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Contact:

Robyn Wise, 415.357.4172, rwise@sfmoma.org

Libby Garrison, 415.357.4177, lgarrison@sfmoma.org

Sandra Farish Sloan, 415.357.4174, ssloan@sfmoma.org

SFMOMA PRESENTS VIDEO AND FILM WORKS BY DOUGLAS GORDON



Douglas Gordon, *24 Hour Psycho* (still), 1993;
Courtesy the artist; photo: Bert Ross © 2007 Douglas
Gordon

From October 27, 2007, through February 24, 2008, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) presents the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work from about 1992 until Now*. The exhibition encompasses a single, ever-growing work conceived by the artist—titled *Pretty much every film and video work from about 1992 until now*. To be seen on monitors, some with headphones, others run silently and all simultaneously—that is, as the title suggests, a multichannel video installation comprising nearly 50 of his films and videos.

This condensed retrospective of Gordon's moving-image practice provides a 15-year overview of the central themes and formal strategies the Scottish artist uses to both explore and manipulate perceptions of time. His most significant works to date are represented, including *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), *Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)* (1997), *Feature Film* (1999), and *Play Dead; Real Time* (2003).

A conceptual piece that continues to expand, the work offers a different spatial configuration and number of monitors each time it is installed. This presentation, organized by Rudolf Frieling, SFMOMA's curator of media arts, invites viewers to make their own connections between the works by observing the various ways in which the artist addresses subjects of perception, collective memory, madness, authorship, and the tension between opposites.

"While many artists working in film or video have dealt with found footage, it is Gordon's boldness in appropriating and reconfiguring visual references and icons—from *Star Trek* to archival medical footage to Andy Warhol—that truly distinguishes his practice," says Frieling. "He is one of the few contemporary artists working predominantly in media arts who has such conceptual strength and sensitivity to the tradition of body-related performance."

Gordon (b. 1966) approaches time itself as both subject and medium in a diverse oeuvre that encompasses video, film, photography, installation, text works, and sculpture. He also plays with the familiarity of mainstream commercial film by altering existing footage through various editing techniques—repetition, doubling, mirroring, superimposition, slow motion—in order to shift the viewer's experience, and is perhaps best known for structurally reframing suspense and other related movie genres—film noir, crime thrillers, horror flicks, and B movies. He first

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rose to prominence in the 1990s with his landmark minimalist video *24 Hour Psycho*, which extends the psychological drama of Alfred Hitchcock's original *Psycho* by radically slowing the film speed so that it takes 24 hours to play to the end. The sluggish pace creates an acute awareness of the relationship between real time and film time. The technique also delays resolution of the narrative, conflating the viewer's memory of the original film with the in-gallery experience of Gordon's silent, drawn-out counterpart.

Through appropriated imagery as well as original material, Gordon addresses the fraught relationship between such universal dualities as light and darkness, life and death, truth and falsehood, male and female. For instance, in *Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)*, he fuses ethical opposites in an exploration of good and evil by superimposing two Hollywood films—Henry King's *Song of Bernadette* (about a girl who sees a vision of the Virgin Mary) and William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (about a teen's demonic possession)—so that the narratives are viewed simultaneously.

In his *Bootleg* series (1995–98), Gordon focuses on the complicit relationship between performer and audience by observing crowd dynamics at stage shows by The Smiths, The Cramps, and the Rolling Stones. In *Bootleg (Empire)* (1997), he illicitly records a screening of Warhol's epic structural film *Empire* (1964), an important influence on Gordon's practice.

Throughout his career, the artist has created performance-based works that often depict his own body in action. In these pieces he plays with repetitive, compulsive motions—the use of hand gestures, in particular—as physical manifestations of inner states. *Divided Self I and II* (1996) show the artist's two arms engaged in a struggle, reflecting his interest in internal dialogue and alter ego, as well as the formal techniques of doubling and mirroring.

In the rarely seen video *Monster* (1996), Gordon's face becomes grotesque through the application of strips of transparent adhesive tape. Both author and character in this work, Gordon draws on the cinematic trope of a man's encounter with his mirrored double. In two other works, the artist appropriates iconic “alter-ego” moments from classic films: the transformation scene in Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* figures in Gordon's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1995–96), and the famous “You looking at me?” sequence performed by Robert De Niro in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* becomes the basis for the 1999 work *through a looking glass*.

The dynamic between memory and bodily motion is another theme Gordon explores in his work. His piece *10ms⁻¹* (1994) uses footage of a medical demonstration from World War I that documents a shell-shocked veteran repeatedly trying, but failing, to stand. Gordon's slow-motion loop traps the soldier in a cycle of struggle. (The title refers to the actual speed at which an object falls according to the laws of gravity.) *Play Dead; Real Time* (2003) features the artist's footage of a trained elephant in a pristine gallery space as it repeatedly drops to the floor on its side and remains motionless on command, struggling to its feet only to go through the paces once again.



Douglas Gordon, *Pretty much every film and video...*
(installation view at the National Galleries of Scotland, Royal
Scottish Academy Building, Edinburgh), 1992–present; ©
2007 Douglas Gordon; photo: Antonia Reeve

Gordon's works typically are shown individually in large-scale projections. Here, however, the unified presentation on multiple monitors suggests a video archive to explore; the use of second-hand televisions with exposed electronics alludes to the personal experience of watching videos at home.

Associated with the Young British Artists (YBAs), Gordon has received three of the most important international awards in contemporary art: the Tate's Turner Prize (1996), the Venice Biennale's Premio 2000 (1997), and the Guggenheim Museum's Hugo Boss Prize (1998).

In conjunction with the exhibition, SFMOMA's Education Department will present a series of public programs, including a related video program by contemporary artists. Details will be announced at a later date.

Full title of artwork:

Pretty much every film and video work from about 1992 until now. To be seen on monitors, some with headphones, others run silently, and all simultaneously (1992–present)

The work includes the following 48 titles:

10ms⁻¹ (1994); 24 Hour Psycho (1993); Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake) (1997); Black and White (Babylon) (1996); Blue (1998); B-Movie (1995); Bootleg (Big Mouth) (1995); Bootleg (Cramped) (1995); Bootleg (Empire) (1997); Bootleg (Stoned) (1996); Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1995–96); Dead Right (1998); Déjà vu (2000); Divided Self I and Divided Self II (1996); Domestic (2002); Don't Think About It (2001); Douglas Gordon Sings 'The Best of Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground' (for Bas Jan Ader) (1993); Feature Film (1999); Film Noir (Fear) (1995); Film Noir (Fly) (1995); Film Noir (Hand) (1995); Film Noir (Perspire) (1995); Film Noir (Sleeper) (1995); Film Noir (Twins) (1995); Fog (2001); Hand and Foot (1995); Head (1995); Hysterical (1995); Left Dead (1998); The Left Hand Can't See That the Right Hand Is Blind (2004); The Left Hand Doesn't Care What the Right Hand Isn't Doing (2004); Left is right and right is wrong and left is wrong and right is right (1999); Magic Newspaper (1992); A Moment's Silence (2000); Monster (1996); Monument for X (1998); Off-screen (black and white) (1998); Off-screen (color) (1998); Play Dead (That Way) (2003); Play Dead (The Other Way) (2003); Play Dead (This Way) (2003); Play Dead; Real Time (2003); Predictable Incidents in Unfamiliar Surroundings (1995); Remote Viewing 13.05.94 (Horror Movie) (1995); The Right Hand Doesn't Care What the Left Hand Isn't Doing (2004); Scratch Hither (2002); through a looking glass (1999); Trigger Finger (1994).

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The Museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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