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## After and Before

March 13-April 17, 1994

The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago presents *After and Before*, an exhibition organized around the concept of time. There will be an opening reception on Sunday, March 13, from 5:00-7:00 p.m. The reception is free and all are welcome to attend.

At 4:00 p.m., prior to the opening reception, a special screening of an abbreviated version of *Empire*, a film by Andy Warhol, will take place in the Film Study Center of the University of Chicago, room 306 of Cobb Hall, just one floor below The Renaissance Society. *Empire* will also be screened at 5:20 p.m. Both screenings are free.

The inspirations for this show are three-fold: as an historical exhibition *After and Before* anticipates the completion of The Renaissance Society's long-awaited publication *A History of the Renaissance Society: The First Seventy-five Years*, due out May 6. (Review copies will be available Friday, April 8.) Three years in the making, this catalogue thoroughly chronicles The Society's history from its founding in 1915 through the 1990-91 exhibition season. With its completion the Society is indeed poised at a privileged place in time: "after" the accomplishments of its first seventy-five years and "before" whatever accomplishments are to come.

*After and Before* will also re-examine the tenure of Susanne Ghez, who will celebrate her twentieth anniversary as Director of The Renaissance Society in May. Over the years she has worked with the majority of artists in the exhibition, many of whom enjoyed their first midwestern exposure at The Renaissance Society.

Time as a concept is obviously broad, but in retrospect it is one of the few traits that profoundly connects the range of Ghez's artistic concerns, particularly conceptual art and installations. The literal time required for Hanne Darboven to script eight hundred pages of drawings by hand and the narrative time required to navigate a Jessica Stockholder installation are both palpable to us as viewers. We

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become aware of the duration of our experience with the artwork and how our perception of it changes in the process. And while this richness of duration might be attributed to any complex artwork—say, a Cezanne painting or a Cassavetes film—it has been incorporated into the very structure of much recent art: as in the marathon films of Andy Warhol, the “Date Paintings” of On Kawara, or the “endless” paper stacks of Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

Material time and gravity present time on a scale that is much greater than the bodily, “real” time of lived experience. The sculptures of Richard Serra, Carl Andre, and a rare painting on marble by Brice Marden all belie one of the more classical virtues of art—the notion of permanence—and create a sense of physical frailty in us as viewers. There is a relative timelessness in the formal presence of their steel and stone works that heightens the sense of mortality in us, as well as our desire to make and preserve similar traces of our own lives.

A striking contrast to the natural permanence evoked by these artists works is the artificial life span of consumer products, which many “postmodern” artists of the 1980s sought to highlight and define in contradistinction to their minimalist and conceptualist mentors. Jeff Koons’s vacuum cleaners—the “new” Hoover Upright or the “new” Shelton Wet/Dry Triple-Stack—are all gleaming with the seduction of the here and now, ironically reveling in the marvelous product innovations that next year’s models will render obsolete. A new work by Los Angeles artist Stephen Prina expounds on this notion of “inflated ephemera.” The work consists of an oversized industrial clock that chimes every hour; instead of bells the clock plays one of Billboard magazine’s top twenty-four hit singles to mark each hour of the day.

Lastly, positioned somewhere between these two object-extremes, is memory. Thomas Struth’s photographs of urban architecture do not capture time so much as they capture its compression through architecture. Struth’s carefully framed mish-mashes of real, local, and imported architecture speak not only to the global transportation of cultures and ideas, but to photography’s ability to isolate and scrutinize phenomena which otherwise go unnoticed. this is equally true of his

recent "portraits" of flowers, which were commissioned by a Swiss hospital for permanent installation in its wards. Memory is also a component of perception and cognition, not only seeing a picture but remembering its details and comparing them to others. This sensual process is made evident in the serial paintings of Gaylen Gerber, extremely subtle renderings of the same still life in the same three shades of gray on same sized canvases which the artist has executed over the last ten years. Gerber's method allows a surprisingly playful range of recognition and memory loss to develop in us as we move from painting to painting, retaining some details about the objects depicted while others seemingly evaporate.

Artists in the exhibition are: Hanne Darboven, Daniel Buren, Günther Förg, Julia Fish, Gaylen Gerber, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, On Kawara, Ellsworth Kelly, Jeff Koons, Sherrie Levine, Brice Marden, Bruce Nauman, Hirsch Perlman, Stephen Prina, Gerhard Richter, Adrian Schiess, Richard Serra, Thomas Struth, Jeff Wall, Andy Warhol, Lawrence Weiner.

The exhibition continues through Sunday, April 17.

Museum hours:

Tuesday-Friday: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Saturday, Sunday: 12:00-4:00 p.m.

Closed Mondays

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