

**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ANNOUNCES ACQUISITION OF *DIVER* BY JASPER JOHNS****MAJOR GROUP OF WORKS BY DIVERSE ARRAY OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS ALSO ANNOUNCED**

***Diver*--Seminal Early Work by Jasper Johns--Is Considered One of the Most Important Works on Paper Made in the Twentieth Century**

**Group of Acquisitions Includes Works by Francis Bacon, Ellsworth Kelly, Takashi Murakami, Pablo Picasso, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp**

**NEW YORK, December 15, 2003**---The Museum of Modern Art has acquired *Diver*, a seminal work on paper by Jasper Johns, MoMA's Director Glenn D. Lowry announced today. He also announced the acquisition of a group of major works by a diverse array of artists representing key periods in modern and contemporary art that span nearly a century. *Diver* (1962-63) will join the MoMA collection along with *Pregnant Woman* (1950), a plaster sculpture by Pablo Picasso; *Triptych* (1991), Francis Bacon's last major work; and *Dada Head* (1920), a rare sculpture by Sophie Taeuber-Arp. These are all significant additions to the Museum's collection as a whole and will enhance MoMA's individual holdings of these artists. Other acquisitions are Ellsworth Kelly's painting *White Relief Over White* (2003), and 727 (1996), the first painting by Takashi Murakami to enter MoMA's collection, as well as sculptural works by Anne Truitt and Jesús Rafael Soto, and by Charles LeDray, Josiah McElheny, and Karin Sander.

Mr. Lowry says, "The Museum of Modern Art has long sought to acquire *Diver* for the collection. Its acquisition today is the result of years of discussions with its owners begun by the late Kirk Varnedoe, former Chief Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, and continued by his successor, John Elderfield, and Gary Garrels, Chief Curator, Department of Drawings. We are thrilled that this seminal and iconic work will be added to our collection along with significant works by Picasso, Bacon, and Taeuber-Arp, as well as key works by a younger generation of artists."

Mr. Elderfield says, "Jasper Johns's *Diver* is one of the most important works on paper created in the twentieth century, and is one of his most profound and complex creations. It will assume a significant place in the Museum's collection among its masterpieces. This entire group of extraordinary acquisitions highlights the range and diversity of the Museum's collecting interests."

*Diver* was acquired jointly by the Department of Painting and Sculpture with the Department of Drawings, in memory of Kirk Varnedoe. Its acquisition was made possible through the generosity of Kate Ganz and Tony Ganz

who have given a significant part of the drawing as a partial gift in memory of their parents, Sally and Victor Ganz, and in memory of Kirk Varnedoe. *Diver* is considered a key work in any medium in Johns's oeuvre, and will join ten paintings, 16 drawings, more than 250 prints, and a sculpture in the MoMA collection to form one of the world's foremost bodies of work by the artist. *Diver* stands seven feet tall and is executed in charcoal and pastel on paper mounted on canvas, showing the imprint of the artist's hands and feet in an evocation of a swan dive. Created when Johns was only 33 years old, the artist has said that *Diver* has "an ambiguous quality that can suggest either life or death." It will be exhibited at MoMA QNS in February 2004, with a small selection of other new acquisitions.

The sculpture *Pregnant Woman* was created in 1950, during a period when Picasso's companion Françoise Gilot underwent the pregnancy and birth of their daughter Paloma. Picasso's son Claude had been born in 1948, and the imagery in Picasso's work during this period contained many references to childhood, and showed his intense attention to a vital aspect of his own creation—his personal capacity to recreate life. *Pregnant Woman* is executed in plaster over a metal armature, and is augmented by found objects: a stick of wood and three earthenware pitchers, each intended to represent a fragment of Françoise's body. The sculpture reveals Picasso's thinking process through its raw texture, its rich construction, and its many marks of the artist's hand.

*Triptych*, Bacon's last major work before his death in 1992, is a summation of many of the themes he explored in an extraordinary career. *Triptych* joins major earlier paintings by Bacon represented in the collection, including *Painting* (1946), which became the first Bacon to enter a major institution when Alfred Barr purchased it for The Museum of Modern Art in 1948. The triptych, with its imagery inspired by photographs, can be interpreted as a struggle between the man of action and the man of intellect. The triptych's panels refer to the Brazilian race car driver Ayrton Senna, an Eadweard Muybridge photographic study of men wrestling, and a self-portrait that depicts Bacon pinned to the wall, echoing the position of the driver in an illusionistic tour-de-force.

*Dada Head* by Taeuber-Arp adds an important new dimension to the Museum's collection of Dada and Surrealist objects. Taeuber-Arp is widely recognized today as a highly innovative 20<sup>th</sup> century artist and a key participant in the Zurich Dada movement, in Switzerland. Taeuber-Arp's series of Dada Heads are quintessential Dada objects, comprised of forms of turned wood resembling the dummies of haberdashers and hairdressers, painted with highly stylized angular and curvilinear patterns. *Dada Head*, which is one of only four extant works, joins two paintings, one drawing, and six prints by Taeuber-Arp in the MoMA collection.

This group of acquisitions represents purchases with Museum funds and gifts. In addition to *Diver*, Kelly's *White Relief over White* was given by Kathy and Richard S. Fuld, Jr., and Murakami's 727 is the fractional and promised gift of David Teiger. Anne Truitt's *Twining Court I* is the gift of Agnes Gund. McElheny's *Modernity, Mirrored and Reflected Infinitely* was given by Angeliki Intzides, Jordi Cerqueda and Fernando Romero. Sander's *Karin Sander 1:10* is the gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros in honor of Adriana Cisneros-Phelps.

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