

AN EXPLORATION OF ART AND LIFE IS THE SUBJECT
OF AN EXHIBITION AT THE NEW MUSEUM

In an attempt to remove the barriers between art and life, The New Museum of Contemporary Art presents "Choices: Making an Art of Everyday Life," an exhibition featuring artists who have transformed their lives as a way of making art. Organized by The New Museum's Director Marcia Tucker, the exhibition, which opens February 1 and continues through March 30, 1986, explores the elements and forces that constitute the connecting link between art and life. Through extremes of self-discipline, physical hardship, endurance, and humor, the twelve artists (eight individuals and two collaborative pairs) challenge our notions of art.

-Marina Abramovic and Ulay live in Holland and have worked collaboratively since 1976. In Nightsea Crossing, a ninety-day meditation piece performed for at least seven hours at a time, they remain motionless, exploring the relationship of time, space, and body. IS THIS ART?

-James Lee Byars will be present in this exhibition by being physically absent, as the ghost of James Lee Byars. IS THIS ART?

-A series of videotapes will document Spalding Gray's very personal approach to theatrical conventions through storytelling, dialogue, and monologue. IS THIS ART?

-Sacred Mirrors is a series of works examining the structure of the body, from the image of the skeleton, to the outer layers of the body, and finally to the non-physical, with auras and karmic waves. This series is just one result of the exploration of the themes of life and death by Alex Grey. IS THIS ART?

.../

-This year Tehching Hsieh, the performance artist who has done such one-year performances as living alone in a cage, and punching a time clock every hour of the day and night, is emphatically affirming life by his negation of all art activity.

IS THIS ART?

-Linda Montano has been a featured artist at The New Museum since December 1984, when she began her seven-year, once-a-month occupancy in the Museum's Mercer Street window, talking to the public about art and life. She recently spent one year tied at the waist by an eight-foot length of rope to Tehching Hsieh, without touching.

IS THIS ART?

-Morgan O'Hara has spent the last seventeen years recording each and every detail of her life into notebooks, graphs, charts, and activity maps.

IS THIS ART?

-Mike Osterhout has studied at a seminary (and received a degree), bought a cow, adopted a child, and produced a body of paintings by a fictitious female artist named Kristian Kohl, as a complex reflection on the self as "other."

IS THIS ART?

-Tongue-in-cheek looks at love and friendship, fame and fortune, honesty, integrity, and, most recently, the legalities of art, are presented in the posters by United Art Contractors (Terri and Dave).

IS THIS ART?

-Ian Wilson holds carefully orchestrated dialogues with small groups about various epistemological issues.

IS THIS ART?

This exhibition does not attempt to answer the question of whether this work is or is not art, but instead poses another possibility of art as a provocative, transformational activity rather than the production of aesthetic objects, or any objects at all. As Marcia Tucker says in the catalogue essay, "'Choices' is the result of a long-term fascination with work that challenges and upsets my own preconceived notions of art, initiated by unusual work and unconventional ideas that artists have shared with me over the years. The question that most offends and irritates artists, "Why is this stuff called art?" is one of profound interest to me as well as to most of the public, continually assaulted, as we are, with the expansion of the definition of art."

.../

Accompanying the exhibition is a catalogue of 120 pages, with 50 black-and-white photographs, and an extensive critical essay by Marcia Tucker. It will be available in the Museum Shop.

A panel discussion, moderated by critic Thomas McEvelley, who has written extensively on related subjects, will be held on February 3, 1986.

This exhibition is supported in part by major grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and Susan Levin Tepper, with additional support from the Institute of Museum Services, the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and Phyllis Goldman.

(30)

January 2, 1986

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Ruth B. Utley or Lisa Wyant (212) 219-1222