

# Haunted

contemporary photography | video | performance

## Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Teacher Resource Unit

### A NOTE TO TEACHERS

*Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance* is a groundbreaking exhibition that presents a new reading of the impact of photography of the past fifty years. Much of the work has been created in the 21st century and incorporates technologies of recording—still and moving images, audio, and performance—that suggest a reinterpretation of postwar art in which the events of the past are recognized as inhabiting even the most forward-looking ideas.

This Resource Unit focuses on various themes and artists included in the exhibition and provides techniques for exploring both the visual arts and other areas of the school curriculum. This guide is also available on the museum's Web site at [www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum](http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum) with images that can be downloaded or projected for classroom use. The images may be used for educational purposes only and are not licensed for commercial applications of any kind. Before bringing your class to the Guggenheim, we invite you to visit the exhibition, read the guide, and decide which aspects of the exhibition are most relevant to your students. For more information on scheduling a visit for your students, please call 212 423 3637.

This Resource Unit focuses on works and concepts that are integral to the school curriculum and can be successfully used with students of all ages. As for all exhibitions, it is strongly recommended that educators preview the exhibition prior to student visits.

### HAUNTED: CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/PERFORMANCE

March 26–September 6, 2010

Additional galleries open June 4–September 1, 2010

### EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Much of contemporary photography and video seems haunted by the past—by the history of art, by apparitions that are reanimated in reproductive mediums, live performance, and the virtual world. By using dated, passé, or quasi-extinct stylistic devices, subject matter, and technologies, such art embodies a melancholic longing for an otherwise unrecoverable past. *Haunted* documents this obsession, examining myriad ways photographic imagery is incorporated into recent practice and in the process underscores the unique power of all reproductive mediums. The works included range from individual photographs and photographic series to sculptures and paintings that incorporate photographic elements; videos; film; performance; and site-specific installations. While much of the work has been created since 2001, the show traces the extensive incorporation of photography into contemporary art since the 1960s.

Within this context, *Haunted* is organized around a series of formal and conceptual threads that weave themselves through the artworks on view:

**APPROPRIATION AND THE ARCHIVE:** When Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol began silkscreening snapshots and press photographs into their paintings in the early 1960s, they established not only a new mode of visual production but also a new conception of the artwork as a repository for autobiographical, cultural, and historical information. In the ensuing years, a number of artists, including Bernd and Hilla Becher, Sarah Charlesworth, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Douglas Gordon, Luis Jacob, Richard Prince, and Cindy Sherman, have pursued this archival impulse, amassing fragments of reality either by creating new photographs or by appropriating existing ones.

**DOCUMENTATION AND REITERATION:** Since at least the 1970s, photographic documentation, including film and video, has existed as an important complement to the art of live performance, often setting the conditions by which events are staged and sometimes obviating the need for a live audience altogether. The power of the document to reiterate the past has inspired artists such as Marina Abramović, Christian Boltanski, Tacita Dean, Joan Jonas, Christian Marclay, Ana Mendieta, and Gina Pane to use photography not only to restage performative acts but often to revisit the bodily experience of historical events. Along the way many have reconsidered the document itself as an object embedded with history, closely attending to its material specificity in their works.

**LANDSCAPE, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME:** In addition to documenting people and events, one of photography's primary historical functions has been to record sites where significant, often traumatic events have taken place. These images are doubly arresting, for they capture spaces where something has already occurred. As viewers, we are left with only traces from which we hope to reconstruct the absent occurrences in the fields, forests, homes, and offices we see. With this condition in mind, many artists, among them James Casebere, Spencer Finch, Ori Gersht, Roni Horn, Luisa Lambri, An-My Lê, Sally Mann, and Hiroshi Sugimoto, have turned to empty spaces in landscape and architecture, creating poetic reflections on time's inexorable passing and insisting on the importance of remembrance and memorialization.

**TRAUMA AND THE UNCANNY:** Photography has, of course, not only profoundly impacted our understanding of history; it has altered, or as some theorists argue, completely reconfigured our sense of personal memory. From birth to death, all aspects of our lives are reconstituted as images alongside our own experience of them. This repetition, which is mirrored in the very technology of the photographic medium, effectively produces an alternate reality in representation that, especially when coping with traumatic events, can take on the force of the uncanny. Artists such as Stan Douglas, Anna Gaskell, Anthony Goicolea, Sarah Anne Johnson, Jeff Wall, and Gillian Wearing exploit this effect, constructing fictional scenarios in which the pains and pleasures of personal experience return with eerie and foreboding qualities.

