

GLADSTONE GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bruce Conner

December 16, 2004–January 29, 2005

Gladstone Gallery will be closed for the holidays from December 24 through January 3, 2005.

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to announce its first exhibition of work by Bruce Conner. Vanguard artist and filmmaker, Conner has been at the forefront of many artistic movements since the 1960s. First earning acclaim for his assemblages and short films, such as the seminal *A MOVIE*, his forays into various modes of visual expression critique mass consciousness through dismantling the structures in which it is viewed. The density of his work, whether created through meticulous mark-making, the combination of disparate found objects, or fast-paced edits of stock film footage, strive to stimulate the eye in hopes of exposing both the ties and the frays inherent in our social fabric.

In 1978, Conner, long a figure in the avant-garde and bohemian subcultures that burgeoned in the San Francisco Bay Area, documented the nascent California punk scene that rallied around the area club Mabuhay Gardens. His strong ties to the growing punk movement of the time allowed him to photograph the tight-knit group of bands, fans, and other personalities from the vantage point of an insider, capturing the raucous behavior and exuberant performances that spilled off the stage nightly. Frank and humorous, these images frame the comings and goings of the regulars of the club, such as Toni Basil, Devo, and Negative Trend, in tightly composed shots whose seemingly easy feel belie their visual complexity. The images of flying guitars, rioting fans, and the camaraderie built during late hours in smoky barrooms avoid now-nostalgic overtones through Conner's formal mastery and anarchic touch. Though a selection were first published in *Search and Destroy*, the famed punk 'zine, Conner organized the 53 photographs into two series which will be shown together for the first time.

LUKE, a new film by Conner that premiered at the New York Film Festival in October 2004, will be screened at the gallery throughout the exhibition. The film recounts one day during the production of the 1967 film *Cool Hand Luke*. Invited to visit the set by his friend Dennis Hopper, Conner's film captures the events occurring on both sides of the camera. Though the focus of the day's shoot is a posse of shirtless actors shoveling gravel, including Paul Newman, George Kennedy, and Hopper, Conner's behind-the-scenes view emphasizes the filming as much as what is being filmed. As the crew mills about, dragging various equipment back and forth, the production of the film becomes a parade. Teasing out the relationship between still photography and motion picture, Conner has slowed the film speed during transfer from 8mm to digital video, creating images that are alternately staccato and attenuated. This poetic film, which meditates on both the formal features of film as well as its cultural role, features an original score both composed and performed by Patrick Gleeson.

Bruce Conner was born in 1933 in McPherson, Kansas, and studied at the University of Nebraska and Brooklyn Museum Art School. Since the 1960s, his sculpture, films, drawing, and collages have been the subject of many solo exhibitions, including "2000 BC The Bruce Conner Story Part II," which was organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and traveled to the Modern Art Museum of Ft. Worth; the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. His work has been exhibited at numerous venues including the Whitney Museum of American Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and the Fondation Cartier, Paris.

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