

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART HONORS DANCER-CHOREOGRAPHER MERCE CUNNINGHAM ON SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani is proclaiming April 16 "Merce Cunningham Day"

In honor of dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday on April 16, The Museum of Modern Art is presenting a special installation of works by artist-collaborators from April 14 to 17, 1994. In addition, the Honorable Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mayor of the City of New York, is proclaiming April 16 as "Merce Cunningham Day." A mayoral proclamation will be read on April 13 at The Museum of Modern Art by Schuyler G. Chapin, Commissioner, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

The installation, located on the Museum's ground floor, features an untitled piece made in 1993 by Nam June Paik, who has collaborated with Cunningham on several occasions. It consists of a player piano, fifteen television sets -- including images of performances by Cunningham and the late John Cage, Founding Musical Director of Cunningham's dance troupe -- two cameras, two laser-disk players, and an electric light.

Also included in the installation are a 1942 portrait of Cunningham by photographer Barbara Morgan and selections from a print portfolio, produced as a tribute to Cunningham in 1974-75. It contains works by artists with whom he had extensive associations, including Cage and Robert Rauschenberg, who from 1954 to 1964 served as the troupe's stage manager and costume and set designer. The portfolio also contains prints by Jasper Johns, who served from

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1967 to 1980 as the company's artistic advisor, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Frank Stella, and Andy Warhol. The installation was organized by Laura Rosenstock, Assistant Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

Cunningham's relationship with The Museum of Modern Art began in 1943, when he performed at the Museum during a percussion concert directed by Cage; later that same year, he participated in one of a series of "Serenade Concerts," programmed by the Music Committee of The Museum of Modern Art. In 1971 he performed a solo performance of *Loops*, and, in 1979, collaborated with the filmmaker Charles Atlas in the Museum's "Video Viewpoints" program.

Since he began choreographing independently in 1942, Cunningham has consistently broken new artistic ground and has worked with some of the greatest artists of this century. In 1953 he formed his own dance troupe, which originally included Carolyn Brown, Remy Charlip, Viola Farber, and Paul Taylor. In the 1970s he began choreographing a number of video- and film-dances in collaboration with Atlas and, later, Elliot Caplan. Cunningham's distinguished career includes such prestigious honors and awards as a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1985), the Laurence Olivier Award (1985), and the Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award (1982).

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