

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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VANGUARD ART SINCE THE 1960S

SELECTED FROM THE VOGEL COLLECTION FOR EXHIBITION

AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, OPENS MAY 29, 1994

WASHINGTON, DC -- Sol LeWitt's transitory wall drawings, John Cage's musical sketches, and Christo's wrapped objects are among the nearly ninety works that will be presented in From Minimal to Conceptual Art: Works from The Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection at the National Gallery of Art, May 29 through November 27, 1994. The exhibition will include drawings, photographs, paintings, and sculpture which illustrate the radical expansion of intellectual and stylistic expression in Europe and America since the 1960s. From Minimal to Conceptual Art has been made possible in part by The Circle of the National Gallery of Art.

New Yorkers Dorothy and Herbert Vogel have assembled one of the country's most extensive collections of contemporary art. From Minimal to Conceptual Art will be the first major showing of their collection at the National Gallery of Art. Dorothy

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Vogel, a librarian, and Herbert Vogel, a postal clerk, both now retired, made front-page news in January 1992 when the Gallery announced it would be receiving more than 2,000 paintings, drawings, and works of sculpture from their collection.

"The minimal, post-minimal, and conceptual works selected for this exhibition reveal much about the Vogels' extraordinary connoisseurship and their love of art, as well as their generosity in pledging much of their collection to the nation," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

Based in Manhattan, the Vogels began collecting the work of American and European vanguard artists in the early 1960s. Most of these works would later be classified as minimal and conceptual art. Through their formative relationship with the artists Sol LeWitt and Don Graham, the Vogels collected their early work and that of their stylistic generation, expanding aggressively across the spectrum to such artists as Robert Mangold, Donald Judd, Christo, Lynda Benglis, Richard Tuttle, John Cage, Sylvia Mangold, Richard Artschwager, Joel Shapiro, Carl Andre, and dozens of others. From the 1970s to the present, the Vogels have further expanded their collection to encourage, support, and acquire carefully chosen work by subsequent generations of minimal and conceptual artists and artists working in other styles, while also continuing their acquisition of current work by increasingly important older artists.

National Gallery curators Ruth Fine, modern prints and drawings, and Mark Rosenthal, twentieth-century art, and research assistant Molly Donovan are

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organizing the exhibition. The National Gallery will publish an illustrated catalogue that includes an essay tracing the development of minimal through conceptual art by John Paoletti, professor of art history, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut; an interview with the Vogels conducted by Ruth Fine; selected artists' writings; a selected bibliography of articles about the Vogels; and an exhibition history of their collection.

Following the Second World War, abstract expressionists such as Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko, as well as a younger generation including Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Ellsworth Kelly, provided models for the artists who came of age in the 1960s, a time when social mores and political policies were being challenged.

This new generation of artists questioned the entire practice of art-making, the nature of the art object, and how it functioned within society. Much of their art has been described as conceptual, minimal, and post-minimal. The objects in the exhibition illustrate how they refused to conduct artistic practice in traditional ways and explored new media, subject matter, and forms of expression.

Robert Mangold creates a tension between the drawn line and the shape of the canvas in such paintings as 1/2 X Series (Medium Scale) (1968). Works of sculpture such as Carl Andre's Nine Steel Rectangles (1977), which is placed on the floor, and Donald Judd's untitled galvanized iron box (1965), which is cantilevered from the wall, possess qualities that characterize minimalism: a restricted, geometric

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vocabulary and a machined form, often commercially manufactured.

Jennifer Bartlett gives viewers a glimpse of the thought process that may go into composing a work of art in her drawing, Untitled (Two Trees, Two Houses Portrait of Lynda Benglis) (1976). Painting becomes sculpture in Lynda Benglis' works, including her untitled beeswax plank of 1971, which she created by applying an acetylene torch to a carefully layered wax surface.

The landscape itself, or sites, became a rich medium for works including the one recorded in Robert Smithson's drawing, Mudslide (1969). Dennis Oppenheim's 1970 Sunburn Piece recalls that period of social and political unrest over issues such as the war in Vietnam, which prompted a number of artists to choose self-violation as a mode of artistic activity.

The exhibition also includes works that question the nature of the artist's craft, the methods of artistic distribution, the arrangement of objects in museum settings, and gallery visitor expectations. These include: Japanese artist On Kawara's I GOT UP AT . . . (1968/1969), a series of postcards mailed to the Vogels; Lawrence Weiner's Sentence Fragment (1980), a word piece painted on the wall; and Robert Barry's Closed Gallery (1969), a conceptual work marking a gallery exhibition that never opened.

