

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

## Jannis Kounellis

November 2 – December 23, 2022

Reception: November 2, 6pm - 8pm

530 West 21st Street

Gladstone

On November 2, Gladstone will open an exhibition by Jannis Kounellis at 530 West 21st Street, in New York City.

Like many of his generation in Europe, Jannis Kounellis (1936 – 2017) experienced war at close quarters throughout his childhood; first during the German Nazi/Italian Fascist occupation [subjugation] of Greece, and then the civil war that erupted in the power vacuum when the occupiers were defeated in 1943. One of the first Cold War conflicts, the war lasted until 1949, when Kounellis was 13 years old. Seven years later in 1956 at the age of 20, Kounellis left his native Piraeus and moved to Rome.

The conflicts of the Second World War and the Cold War were considered history. Our daily experience told us that we were past that moment and that the theater of the war resided only in the imagination.

In that same post-war period, the United States and New York in particular became the center of a new global empire of capital. It also rose to preeminence in terms of painting and what was then called the 'avant-garde'. All the while war, imperialism, and trauma occurred elsewhere. Washing up on these shores in the form of wounded servicemen, epidemics of wars on drugs, and terrorism on September 11, 2001.

Kounellis always felt it was a delusion to imagine that we were past war, that we are post-war because war has never left our side. Rather, it is like a series of links in a chain, from one hand to another, from this war to that war - we find ourselves always connected to war.

Who are the players in this theater? The husbands and the wives, the mothers and the fathers, the sisters and the brothers, the women, and the children. In Kounellis's view, man has always been an "irreplaceable centrality and an open border." He sees the realities and frustrations of contemporary society while, simultaneously, drawing upon primitive, fundamental, human values and the human objects that embody and contain, and measure those values. These values have not changed, and the need for their constant measure is a necessity as pressing as it ever was.

Kounellis' art is a brutal moral insistence but also an affirmation of freedom.

Jannis Kounellis first came to prominence in the late 50s with his *Alphabets*, expanses of color with letters, numbers, typographical symbols and road markings superimposed. In 1967, he became associated with Arte Povera; his work characterized by the use of real, concrete objects of a place or community, such as clothing, furniture, and ships, as well as living organisms. His work appeared in key exhibitions as *Live in your Head. When Attitudes Become Form*, Kunsthalle, Bern; *Arte Povera: 13 italienische Künstler*, Kunstverein, Monaco (1971); *'60-'80: attitudes / concepts / images*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1982); and *Transformations in Sculpture. Four decades of American and European Art*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1985). His installation *Untitled (12 Horses)* was presented at Gavin Brown's enterprise in 2015. Most recently the retrospective *Jannis Kounellis in Six Acts*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

For further information, please contact [press@gladstonegallery.com](mailto:press@gladstonegallery.com)

New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm

Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday, 12pm–6pm