

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA TO PRESENT *STEPHEN PRINA: A LICK AND A PROMISE*, THE FIRST IN-DEPTH MUSEUM EXHIBITION FOCUSED ON THE ARTIST'S PERFORMANCES, FROM SEPTEMBER 12 TO DECEMBER 13, 2025

Unfolding Across Multiple Locations in the Museum, the Presentation Will Feature More Than a Dozen Performances, Including the World Premiere of Prina's New Work, *A Lick and a Promise*

NEW YORK, July 14, 2025—The Museum of Modern Art presents *Stephen Prina: A Lick and a Promise*, the first in-depth institutional survey of the artist, musician, and composer's performances, from September 12 through December 13, 2025. Presented across multiple locations throughout the Museum, including MoMA's Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio, Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium, Agnes Gund Garden Lobby, and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, the exhibition includes a slate of more than 15 live events this fall, featuring Prina and invited guests performing works spanning the artist's five-decade career. Prina's newest work, titled *A Lick and a Promise*, will be presented in its world premiere as part of the retrospective. A trio of Prina's works from the Museum's collection also will be installed in the galleries. While previous exhibitions of Prina's work have highlighted his visual arts practice, MoMA's presentation will be the first to focus on the artist's long engagement with music and performance, bringing new perspectives to a central factor in Prina's wider oeuvre: how cultural artifacts find new lives in different contexts. *Stephen Prina: A Lick and a Promise* is organized by Stuart Comer, The Lonti Ebers Chief Curator of Media and Performance, with Sibia Sarangan, Curatorial Assistant, May Makki, former Curatorial Assistant, and Gee Wesley, former Curatorial Associate, Department of Media and Performance. It is produced by Lizzie Gorfaine, Director, and Kate Scherer, Senior Manager and Producer, with Olivia Rousey, Jessie Gold, Aminah Ibrahim, Kayva Yang, and Monica Nyenkan, Assistant Performance Coordinators, and Nora Chellew, former Assistant Performance Coordinator, Performance and Live Art.

"Over the course of his remarkable 50-year career, Stephen Prina has established himself as one of the most inventive and perceptive artists in a generation renowned for the critical exploration of received cultural codes and institutional systems," said Stuart Comer, The Lonti Ebers Chief Curator of Media and Performance. "This exhibition will explore for the first time the central role that music has played in forming the artist's wider project, prompting a model of appropriation unique in a field more rooted in photography, moving images, and sculpture. Prina's voice emerges within richly layered networks of reference to the history of music and art, transforming the past into a field of infinite variation and possibility. His cunning recombinations are as moving as they are rigorous. *A Lick and a Promise* provides a rare opportunity to experience them live."

Known for his irreverent approach to installations, films, and musical performances, Prina frequently brings together networks of preexisting materials—a Joni Mitchell song, Robert Bresson films, Glenn Gould recordings, the paintings of Édouard Manet—recombining them in different contexts to surface new meanings and associations. Included in the exhibition are performances of nine works from between 1976 and 2025, including *Concerto for Modern, Movie, and Pop Music for 10 Instruments and Voice* (2008), in which Prina playfully combines his own pop songs and compositions with Joni Mitchell's popular 1971 song "A Case of You" and Anton Webern's *Concerto Op. 24 for Nine Instruments* (1934). Another highlight is *To the People of (New York City)* (2000), in which Prina draws on composer Peer Raben's music for the films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder and artist Blinky Palermo's painting cycle *To the People of New York* (1976).

The exhibition will also highlight Prina's wide-ranging collaborations with other artists, including Mike Kelley and Anita Pace, with whom he created *Beat of the Traps* (1992). Restaged at MoMA for the first time since 1992, *Beat of the Traps* is performed to establish and then unravel a regular beat—the heart of pop music. Restaging another historic work, *Sonic Dan* (1994), Prina combines and remixes the songs of Steely Dan and Sonic Youth—two bands that by 1994 had recorded the same number of albums—alongside a recording of Anton Webern's complete string quartets.

Push Comes to Love Fest, an all-day celebratory concert on December 13, will serve as the exhibition's capstone, establishing bridges between “modern classics” and love songs, musique concrète and cabaret—with doses of noise and rage—played by collaborators past, present, and future. Participants include David Grubbs, Ken Okiishi and Emily Sundblad, Ursula Oppens, Marina Rosenfeld, TILT Brass, and White People Killed Them (Raven Chacon, John Dieterich, and Marshall Trammell).