Other artists represented in the exhibition are: Vito Acconci, Richard Artschwager, Jo Baer, John Baldessari, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Joseph Beuys, James Bishop, Mel Bochner, Jonathan Borofsky, Daniel Buren, André Cadere,

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Chuck Close, Merce Cunningham, Hanne Darboven, Jan Dibbets, Dan Flavin, Dan Graham, Robert Grosvenor, Eva Hesse, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Brice Marden, Robert Morris, Richard Nonas, Nam June Paik, Edda Renouf, Klaus Rinke, Dorothea Rockburne, Dieter Roth, Edward Ruscha, Robert Ryman, Alan Saret, Joel Shapiro, and Richard Tuttle.

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BACKGROUNDER

THE DOROTHY AND HERBERT VOGEL COLLECTION AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

The Vogel Collection is an internationally recognized collection of modern and contemporary drawings, with additional important paintings and sculpture, energetically acquired over the last thirty years. Based in Manhattan, the Vogels began collecting American and European vanguard artists in the 1960s. Most of these works would later be classified as minimal and conceptual art. Through their formative relationship with the artist Sol Lewitt, the Vogels collected Lewitt's early work and that of his stylistic generation, expanding aggressively across the spectrum to include: Robert Mangold, Donald Judd, Christo, Lynda Benglis, Richard Tuttle, John Cage, Sylvia Mangold, Richard Artschwager, Joel Shapiro, Carl Andre, and dozens of others.

From the 1970s to the present, the Vogels have further expanded their collection to encourage, support, and acquire carefully chosen work by subsequent generations of minimal and conceptual artists and artists working in other styles,

while also continuing their acquisition of current work by their increasingly important older artists. With the exception of the Sol Lewitt Collection, at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, there is no known private collection of similar work in Europe or America which rivals the range, complexity, and artistic quality of the Vogel Collection. Their collection has been featured in numerous national and international exhibitions and articles.

On the one hand, the Vogel Collection has followed a horizontal growth pattern. Its diversity reflects the phenomenal developments of the last thirty years, as notable American and European contemporary artists participated in a radical expansion of intellectual and stylistic expression in many media. The Vogels have personally selected artists that represent these major stylistic evolutions.

On the other hand, the Collection is remarkable, and arguably unique, in its focused vertical growth. The Vogels have collected numerous artists in great depth and on a regular basis, for almost three decades.

The extraordinary breadth and rare depth of this enterprise is all the more striking considering the modest means at the collectors' disposal. Mr. Vogel worked as a salaried employee of the United States Postal Service and Mrs. Vogel, as a reference librarian for the Brooklyn Public Library.

By setting their collecting priorities above those of personal comfort, the Vogels were able to acquire works by making perceptive, early purchases of talented emerging artists.

Through their continued support, direct interest, and personal friendship, the Vogels have continued collecting. They have remained dedicated, active, frequent participants in the issues of contemporary art over the last three decades.

National Gallery curator of twentieth-century art Jack Cowart initiated the preservation of the collection and its transfer from New York to the National Gallery, and has worked closely with the Vogels for a number of years. Mr. Vogel, as a former Federal employee, and Mrs. Vogel are both attracted to this special affiliation and the many roles it can play in the Gallery's national and international curatorial and collection programs.

The beginning of this transfer process through partial purchase and Vogel gifts comprises two hundred and fourteen paintings, drawings, and sculptures by eleven artists. The works now acquired include: Carl Andre - nine sculptures; Richard Artschwager - four sculptures and sixteen drawings; Lynda Benqlis - five sculptures and four drawings; John Cage

- eight drawings; Christo - two sculptures and three drawings; Donald Judd - two sculptures and two drawings; Sol Lewitt - five sculptures, sixteen drawings, fourteen photographic pieces, and three wall drawings; Robert Mangold - nineteen paintings and twenty drawings; Sylvia Plimack Mangold - four paintings and five drawings; Joel Shapiro - three sculptures and one drawing; and Richard Tuttle - two sculptures and sixty-seven drawings.

The remaining works in the Vogel Collection, and works yet to be acquired, will be transferred to the Gallery at intervals in the future. Their collection currently comprises over two thousand works by more than two hundred artists.

This is a remarkable acquisition and gift plan of international significance. The National Gallery has few, if any, holdings of post-1960s drawings and paintings or sculpture by many of these important artists. As a collaborative program between the National Gallery's department of twentieth-century art and the department of modern prints and drawings, this project is a strong expansion of our shared curatorial program.

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