



“If I was an artist and I was in the studio, then whatever I was doing must be art. At this point art became more of an activity and less of a product.”

BRUCE NAUMAN

Bruce Nauman

***Studio Mix*, 2010**

HD video installation (color, stereo sound), continuous play

1 HD video source, 1 HD projector, 1 suspended rear projection panel,

2 hidden speakers

Edition 1/3

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Museum purchase

Acquired in 2012

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Bruce Nauman makes art that aims to understand why we do what we do. Not tied to a particular medium, the artist seeks to expose and analyze such basic human activities as pacing back and forth, inhabiting a room, making an object, or learning a skill. Through film, video, sculpture, language, and installations, Nauman investigates the nature of artmaking, using whatever material best communicates the idea. After graduating from the University of California at Davis in the late 1960s, Nauman spent much solitary time in his large studio in San Francisco’s Mission District. It was here that he struggled with a deep sense of isolation from the local—and global—artistic community. It is this sense of remoteness that prompted Nauman to investigate the basic question, what is the function of the artist?

Nauman looked to other disciplines to guide his artistic practice and is indebted to creative luminaries such as John Cage, Philip Glass, and Merce Cunningham. Cage’s reliance on chance to create musical scores infused Nauman’s early work with a sense of spontaneity. Glass’s emphasis on repetition in his musical compositions brought to Nauman’s art practice the notion of deliberateness and the intentional embrace of human error. And the simplicity of Cunningham’s choreography, which highlighted straightforward, everyday movements in sequence, gave Nauman permission to do the same.

Nauman’s early short films (and later, videos) feature the artist doing common, repetitive actions such as walking around the perimeter of a square. Through Nauman’s attention to his own body and its movement, he created works that explore the possibilities of everyday situations. Narrowing the distance between art and life, Nauman’s *Studio Mix* combines a variety of the artist’s interests: video, music, language, repetition, and instruction. The video features a set of hands (the artist’s own, cropped at the wrists) in front of a monochrome backdrop. As the hands move through a predetermined series of finger positions, a voice calls out instructions from a primer for young children learning to play the piano, written by composer Béla Bartók. While the voice calls out each finger arrangement, Nauman’s hands respond appropriately, and another voice repeats “for children, for children,” referring to Bartók’s instructional book. The repetitive layering of the visual and the audible highlights the tedium of both the learning and teaching processes, while prompting viewers to consider why the artist chose to weave these layers together and what it could mean for each individual.