

NORTON SIMON MUSEUM FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Not Wanting to Say Anything About Marcel: An Artwork by John Cage

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Pasadena, CA— The Norton Simon Museum presents an installation of *Not Wanting to Say Anything About Marcel*, an artwork by American composer and artist John Cage (1912–1992). Created in 1969 as a tribute to artist Marcel Duchamp, *Not Wanting to Say Anything About Marcel* is a multiple comprised of five components: four Plexigrams and one lithograph, all with randomly placed text and images. This innovative work, with its captivating construction and endless interpretation by the viewer, has not been on view at the Museum since 1970.

John Cage made an impact on many artistic disciplines— theater, dance, poetry, visual art and musical composition. His first forays into art involved music, and he is arguably best known for *4'33"*, first performed in 1952. Cage composed a musical performance in which well-known pianist David Tudor sat at the piano in silence for four minutes and thirty-three seconds. By including noise as well as silence, *4'33"* exemplifies Cage's characteristic sense of humor and rebellion. By removing the music from a musical performance, he allowed the ambient noises from the uncomfortable audience to become just as much of the composition as the pianist and piano onstage.

In 1969, while he was the composer-in-residence at the University of Cincinnati, Cage was prompted by art patron Alice Weston to create his first visual artwork. Around the same time, an uncited art publication solicited several artists, Cage among them, to say something in honor of Marcel Duchamp, who had died the year before and who was both a friend to and an influence on Cage. Cage and the artist Jasper Johns were discussing the publication's request when Johns said, "I don't want to say anything about Marcel." Cage took this statement and used it for the title of his first venture into the visual arts.

With the assistance of graphic designer Calvin Sumison and lithographic printers Irwin Hollander and Fred Genis, Cage "composed" the artwork: four Plexigrams, each made of eight sheets of Plexiglas, were silkscreened with letters, numbers and images, and held together by a wooden base.

Included with this serialized edition was one of two lithographs. The Museum's piece, edition 39 of 125, includes Lithograph A, which consists of text and imagery printed on black Fabriano rag. Cage used *I Ching*, the Chinese "Book of Changes," a numerical system with 64 possible outcomes, to determine the design of both the Plexiglas and the lithographs.

Apparent in the work is Cage's use of negative space. The removal, juxtaposition and overlapping of text and images on the layers of Plexiglas enables them to be read in multiple combinations. In effect, Cage is exploring the meaning of these words and images by making the viewer finish them, thereby opening interpretation far beyond the reach of his chance operations. Essentially, the viewer is limited only by his or her own imagination.

By utilizing chance and eliminating his own personal choices, Cage removes the artist's hands from the artwork. While not wanting to say anything, Cage says everything and pays the ultimate homage to Duchamp.

Not Wanting to Say Anything About Marcel is curated by Tom Norris, Curatorial Assistant at the Norton Simon Museum.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition galleries feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 West Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Blvd. in Pasadena, California, at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open every day except Tuesday, from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Friday. **Admission:** General admission is \$8.00 for adults and \$4.00 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 East Holly Street at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.