Installations turn art into an event

By Kathleen Werezynski Murray
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“Feelings,” the first North American survey of the work of British artist Martin Creed, opens this weekend at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College.

The exhibition spans Creed’s 20-year career, beginning with “Work No. 3 Yellow Painting” (1986) and ending with video and sculptural works made during the last year.

Creed’s oeuvre also includes sheets of letter paper filled in with highlighter or ballpoint pen, stacks of lumber and collections of balls in a variety of sizes, textures and colors.

“It is really the first chance for people to connect the dots for an artist who materially is very diverse,” said “Feelings” curator Trevor Smith, the curator-in-residence at Bard College. “It’s definitely a kind of work that materially is grounded in the everyday and not in a marketplace of rarefied materials. It’s about making ordinary things resonate in an interesting way.”

Inspired by the beauty of the Bard campus, the conceptual artist and Turner Prize winner has given a unique gift of five trees of distinctly different heights and texts to the college.

“I wanted the maximum variety of trees that grow well here,” he said of the work, which is installed (planted) in the front of the museum.

“Feelings” also features installations of the artist’s work alongside selected pieces from the permanent collection of the recently opened Hessel Museum of Art.

Richard Long.

“I wanted to try to give things space,” he said.

An installation of his Work No. 300, also known as “the whole world + the work = the whole world,” faces one wall of large box sculptures by Donald Judd and another wall with “Better Looking,” a tiny painting by Kim McCollum.

“It’s nice to put a small piece on the largest wall,” Creed said.

Visitors become part of art

“Feelings” features new realizations of two of the artist’s most renowned works, “The Lights Going On and Off” and “Half the Air in a Given Space,” which are based on the idea that art might be experienced more as an event than an object.

Visitors will experience “Half the Air” in a gallery half-filled with blue balloons.

“It is a sculpture of the people who are in it,” Creed said.

His neon sculptures spell out simple words and phrases.

“Somehow despite its seemingly reductive qualities it’s also emotional,” Smith said. “A number of the neon sculptures are words that try to placate an anxious person — EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT” — or create anxiety ...

Creed, who is also a musician, will perform a one-night-only variety show with his band Saturday in the Spiegeltent.

“The songs are just other works,” he said.

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