

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
January 1990

PROJECTS: VERNON FISHER

January 19 - March 6, 1990

The Museum of Modern Art continues its ongoing PROJECTS series with an installation by Fort Worth artist Vernon Fisher, opening on January 19, 1990. Organized by Magdalena Dabrowski, associate curator in the Department of Drawings, PROJECTS: VERNON FISHER is a site-specific installation that combines painting, wall drawing, three-dimensional objects, and original narrative. Titled Movements Among the Dead, the installation remains on view through March 6, 1990.

Word and image and the exploration of complex and unexpected connections between the two have been the essence of Fisher's multimedia installations for over a decade. By juxtaposing text with image, the artist arranges a balance between two distinct forms of cognition--reading and seeing. Ms. Dabrowski observes in the exhibition brochure, "The pictures never directly illustrate the words, but act as a visual metaphor . . . aiding the viewer in decoding both language and image, and often crossing the borderlines between fact and fiction, reality and illusion."

For the installation, Fisher has transformed the gallery walls to look like blackboards--a consistent element in his recent work. Three of these slate-like walls are drawn with white paintstick. On one, chalk trays are filled to overflowing, some spilling to the floor. Half-erased images, drawn from the artist's personal iconography, provide an evocative backdrop for the

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text. By erasing the images and preserving the residual markings, Fisher teases the viewer's notions of memory.

In Movements Among the Dead, Fisher focuses on nostalgia and contemplates human responses to death, alienation, and longing. The theme is introduced by the artist's text on the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov and his famous experiments on the conditioned reflex. While recounting Pavlov's training a hungry dog to salivate at the sound of a bell, Fisher alters the outcome so that Pavlov is forced to confront the dog's increasingly destructive behavior. Similarly, the viewer is provoked to face his or her own unexpected responses to the work and, in those responses, to find a personal interpretation.

Vernon Fisher was born in 1943 in Fort Worth, Texas, where he resides. He currently teaches at the University of North Texas in Denton. Fisher received his BA degree at Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, in 1967, and his MFA degree from the University of Illinois in 1969. He is a recipient of several fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and a grant from the Awards in the Visual Arts, also funded in part by the NEA. The artist has participated in numerous group and one-person exhibitions. A retrospective of his work was recently organized by La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art and travels to the Houston Contemporary Art Museum, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

PROJECTS is made possible by generous grants from The Bohlen Foundation and the Lannan Foundation. Next in the series is PROJECTS: CILDO MEIRELES, on view from March 16 to May 1, 1990.

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