Concurrent with the survey of performances, MoMA will present three collection installations of Prina's work. A recent acquisition will be shown at the Museum for the first time: *The Top Thirteen Singles from Billboard's Hot 100 Singles Chart for the Week Ending September 11, 1993* (1993). At the top of each hour, the sculptural work, which consists of a large clock, chimes a musical motif derived from one of the top 13 *Billboard* hits for the week of the installation's debut in September 1993.

Also on view will be Prina's *Untitled* / “The history of modern painting, to label it with a phrase, has been the struggle against the catalogue”—Barnett Newman / (*Monochrome Painting, 1988–1989*) (1992), presented in Gallery 414, just outside the Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio. The large-scale installation of ink-wash drawings, which fills the entire gallery, is a “ghost” version of *Monochrome Painting* (1988–89), which was exhibited at P.S.1 in 1990, in which Prina produced green panels that share exact dimensions with 14 monochrome paintings by artists such as Kazimir Malevich and Brice Marden.

Exquisite Corpse: The Complete Paintings of Manet, 41 of 556, Nymphe Surprise (The Startled Nymph), 1861, Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo (1988) is one of an ongoing series of 556 diptychs begun January 1, 1988. The left panel is a sepia ink wash drawing made on a support that is exactly the dimensions of the Édouard Manet painting listed in the title. The right panel is offset lithography on paper depicting a grid of the proportions of all 556 paintings known to have been made by Manet, according to an unofficial catalogue raisonné.

The exhibition is presented as part of the program of the Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio, a key platform for artists experimenting with new art forms that builds on MoMA's long history of supporting and presenting performance and media art. This unique, dedicated space for performance and expanded media, located at the center of the Museum's fourth-floor collection galleries, is activated throughout the year with adventurous commissions, festivals, residencies, installations, workshops, and more.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE:

***Concerto for Modern, Movie, and Pop Music for 10 Instruments and Voice* (2008)**

Friday, September 12, and Saturday, September 13, 7:00 p.m.

MoMA, Floor 4, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio

***Beat of the Traps* (1992)**

Thursday, September 18, Saturday, September 20, and Sunday, September 21, 8:00 p.m.

MoMA, Floor 2, The Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium

String Quartet for Six Players (1976) and The Way He Always Wanted It XI (2013)

Saturday, October 4, and Sunday, October 5, 8:00 p.m.

MoMA, Floor 2, The Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium

An Evening of 19th- and 20th-Century Piano Music (1982–85)

Thursday, October 16, and Saturday, October 18, 7:00 p.m.

MoMA, Floor 4, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio

Three Folk Songs in Search of a Fanfare—Palate Cleanser (2003)

Saturday, October 25, 1:00 p.m. (rain date Sunday, October 26)

MoMA, Floor 1, The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden

The Way He Always Wanted It II, Movement 4 (2008) and A Lick and a Promise (2025) (world premiere)

Thursday, November 6, and Saturday, November 8, 7:00 p.m.

MoMA, Floor 4, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio

Sonic Dan (1994)

Thursday, November 13, and Saturday, November 15, 7:00 p.m.

MoMA, Floor 4, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio

To the People of (New York City) (2000)

Thursday, December 4, and Saturday, December 6, 7:00 p.m.

MoMA, Floor 4, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio

Push Comes to Love Fest (2025)

Saturday, December 13, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

MoMA, Floor 1, The Agnes Gund Garden Lobby

FILM PROGRAM:

Modern Mondays: An Evening with Stephen Prina

Monday, November 17, 7:00 p.m.

MoMA, Floor T2, The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2

RELATED PRESENTATIONS:

Hyundai Card First Look:

Stephen Prina's *The Top Thirteen Singles from Billboard's Hot 100 Singles Chart for the Week Ending September 11, 1993*. 1993

Enamel on aluminum, acrylic, electronic hardware, and carillon

MoMA, Floor 2

Stephen Prina. *Exquisite Corpse: The Complete Paintings of Manet, 41 of 556, Nympe Surprise (The Startled Nymph), 1861, Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo*. 1988

Ink wash and offset lithograph

MoMA, Floor 2, Gallery 203: *Post-Atomic Abstraction*

Stephen Prina. *Untitled/"The history of modern painting, to label it with a phrase, has been the struggle against the catalogue"—Barnett Newman/(Monochrome Painting, 1988–1989)*. 1991

Ink wash on rag, barrier paper, and cardboard, 67 parts
MoMA, Floor 4, Gallery 414: *Stephen Prina*

Stephen Prina. *A Lick and a Promise: Poster*. 2025

Digital print

MoMA, Floor 2, north elevator bank

SPONSORSHIP:

RICHARD MILLE

Media and Performance at MoMA is presented through a partnership with Richard Mille.

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