism can go. But in the final analysis it is not the specific issues or events that stand out. What we come away with is a shared sense of the human condition: rather than feeling set apart, we feel connected.

--Deborah Wye*

The first museum exhibition to explore social and political themes in American printed art from the sixties to the present opens at The Museum of Modern Art on January 31, 1988. Organized by Deborah Wye, associate curator, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, COMMITTED TO PRINT examines prints and books by contemporary artists whose work is primarily in the fine art tradition of painting and sculpture, in contrast to that of the graphic arts poster or the political caricature.

The exhibition has been sponsored in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. The publication accompanying the exhibition has been made possible by the Samuel Rubin Foundation.

The exhibition includes 144 prints and thirty-six artist books by 108 individual artists and sixteen collectives. While all the represented artists live or have lived in America, their concerns are global. Drawn from all sections of the country, the major portion of the work illustrates activity on the East and West coasts (a complete list of artists is attached).

Organized by theme, the works in the exhibition focus on such categories as governments and leaders; race and culture; gender; nuclear power and

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Most of the artists represented in the exhibition communicate their ecology; war and revolution; and economics, class struggle, and the American Dream. Prints overlapping several categories or exploring universal themes are presented in an introductory section. Issues arising from abuse of power inform almost all the works under consideration.

The tradition of social and political printed art goes back to the fifteenth century. Works by such artists as Hieronymus Bosch and Lucas Cranach, and later, Francisco Goya, Honoré Daumier, Otto Dix, Käthe Kollwitz and others, created memorable printed images commenting on social injustice, government corruption, and war. Continuing this tradition, American realists such as George Bellows, Stuart Davis, and John Sloan did illustrations for the socialist magazine The Masses.

The exhibition includes later works by such artists as Jacob Lawrence, Jack Levine, and Ben Shahn, whose work of the thirties related to life during the Great Depression. From the forties to the early sixties, artists working with political and social subjects were not highly visible. By the late sixties and early seventies, a pluralism began to emerge that extended to art with discernible subject matter; many artists emphasized feminist, ethnic, and other social and political currents in their work.

The eighties have seen an increase in the prevalence of art about such issues. Some established artists--such as Vito Acconci, Robert Arneson, Jonathan Borofsky, and Bruce Nauman--who in the late sixties and early seventies were already working outside the abstract movements, have become more specifically political. Others, such as Robert Morris, have turned from abstraction to work of profound political ramifications. Still others, like Leon Golub and Nancy Spero, who worked in these modes for years in relative isolation, were by the mid-eighties receiving widespread attention.

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Most of the artists represented in the exhibition communicate their concerns in the formal language of modernism. Collage techniques, in which otherwise familiar imagery or text is arranged in startling juxtapositions, are frequently used. Flattened surface areas that push out onto the frontal plane lend immediacy to confrontational works. Isolated images on stark backgrounds set up iconic figure/ground relationships that turn subjects into symbols. In addition, expressionist gesture and distortion of the human figure occur frequently in works addressing the subjects of violence and oppression.

These artistic conventions are employed in conjunction with the most appropriate print mediums: the flatness of silkscreen, the directness of block printing, the bite of etching, and the freedom of lithography. The less traditional mediums of stencil and offset, often used in activist art because they are easy and inexpensive, are also employed.

COMMITTED TO PRINT is on view during the Museum's CONTEMPORARY ART IN CONTEXT program, a week-long series of special events, beginning February 29. Discussing their works in the COMMITTED TO PRINT galleries are artists Nancy Spero and Leon Golub (Tuesday, March 1, 12:30 p.m.) and Sue Coe and Faith Ringgold (Friday, March 4, 12:30 p.m.). Enrollment for these discussions is arranged through the Department of Education, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019; 212/708-9795.

* PUBLICATION Committed to Print by Deborah Wye. Introduction; commentaries with each illustration; chronology of social, political, and art-activist events of the period; notes on the artists; bibliography. 120 pages. 134 black-and-white illustrations. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. Paperbound, \$12.50; available in the Museum Store.

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

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Artists and Collectives in the Exhibition

Unless otherwise indicated, all artists were born in the United States.

January 27, 1988: This corrected list supersedes previously issued versions, which were incomplete.

Vito Acconci (b. 1940, resides New York)
 Jerri Allyn (b. 1952, resides New York)
 Luis Alonso (b. 1951, resides Puerto Rico)
 Emma Amos (b. 1938, resides New York)
 Benny Andrews (b. 1930, resides New York and Georgia)
 Ida Applebroog (b. 1929, resides New York)
 Tomie Arai (b. 1949, resides New York)
 Robert Arneson (b. 1930, resides California)
 Artists Meeting for Cultural Change
 Artists and Writers Protest Against the War in Vietnam
 Art Workers' Coalition
 Eric Avery (b. 1948, resides Texas)
 Luis Cruz Azaceta (b. 1941, Cuba; resides New York)
 Sonia Balassanian (b. 1942, Iran; resides New York)
 Rudolf Baranik (b. 1920, Lithuania; resides New York)
 Romare Bearden (b. 1914, resides New York)
 Nan Becker (resides New Jersey)
 Rudy Begay (b. 1946, member Navajo nation, resides Arizona)
 Leslie Bender (resides New York)
 Black Emergency Cultural Coalition
 Jonathan Borofsky (b. 1942, resides California)
 Louise Bourgeois (b. 1911, France; resides New York)
 Vivian Browne (resides New York)
 Chris Burden (b. 1946, resides California)
 Luis Camnitzer (b. 1937, Germany; immigrated to Uruguay.
 Resides New York)
 Josely Carvalho (b. Brazil; resides New York)
 Elizabeth Catlett (b. 1919, resides Mexico and New York)
 Judy Chicago (b. 1939, resides New Mexico)
 Eva Cockcroft (resides New York)
 Sue Coe (b. 1951, England; resides New York)
 Collaborative Projects, Inc.
 Michael Corris (b. 1949, resides New York)
 Carlos Cortez (b. 1923, resides Chicago)
 Anton van Dalen (b. 1938, Holland; resides New York)
 Jane Dickson (b. 1952, resides New York)