**DEATH, PUBLICITY, AND POLITICS:** When Warhol created his silkscreens of Marilyn Monroe in the wake of her death, he touched on the darker side of a burgeoning media culture that, during the Vietnam War, became an integral part of everyday life. Today, with vastly expanded channels for the propagation and reproduction of images, events as varied as the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center and the deaths of celebrities such as Princess Diana and Michael Jackson have the capability of becoming traumatic on a global scale. As this new cultural condition has taken hold, many artists, including Adam Helms, Nate Lowman, Adam McEwen, Cady Noland, and Anri Sala, have reexamined the strategy of image appropriation Warhol pioneered, attending closely to the ways political conflict can take on global significance.

This exhibition is curated by Jennifer Blessing, Curator of Photography, and Nat Trotman, Associate Curator.

This exhibition is made possible by the International Director's Council of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

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The Leadership Committee for *Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance* is gratefully acknowledged.

"I've always played with make-up to transform myself, but everything, including the lighting, was self taught. I just learned things as I needed to use them. I absorbed my ideas for the women in these photos from every cultural source that I've ever had access to, including film, TV, advertisements, magazines, as well as any adult role models from my youth."<sup>1</sup>

## < CINDY SHERMAN APPROPRIATION AND THE ARCHIVE >

Cindy Sherman (b. 1954, Glen Ridge, N.J.) emerged onto the New York art scene in the early 1980s as part of a new generation of artists concerned with the codes of representation in a media-saturated era. Along with many artists working in the 1980s, Sherman explored photography as a way to reveal and examine the cultural constructions we designate as truth. Confronting the belief that photographs are truthful documents, Sherman's fictional narratives suggested that photographs, like all forms of representation, are ideologically motivated. She is aware that the camera is not a neutral device but rather a tool that frames a particular viewpoint.

Sherman's reputation was established early on with her *Untitled Film Stills*, a series of 69 black-and-white photographs that she began making in 1977, when she was twenty-three. In this series, the artist depicted herself dressed in the various melodramatic guises of clichéd B-movie heroines presented in 8 x 10 publicity stills from the 1950s and 1960s. In photograph after photograph, Sherman both acts in and documents her own productions. Although Sherman is both model and photographer, these images are not autobiographical. Rather, they memorialize absence and leave us searching for a narrative and clues to what may exist beyond the frame of the camera.

By the time Sherman made the *Untitled Film Stills*, black-and-white photography was already recognized as belonging to the past,

and the styles she replicated were taken not from her own generation but from that of her mother's. Sherman used wigs and makeup as well as vintage clothing to create a range of female characters. She sets her photos in a variety of locations, including rural landscapes, cities, and her own apartment. Although many of the pictures are taken by Sherman herself using an extended shutter release, for others she required help, sometimes enlisting friends and family. The characters she created include an ingénue finding her way in the big city, a party girl, a housewife, a woman in distress, a dancer, and an actress. In 1980 she completed the series and has said that she stopped when she ran out of clichés to depict. Unlike the media images they refer to, Sherman's stills have a deliberate artifice that is heightened by the often-visible camera cord, slightly eccentric props, unusual camera angles, and by the fact that each image includes the artist rather than a recognizable actress or model. Sherman remains an important figure, with works in major collections around the globe, and continues to create striking, imaginative art.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #58*, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm, edition 1/10. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift, Ginny Williams 97.4611

# VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *Untitled Film Still #58*, 1980

- ▶ Look carefully at this photo. What do you notice?
- ▶ What type of character do you see? What are some of the traits that this photo suggests about its subject? Write a brief character profile that includes what you imagine is her age, livelihood, and living situation. Is she naïve or experienced, trustworthy or dishonest? Explain what in the photo suggests these conclusions to you.
- ▶ It has been noted that Sherman's characters frequently appear to be gazing at something outside our view. What might she be looking at?
- ▶ Sherman has explained that she called this series of images "film stills" because she was thinking of publicity stills that used to be used to advertise movies. What type of film might this be an advertisement for?
- ▶ The ambiguity of Sherman's work encourages a wide range of interpretations. Her images evoke events in possible narratives that the viewer may invent or interpret in different ways. Invent a narrative where this photo is woven into the story line.
- ▶ What clues does Sherman provide for us that let us know that this photograph is set in a different time period?

