

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
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PROJECTS: LUC COURCHESNE

June 23 - October 23, 1994

An interactive video and computer installation by Montreal-based artist Luc Courchesne (b. 1952) is on view from June 23 through October 23, 1994, at The Museum of Modern Art, as part of its ongoing **PROJECTS** series. Organized by Barbara London, Associate Curator, Department of Film and Video, **PROJECTS: LUC COURCHESNE** adapts the ancient convention of portraiture to contemporary tools. For this work, entitled *Family Portrait*, Courchesne uses video to reveal the physical and emotional characteristics of each person and to provide a lively context in which the viewer, as an active participant in the work, can "meet" the family members.

Four simply designed pedestals have been installed in the Projects Garden Hall Gallery, and above each pedestal floats an image of a person. The viewer can initiate a discussion with any one of the figures by selecting a question from a set on a small, accompanying computer screen. When the portrait verbally answers, another series of questions or comments appears on the computer screen. With increasing interaction, a dialogue develops according to the viewer's inquisitiveness and the subject's mood.

Courchesne spent hours with the eight people depicted in *Family Portrait*, all of whom live in Marseilles and belong to the same circle of friends. While traditional portrait-painters and photographers work to render a likeness that embodies for all time the essence of their subject, the

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figures in Courchesne's group portrait are transitory, implying the passage of time rather than its duration.

Over the last decade, Courchesne has created interactive installations combining standard video and computer equipment in what is popularly known as "hyper-media." After planning and shooting, Courchesne meticulously edits and structures his videotaped footage, using commercially available software programs. He then presses the video material onto glass laser discs and stores in the computer both a written text and a "navigation strategy," which is used by the viewer to move through the video material. Viewers can proceed through the visual, audio, and written material by constructing their own path, and at their own pace.

Luc Courchesne, who was born in St. Léonard d'Aston, Quebec, holds a Master of Science degree in Visual Studies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1984). He lives in Montreal, where he is Professor of Information Design at the University of Montreal. Other interactive video installations and portraits include *Five Interactive Virtual Beings* (1992), exhibited at the Musée Pointe-à-Callière, Montreal, *Portrait One* and *Claude Jutra* (both 1989-91), and *Encyclopédia Chiaroscuro* (1985-87). The artist's video work has been shown throughout Canada, the United States, and Europe.

The **PROJECTS** series is made possible by generous grants from the Lannan Foundation, The Bohlen Foundation, and the Contemporary Arts Council and The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art. Future exhibitions in the series include **PROJECTS: ANN HAMILTON** (November 10, 1994 - January 3, 1995).

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