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Jim Dine (b. 1935, resides Vermont)
 James Dong (b. 1949, resides San Francisco)
 Mary Beth Edelson (resides New York)
 Melvin Edwards (b. 1937, resides New York)
 Marguerite Elliot (resides California)
 John Fekner (b. 1950, resides New York)
 Mary Frank (b. 1933, England; resides New York)
 Antonio Frasconi (b. 1919, Argentina; resides Connecticut)
 Rupert Garcia (b. 1941, resides California)
 Sharon Gilbert (b. 1944, resides New York)
 Mike Glier (b. 1953, resides New York)
 Leon Golub (b. 1922, resides New York)
 Peter Gourfain (b. 1934, resides New York)
 Ilona Granet (resides New York)
 Group Material
 Dolores Guerrero-Cruz (resides California)
 Guerrilla Art Action Group
 Marina Gutiérrez (b. 1954, resides New York)
 Hans Haacke (b. 1936, Germany; resides New York)
 David Hammons (b. 1943, resides New York)
 Keith Haring (b. 1958, resides New York)
 Edgar Heap of Birds (b. 1954, member Cheyenne/Arapaho nation;
 resides Oklahoma)
 Heresies Collective
 Jenny Holzer (b. 1950, resides New York)
 Rebecca Howland (resides New York)
 Arlan Huang (b. 1948, resides New York)
 Robert Indiana (b. 1928, resides Maine)
 Carlos Irizarry (b. 1938, resides Puerto Rico)
 Alfredo Jaar (b. 1956, Chile; resides New York)
 Luis Jimenez (b. 1940, resides New Mexico)
 Jasper Johns (b. 1930, resides New York and St. Martin)
 Jerry Kearns (b. 1943, resides New York)
 Edward Kienholz (b. 1927, resides Idaho and West Berlin)
 Janet Koenig (resides New York)
 Margia Kramer (resides New York)
 Barbara Kruger (b. 1945, resides New York)
 Suzanne Lacy (b. 1945, resides California)
 Jean LaMarr (b. 1945, member Paiute/Pit River nation,
 resides California and New Mexico)
 Jacob Lawrence (b. 1917, resides Washington State)
 Michael Lebron (b. 1954, resides New York)
 Colin Lee (b. 1953, resides New York)
 Jack Levine (b. 1915, resides New York)
 Les Levine (b. 1935, Ireland; resides New York)
 Robert Longo (b. 1953, resides New York)
 Paul Marcus (b. 1953, resides New York)
 Marisol (b. 1930, France; resides New York)
 Dona Ann McAdams (b. 1954, resides New York)
 Yong Soon Min (b. 1953, South Korea; resides New York)
 Richard Mock (b. 1944, resides New York)
 Sabra Moore (resides New York)
 Robert Morris (b. 1931, resides New York)

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- Bruce Nauman (b. 1941, resides New Mexico)
- Joseph Nechvatal (b. 1953, resides New York)
- Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929, Sweden; resides New York)
- Ed Paschke (b. 1939, resides Chicago)
- Adrian Piper (b. 1948, resides Washington, D.C.)
- Susan Pyzow (b. 1955, resides New York)
- Robert Rauschenberg (b. 1925, resides New York and Florida)
- Faith Ringgold (b. 1934, resides New York and California)
- Larry Rivers (b. 1923, resides New York)
- Elizabeth Rodriguez (resides New Jersey)
- Tim Rollins + K.O.S. (Rollins, b. 1955, resides New York)
- Rachael Romero with Leon Klayman (reside New York)
- James Rosenquist (b. 1933, resides New York and Florida)
- Martha Rosler (resides New York)
- Erika Rothenberg (resides New York and California)
- Christy Rupp (b. 1949, resides New York)
- Jos Sances (b. 1952, resides California)
- Juan Sánchez (b. 1954, resides New York)
- Peter Saul (b. 1934, resides Texas)
- Miriam Schapiro (b. 1923, resides New York)
- Ben Shahn (b. 1898, Lithuania; d. 1969, United States)
- Sisters of Survival
- Mimi Smith (resides New York)
- Vincent Smith (b. 1929, resides New York)
- Nancy Spero (b. 1926, resides New York)
- Frank Stella (b. 1936, resides New York)
- May Stevens (b. 1924, resides New York)
- Mark di Suvero (b. 1933, China; resides New York)
- Dennis Thomas/Day Gleeson (Thomas, b. 1955; Gleeson, b. 1948; reside New York)
- Francesc Torres (b. 1948, Barcelona; resides New York)
- Andy Warhol (1930-87)
- John Pitman Weber (b. 1942, resides Chicago)
- We're All in the Same Boat
- William Wiley (b. 1937, resides California)
- John Woo (b. 1951, resides New York)
- Qris Yamashita (resides California)