

ART &amp; DESIGN

# The National Gallery of Art Cancels a Chuck Close Show After Misconduct Accusations

By COLIN MOYNIHAN and ROBIN POGREBIN JAN. 26, 2018

The National Gallery of Art in Washington has canceled a Chuck Close exhibition, planned for May, because of accusations of sexual misconduct that have engulfed the artist in controversy.

Anabeth Guthrie, a spokeswoman for the National Gallery said that museum officials made the decision to cancel the show this month because of “allegations of misconduct” made against Mr. Close. In December, The New York Times published a report that Mr. Close had asked women who visited his studio to undress and made unwelcome explicit comments.

“We have never made a decision to cancel a show because of allegations of this kind before,” Ms. Guthrie said.

In a telephone interview on Friday, Mr. Close said the allegations against him were “not true” and that he was under the impression that the National Gallery had only postponed his show for a year.

“It’s lies,” Mr. Close said. “I haven’t slept in weeks. I’ve been such a supporter of women and women artists. I’ve done nothing wrong and I’m being crucified.”

About two dozen paintings, photographs and works on paper by Mr. Close were to have been shown in tower three of the National Gallery’s East Building, as part of a

rotating series of installations known as “In the Tower,” Ms. Guthrie said.

The gallery also canceled an exhibition of photographs planned for September by Thomas Roma, a documentary photographer and former professor who had also been accused of sexual misconduct, Ms. Guthrie said. The photographs focused on worshipers in African-American churches in Brooklyn.

Mr. Roma retired earlier this month from Columbia University, where he had been the director of the School of the Arts photography program, after The Times published accounts of sexual harassment and assault from five women who had been his students there and the School of Visual Arts.

The National Gallery’s decision is unusual, and most institutions are not reconsidering their decision to hang work by Mr. Close on their walls.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is not changing the Close painting currently on view in its Modern and Contemporary galleries.

Kim Sajet, director of the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, said in an emailed statement on Friday that the institution had not received any inquiries about Mr. Close’s portrait of Bill Clinton, which remains on loan in a permanent gallery there.

“Like others in the art world, we have been giving this news serious consideration,” she added.

The Broad Museum in Los Angeles has one work by Mr. Close on display, “John,” from 1971.

In response to a Times inquiry over whether it was rethinking the artist’s presence on its walls, it stated: “We are dismayed by accounts we have read of misconduct in Chuck Close’s interactions with many women.

We are engaged in active internal discussion, considering both The Broad museum’s primary mission to present contemporary art and foster dialogue, and the complexity and seriousness of the issue.”