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NEW MUSEUM GROUP EXHIBITION EXAMINES HOW ABSTRACT ART CONVEYS MEANING

Cadences: Icon and Abstraction in Context, a group exhibition examining how abstract art conveys meaning, will be on view February 16 through April 7, 1991 at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. With references to art historical movements from Constructivism to Minimalism and Conceptual art in which abstract art was used in opposition to dominant modes of representation, the exhibition considers the ideas and visual vocabularies of nine artists currently working in abstraction. Organized by New Museum Curator Gary Sangster, Cadences proposes that the contemporary language of abstract art is not universal, but like all art, the content depends upon the viewing context, the nature and history of the materials, and the intentions of the artist.

Cadences will present artworks that, because of their reliance on iconic geometric forms like cubes, squares, rectangles, circles, and grids, may appear quite simple and straightforward, but in fact contain a wide variety of social, cultural, or other historical meanings. Terry Adkins takes apart outmoded, broken, or forgotten objects and materials like discarded window frames or timber construction beams. He then reconstructs them, adding subtle, powdery pigments to the assemblage creating objects with the poetic appearance of contemporary artifacts. Dana Duff's work also reflects a focus on the nature of materials to convey meaning. In her apparently abstract chrome and salt sculpture, New Currency, 1988, she obliquely recounts the history of salt as an ancient currency. Maria Elena Gonzalez disconnects and then reassembles organic forms, citing the body as a socially constructed site of gender, that speak of the tension between pleasure and pain, or repression and liberation.

Illusion plays a role in the work in Cadences, where plain and unadorned forms belie their complexity and invisible structures. In Charles Ray's sculptures, a hollow aluminum grey cube is partially invisible, and liquid appears solid in a black steel cube. Claudia Matzko's installation also defies expectations; from a distance it appears to be a unified field or surface, but on closer viewing reveals itself as a complicated construction of more than 150,000 glistening glass slide covers and dressmaking pins that is at once monumental and self-effacing.

Both Curtis Mitchell and Eva Schlegel make paradoxical sculptures that evoke gesture while erasing any traces of gesture or marks. Schlegel's floor and wall pieces have polished surfaces that shine with a metallic luster that appears to be a manufactured, sculpted surface, but is in fact rubbed

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graphite. Mitchell's forthright and seemingly ordinary sculptures -- an artificially aged wood panel, a soiled concrete square complete with a subway platform orange stripe -- appear to be worn and distressed by-products of everyday experience, but are actually carefully reconstructed facsimiles of our urban environment.

BP, a collaborative group from France, makes reference in all of their work to the conjunction of aesthetics and commerce by focusing on the symbolic power of a ubiquitous, functional substance: oil. Their large-scale work in Cadences is a kinetic monochrome sculpture with an endless, silent flow of oil over a flat vertical plane that serves as a metaphor for painting. Tomoharu Murakami's duochromes and oils on canvas are two-dimensional works that, in many senses, may be described as three-dimensional objects. Their dense, colorless blackness are emphatically devoid of the representation of space, but act as icons of concentrated physical labor.

In conjunction with Cadences and Kazimir Malevich, 1878 - 1935 at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The New Museum and The Metropolitan will present "Abstraction and Meaning: Historical Reflections and Contemporary Contexts," a panel discussion on Sunday, March 10 at 2:00 PM at The Met. The panelists for this discussion, which is free with museum admission, are artists Terry Adkins and Dana Duff, whose works are included in Cadences, art critic Eleanor Heartney, and New Museum Curator Gary Sangster. It will be moderated by Lowery Sims, Associate Curator of Twentieth-Century Art at The Metropolitan. No reservations are necessary for this event.

An illustrated catalogue amplifies the range of concerns that Cadences: Icon and Abstraction in Context considers with three major essays: art historian Yve-Alain Bois examines abstraction in early Modernism, while philosopher Elizabeth Grosz considers the nature of meaning in abstract art, and Curator Gary Sangster explores the current context in which the artists in the exhibition are working. In addition, the catalogue features specially commissioned two-page artists' projects, including an original drawing by Charles Ray in every catalogue which makes each a unique volume.

Cadences: Icon and Abstraction in Context has been made possible with generous grants from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

The New Museum of Contemporary Art is located at 583 Broadway between Prince and Houston Streets in Soho. Hours are Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday: noon to 6:00 PM; Friday and Saturday: noon to 8:00 PM; Monday and Tuesday: closed. Admission is by suggested contribution: \$3.50 general; \$2.50 artists, students, and seniors; members and children under 12 admitted free.

Recorded information concerning exhibitions and programs at The New Museum may be obtained by calling 212/219-1355.