



NYC Museum Highlight - “Bruce Conner: It’s All True” at MoMA

September 23, 2016

by Pat Rogers

“Bruce Conner: It’s All True” represents a lot of firsts. The exhibition, currently on view at [MoMA](#) (the Museum of Modern Art) in New York City, is the first retrospective of the pioneer filmmaker and artist in New York City; the first complete retrospective of the artist’s 50-year career; the first survey of Conner’s work in around 16 years and the first retrospective since his death in 2008. Presented as a collaboration with [SFMOMA](#) (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), the exhibition presents over 250 objects curated among the various medium the artist is known for. This includes film, video, painting, assemblage, drawing, prints, photography, photograms and performance.

Haven’t heard of [Bruce Conner](#)? That’s part of the point of organizing the bi-coastal exhibition. The artist and filmmaker was well-known within his home base of the San Francisco Bay Area and its counterculture circles during his lifetime. Since then, his reputation has grown to become an acknowledged influential artist of his time, said SFMOMA director Neal Benezra during the press preview.

Another point was to curate an exhibition that could assist viewers connect the dots of comprehension on Conner’s far flung art practice, said Stuart Comer, Chief Curator, Department of Media and Performance Art for MoMA at the press conference.

Put simply, Laura Hoptman, Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture for MoMA, said “Bruce Conner is the best known lesser known artist in American postwar art.”



“Crossroads” [promotional still] by Bruce Conner, 1976. 35mm film (black and white, sound) transferred to video. 37 min. The Museum of Modern Art, New York and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (Accessions Committee Fund purchase), with the generous support of the New Art Trust. © Bruce Conner 2016. Courtesy Conner Family Trust.

The art of Bruce Conner (1933-2008) touches upon various themes of postwar American society, ranging from a rising consumer culture to the dread of nuclear apocalypse. Working simultaneously in a range of mediums, Conner created hybrids of painting and sculpture, film and performance, drawing and printing, including bodies of works on paper utilizing drawing and collage and two

important photographic bodies of work.

This includes a haunting group of black-and-white life-sized photograms called “Angels.” An early practitioner of found-object assemblage, Bruce Conner’s relief and free-standing sculptural objects including the restored *Child* (1959) and *Looking Glass* (1964), both which were widely recognized for their masterful compositions and daringly dark subject matter.

Conner first gained recognition while working in New York City in the 1950s. While in his early 20s, Conner was making assemblages and he was affiliated with the burgeoning assemblage movement, along with Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and others. Deciding to go in another direction in 1965, he left assemblage behind and channeled his avant garde spirit into a variety of mediums, especially film.

A pioneer of experimental filmmaking, Conner developed a quick-cut method of editing that defined his oeuvre. Weaving film footage from various sources, including countdown leaders, training films, and newsreels, with his own 16mm film footage, Conner’s films focus on disturbing but utterly current themes. His films “A Movie” (1958) and “Crossroads” (1976) became landmarks of American experimental cinema due to their structural innovation and daring subject matter.

Film is an integral part of “It’s All True” and a survey screening of his films is presented in the program “Movie in My Head: Bruce Conner and Beyond.” Each screening features Conner’s films paired with those by filmmakers working in the sixties through today. Programs are curated to reveal an aspect of Conner’s practice including dance music set to film; the incorporation of found footage; the female form and more.

Each screening begins with “Ten Second Film,” Conner’s rejected trailer for the 1965 New York Film Festival. The trailer is followed by a program of films and shorts by Conner and other filmmakers. Each program runs between 69 to 90 minutes. For a schedule, click [here](#). Screenings continue from September 23 to 30, 2016. The exhibition itself closes on October 2, 2016. To see some of Bruce Conner’s work, click [here](#).

“Bruce Conner: It’s All True” is organized by the SFMOMA with curation from both SFMOMA and MoMA, spanning multiple departments. From MoMA, the exhibition is co-curated by Stuart Comer, Chief Curator, Department of Media and Performance Art, and Laura Hoptman, Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture. From SFMOMA, the exhibition is co-curated by Rudolf Frieling, Curator of Media Arts and Gary Garrels, The Elise S. Haas Senior Curator of Painting and Sculpture, with Rachel Federman, Assistant Curator, Painting and Sculpture.

After the exhibition closes at MoMA, it travels to SFMOMA where it [will be exhibited](#) from October 29, 2016 to January 22, 2017.

BASIC FACTS: “Bruce Conner: It’s All True” is on view through October 2, 2016 at MoMA, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019. www.moma.org.

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