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MAJOR CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITION AT THE BMA EXAMINES THE “WORK” IN ARTWORK

BALTIMORE, MD (October 12, 2003) — Since the 1960s, artists have been hard at work—pushing the limits of what can be considered art. **Work Ethic**, on view at The Baltimore Museum of Art from **October 12, 2003, through January 4, 2004**, brings together an international group of contemporary artists who challenge the rules of both the workplace and the art world. The exhibition encompasses nearly 80 objects, from iconic works of post-World War II art by Andy Warhol, Frank Stella, and Robert Rauschenberg to contemporary works by David Hammons, Hope Ginsburg, and Gabriel Orozco. Combined, these objects and experiences are often humorous, ironic, playful, and provocative.

“The artworks and experiences in this exhibition give us a deeper understanding of how the world of work has changed in the past 40 years—both for artists and ourselves,” said BMA Director Doreen Bolger. “**Work Ethic** charts the course of contemporary art and challenges us to consider the questions raised by the art of our time.”

Organized by The Baltimore Museum of Art, **Work Ethic** features interactive installations, film and video, performance art and documentation, language works, site-specific art, and photographs. Many of the works are based in artistic movements such as Fluxus, Conceptual art, Process art, Feminist art, and Performance art.

“Since the 1960s, contemporary art has grappled with the problem of artistic labor,” said Helen Molesworth, curator of the exhibition. “Who does it? The artist, the studio assistant, the factory worker, the viewer? What happens to the meaning of art once traditional artistic skills are not necessary to produce it?”

Work Ethic is organized into four sections, each exploring a different aspect of artistic labor in contemporary art. The artwork is placed in the context of the division of labor found in the workplace to show how the act of making art engages the same issues of management, production, and skill that have accompanied the emergence of the Information Age.

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The Artist as Worker

The first section of the exhibition traces how artists have become less interested in art objects as a finished product and more interested in the activity of making art. These artists create a task for themselves, however mundane or obsessive, and complete it as their artwork.

- *Hand Catching Lead* (1968), a three-minute film, features sculptor Richard Serra's hand grasping at falling pieces of lead. While his hand is fully engaged in its work, it does not carve or mold the material.
- A blank sheet of white paper titled *1000 Hours of Staring* (1992-1997) documents Tom Friedman's arduous task of staring over a five-year period.
- A photograph captures a moment in David Hammons' *Bliz-aard Ball Sale* (1983), his production and sale of snowballs on a street corner in Manhattan.
- Hope Ginsburg's *Bearded Lady* (1998-2000) performance culminated in her ability to wear a beard of bees and market her own brand of honey.

The Artist as Manager

Following Conceptual art's credo that the idea is more important than the object, these artists commission others to bring their ideas to fruition. The artists set a task for others to complete, relinquishing the act of creating the actual artwork to assistants or fabricators.

- Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting* (1951)—a canvas painted with a roller and white housepaint—is one of a series of paintings regularly recreated by studio assistants according to the artist's specifications.
- Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Can (Turkey Noodle)* (1962) is part of a series of mass-produced silkscreened works turned out by the artist's studio, The Factory.
- Sol LeWitt's *Wall Drawing #280* (1976) was created in the BMA galleries by his studio assistants, who transferred the artist's instructions for a web of colorful lines directly onto the wall.

The Artist as Experience Maker

In these works, the viewer is no longer just an observer but a necessary agent for the completion of the work. The viewer has to participate in order for the event to become art.

- In a video of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964) performance, audience members cut and remove pieces of the artist's clothing.
- Viewers are encouraged to take souvenirs from Felix Gonzalez-Torres' pile of green cellophane-wrapped candies in "*Untitled*" (*Rossmore II*) (1991).
- Erwin Wurm's instructions in the galleries direct visitors to pose with props and hold their position for a minute, allowing themselves to be on view for others in *One Minute Sculptures* (2000).

Quitting Time

Other artists try to remove themselves from the artistic process entirely. This often results in a meditation on not working.

- Gilbert & George declare that their drinking in bars is art in *Smashed* (1972), represented by beautiful black-and-white photographs of the artists intoxicated in pubs.
- Gabriel Orozco's *La Oficina* (1992) photograph shows a desk in an office overgrown with vines.
- Roxy Paine created a machine, *Paint Dipper* (1997), which fabricates paintings while the artist is doing other things. It will be making a painting throughout the exhibition.

The BMA's collection of contemporary art includes examples by many of the artists in the **Work Ethic** exhibition, including Vito Acconci, William Anastasi, Robert Barry, Mel Bochner, John Cage, Peter Fischli and David Weiss, Gilbert & George, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, David Hammons, Donald Judd, Edward Kienholz, Sol LeWitt, Lee Lozano, George Maciunas, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Serra, Frank Stella, and Andy Warhol. The BMA's West Wing for Contemporary Art, which opened in 1994, houses 16 galleries for the display of the Museum's expanding and diverse collection of post-1945 art.

The **Work Ethic** exhibition will be accompanied by a full-color, 248-page catalogue copublished by The Baltimore Museum of Art and Penn State University Press.

Work Ethic is organized by The Baltimore Museum of Art. It will travel to the Des Moines Art Center in Iowa from May 15, 2004, through August 1, 2004, and the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, from September 17, 2004, through January 2, 2005.

This exhibition is curated by Helen Molesworth, former BMA Curator of Contemporary Art and Chief Curator of Exhibitions at the Wexner Center for the Arts.

Work Ethic is made possible by an Emily Hall Tremain Exhibition Award and a grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional support is provided by Howard S. Brown, Suzanne F. Cohen, Nancy Dorman and Stanley Mazaroff, Fifth Floor Foundation, the Friends of Modern Art at The Baltimore Museum of Art, and Katherine Hardiman.

The Baltimore Museum of Art

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is Maryland's largest art museum with more than 85,000 objects. The Museum presents a variety of major exhibitions each year, as well as special installations that showcase the Museum's incomparable collection. The BMA's preeminent holding of post-Impressionist and modern art—The Cone Collection—includes a group of 500 works by Matisse,

considered the most comprehensive collection in the world, as well as major examples by Picasso, Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, and Renoir. Highlights from the BMA's collection include world-renowned works of modern and contemporary art; grand European paintings and sculpture from Old Masters through the 19th century; an extensive collection of prints, drawings, and photographs from the 15th century to the present; notable American decorative arts and Maryland period rooms; and African, Asian, Native American, and Oceanic art. The BMA's sculpture gardens feature a 100-year survey of modern sculpture on nearly three landscaped acres in the heart of the city.

Visitor Information

The Baltimore Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. until 6 p.m.; and during the first Thursday of every month (except major holidays), 11 a.m. until 8 p.m. The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Admission is \$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors age 65 and over and college students; and free for children 18 and under. Admission is free on the first Thursday of every month and for related Free First Thursday activities.

The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31st Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general Museum information, call 410/396-7100 or visit the BMA's web site at www.artbma.org.

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