The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release January 1991

ARTIST'S CHOICE: CHUCK CLOSE HEAD-ON/THE MODERN PORTRAIT

January 10 - March 19, 1991

An exhibition conceived and installed by the American artist Chuck Close opens at The Museum of Modern Art on January 10 and continues through March 19, 1991. ARTIST'S CHOICE: CHUCK CLOSE, HEAD-ON/THE MODERN PORTRAIT explores the various ways artists build portrait images and emphasizes the Museum's role as a repository of visual information. In this highly unconventional exhibition, Close has chosen approximately 170 portraits, in various mediums, from the Museum's collection and has arranged them in an extremely dense installation.

Organized in collaboration with Kirk Varnedoe, director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, this is the third in the Museum's ARTIST'S CHOICE series, in which contemporary artists are invited to organize small shows based upon the Museum's collection. The ARTIST'S CHOICE series is made possible by a generous grant from The Charles A. Dana Foundation.

Covering virtually the entire wall space of one gallery on the Museum's third floor, the exhibition incorporates works by modern masters alongside those of lesser-known artists (see attached list). On one wall, paintings are mounted salon-style from floor to ceiling; on the surrounding walls, prints, photographs, and drawings are closely arranged on stacked shelves, one work overlapping the next. Eight portrait busts are also displayed in the

installation, their varying scales adjusted by aligning the eye level of each figure.

The construction of the exhibition, in which the artist has built a complex field from a select repertoire of units, mirrors the process Close follows in making up his own art. By juxtaposing so many similar head-and-shoulder images, the installation also encourages the viewer to see what the artist calls the "syntax," those systems of abstract marks or compositional strategies from which different portrait likenesses are made.

Additionally, by cutting across boundaries of medium, size, and so-called value, the exhibition alters the usual presentation of the Museum's collection. As Mr. Varnedoe writes in the brochure accompanying the exhibition, "By abandoning the normal conventions of selective, well-spaced hanging, by which museums focus special attention on particular works, this show frees--and challenges--viewers to form their own hierarchies of choice and patterns of attention."

Mr. Close states, "Certainly I tried to pick compelling, important images...portraits of people who were significant for the artist--either the artist himself or herself, family members, friends, or other artists. I tried to find what would have been for the artist an important image, as the subjects of my pictures are for me. But by slamming images together in juxtapositions the way I have, I tried to set up a situation which makes it more likely that viewers will also look at how the particular choices the artist made influence our experience of the subject."

Chuck Close is best known for large-scale, confrontational portraits in which photographic realism is tied to a systematic method of construction by modular, abstract units. Born in 1940 in Monroe, Washington, he received his

B.A. (1962) from the University of Washington, Seattle, and his B.F.A. (1963) and M.F.A. (1964) from Yale University. He studied at Akademie der Bildenen Kunste in Vienna on a Fulbright Grant before moving to New York in 1967.

A video is being produced in conjunction with the exhibition and will be shown in the Museum's Edward John Noble Education Center.

The ARTIST'S CHOICE series was introduced in 1989 to present fresh ways of seeing the history of modern art as a resource for contemporary creativity. The first installation in the series was BURTON ON BRANCUSI, followed in 1990 by ELLSWORTH KELLY: FRAGMENTATION AND THE SINGLE FORM.

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

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Artists in the Exhibition

Berenice Abbott Josef Albers Ivan Le Lorraine Albright Diane Arbus Frank Auerbach Richard Avedon Milton Avery Francis Bacon Balthus Max Beckmann Erwin Blumenfeld Blythe Bohnen Brassai Paul Cadmus Alexander Calder Harry Callahan Julia Margaret Cameron Vincent Canade Eugène Carrière Paul Cézanne Marc Chagall Giorgio de Chirico Francesco Clemente Chuck Close Jean Cocteau Lovis Corinth Jean Crotti Imogen Cunningham Salvador Dali André Derain Jim Dine Otto Dix Jean Dubuffet Marcel Duchamp Raymond Duchamp-Villon Alfred Eisenstadt James Ensor Hugo Erfurth Jesús Escobedo Walker Evans Conrad Felixmüller Llyn Foulkes Lee Friedlander Paul Gauguin

Alberto Giacometti Vincent van Gogh Gianfranco Gorgoni Arshile Gorky Emmet Gowin John D. Graham Timothy Greenfield-Sanders Juan Gris George Grosz Richard Hamilton Erich Heckel David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson Vernon Hill Lotte Jacobi Augustus John Ray Johnson Frida Kahlo John Kane Alex Katz Ernst Ludwig Kirchner Paul Klee Oskar Kokoschka Gaston Lachaise Dorothea Lange Marie Laurencin Alfred Leslie Jay Leyda Jacques Lipchitz Man Ray Robert Mapplethorpe Louis Marcoussis André Masson Henri Matisse Alfred Maurer Joan Miró Arthur S. Mole and John D. Thomas G.D. de Monfried Edvard Munch Nickolas Muray Elie Nadelman Bruce Nauman Alice Neel Arnold Newman Nicholas Nixon

Isamu Noguchi Emil Nolde Claes Oldenburg Otto Pankok David Park Max Pechstein Irving Penn Pablo Picasso Arnulf Rainer Odilon Redon Diego Rivera Larry Rivers William Roberts Alexander Rodchenko Rogi-Andre Jaroslav Rössler Georges Rouault Lucas Samaras August Sander Egon Schiele Karl Schmidt-Rotluff

Karl Schrag Cindy Sherman David Alfaro Siqueiros Michael Spano Edward Steichen Joseph Stella Alfred Stieglitz
Paul Strand
Pavel Tchelitchew Mark Tobey Joann Verburg Jacques Villon Maurice de Vlaminck Wolf Vostell Edouard Vuillard Andy Warhol William Wegman Edward Weston Neil Winokur Theo Wujcik Anton Zverev