

GLADSTONE GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thomas Hirschhorn "Superficial Engagement" January 14–February 11, 2006

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by Thomas Hirschhorn. Just as in his solo debut in 2002, "Cavemanman," he will once more create an installation spanning the entire space of the gallery. Unlike his previous show, where he created a succession of cave dwellings for a Utopia-loving hermit, "Superficial Engagement" will contain a series of platforms exploring the intersection of the destruction of war and the creation of art.

Originally a student of graphic design, his eye for the communicative effect of images is at its most trenchant in his juxtapositions that pit the gloss of fashion ads with the grit of photojournalism. The events of the world, both the violence and glamour, cannot be cast aside; the imagery that stares back from the news reflects and creates the collective view of the world. This form of "superficial engagement," as the artist dubs it, keeps the argument on the surface, not giving room to pundits or politicians to equivocate. As he puts it in his own formulation of the show, "To go deeply into something, I first must begin with the surface. The truth of things, its own logic, is reflected on the surface." The current climate of constant war and oppression worldwide particularly provokes Hirschhorn's critical inquiry, as he considers his art and his political activism to be inseparable. Combining found imagery and texts, bound up in low-tech constructions of cardboard, foil, and packing tape, he props imagistic assaults in a DIY-fashion that correlates to the intellectual scavenging and sensory overload designed to simulate the artist's own process of grappling with the excess of information in his daily life.

For this new exhibition, his gallery-wide installation explores the intersection of political critique and art through a variety of channels. Hirschhorn's belief in art's ability to educate and heal compels him to engage current events and critical theories, while simultaneously investigating historical and formal aspects of art. Taking inspiration from Emma Kunz, a Swiss artist, healer, and medium, and his own fascination with nail-and-wire crafts, he fashioned his work as an optical assault meant to override the terror and oppression of recent international events with images of beauty meant to engage the empathic reasoning of the viewer. His four vibrant platforms create differentiated spaces with various sculptural elements meant to coalesce our time and tap into universal roots. Through these disparate, decorative, and deconstructive pieces, he hopes "to give form to a mega-historical viewpoint"; in his words, "I want to do artwork beyond history. Not against history."

Thomas Hirschhorn was born in 1957 in Bern, Switzerland and now lives and works in Paris. He has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, recently including the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona; Kunsthaus Zürich; Art Institute of Chicago; and Museum Ludwig, Cologne. In 2003 he founded the *Musée Précaire Albinet*, a temporary interactive art and community space in Aubervilliers, France. Currently, he has a solo exhibition entitled "Anschool II" at the Museu Serralves in Porto, Portugal. Additionally, he has taken part in many international group exhibitions, including Documenta 11 in Kassel, Germany, where his large-scale public work, *Bataille Monument*, was on view. Hirschhorn was the recipient of the Prix Marcel Duchamp in 2000 and the Joseph Beuys-Preis in 2004.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10am-6pm
For further information please contact Adam Ottavi-Schiesl adam@gladstonegallery.com