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- On your own, or with a partner, write a brief screenplay for this scene. Where did the character come from? Where might she be headed? Whom will she meet? What will happen next?
- Students are too young to remember the genre that Sherman's *Film Stills* allude to. Turner Classic Movies Web site (<http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/archive/home>) maintains a database and archive that will enable students to look at film stills from the 1950s and '60s and compare them with Sherman's work. How is Sherman's work similar to the photos in the archive? How is it different?
- More work from this series, and Sherman's subsequent work, can be viewed at <http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1997/sherman/index.html>. What aspects of the series are consistent throughout? What parts change?
- Create your own film still. Consider characters from books, films, and television shows, or make up your own. What costume and props will you need to transform yourself into that character? What setting will you choose? What pose and expression will best convey that persona? Once the costume and setting are established, think about the composition of the photograph. Will you see the entire figure or only a portion of it? Consider the lighting and the point of view. Then, with a digital camera—and like Sherman, the help of a friend or family member—take the photograph and print it in an 8-x-10-inch format.

“A good work of art can never be read in one way. My work is full of contradictions. An artwork is open—it is the spectators looking at the work who make the piece, using their own background. A lamp in my work might make you think of a police interrogation, but it’s also religious, like a candle. At the same time it alludes to a precious painting, with a single light shining on it. There are many way of looking at the work. It has to be ‘unfocused’ somehow so that everyone can recognize something of their own self when viewing it.”<sup>2</sup>

Christian Boltanski, *Autel de Lycée Chases*, 1986–87.  
Six photographs, six desk lamps, and twenty-two tin boxes,  
170.2 x 214.6 x 24.1 cm. Rubell Family Collection, Miami. © 2010  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.



## ◀ CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI DOCUMENTATION AND REITERATION ▶

The power of photography to recall the past has inspired many contemporary artists to use photographs to revisit the experience of historical events. In so doing, artists reconsider the photograph itself as an object imbued with history. They became aware that using the medium of photography would lend the elements of specificity and truth to their work.

Since the late 1960s, Christian Boltanski (b. 1944, Paris) has worked with photographs collected from ordinary and often ephemeral sources, endowing the commonplace with significance. Rather than taking original photographs to use in his installations, he often finds and rephotographs everyday documents—passport photographs, school portraits, newspaper pictures, and family albums—to memorialize everyday people. Boltanski seeks to create an art that is indistinguishable from life and has said, “The fascinating moment for me is when the spectator hasn’t registered the art connection, and the longer I can delay this association the better.”<sup>3</sup> By appropriating mementos of other people’s lives and placing them in an art context, Boltanski explores the power of photography to transcend individual identity and to function instead as a witness to collective rituals and shared cultural memories.

In Boltanski’s 1986–87 work *Autel de Lycée Chases* (which means “Altar to the Chases High School”) enlarged photographs of children are hung over a platform constructed from stacked tin biscuit boxes, which are rusted as if they have been ravaged by time. The black-and-white photographs look like artifacts from another era. An electric light illuminates each face while at the same time obscuring it. The arrangement gives no way to identify or connect the unnamed individuals.

The photos used in *Autel de Lycée Chases* were taken from a real-world source, the school photograph of the graduating class of 1931 from a Viennese high school for Jewish students. These students were coming of age in a world dominated by war and persecution, and it is likely that many perished over the next decade.

At once personal and universal in reference, Boltanski’s work serves as a monument to the dead, hinting at the Holocaust without naming it. Within this haunting environment, Boltanski intermingles emotion and history, sentimentality and profundity.

# VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *Autel de Lycée Chases*, 1986–87

- ▶ What is your reaction to this work? What mood does it evoke for you?
- ▶ This work is constructed from a few simple materials; six photographs, six desk lamps, and twenty-two tin boxes. What associations do you have with each of these items?
- ▶ How has the artist suggested a mood by his use and manipulation of these materials?
- ▶ Boltanski has said, “Part of my work has been about what I call ‘small memory.’ Large memory is recorded in books and small memory is all about little things: trivia, jokes. Part of my work then has been about trying to preserve ‘small memory,’ because often when someone dies, that memory disappears. Yet that ‘small memory’ is what makes people different from one another, unique. These memories are very fragile; I wanted to save them.”<sup>4</sup> Do you think this work is successful in achieving Boltanski’s aim? Explain.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- Christian Boltanski grew up in the aftermath of World War II knowing that, to avoid detection by the Nazis, his Jewish father hid under the floorboards of the family’s Paris apartment for a year and a half. Although Boltanski downplays family history, his artistic work is haunted by the wider ideas of faith, memory, and loss. Boltanski creates memorials for those who endured the horrors of the Holocaust, but his work also speaks to other holocausts, such as those in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur. He often seeks to memorialize the anonymous and those who have disappeared.

Discuss with your students different types of memorials and commemorations that help us to remember those who perished in acts of genocide. Some people prefer an individual symbolic act, like lighting a candle or observing a silence. Others may write a poem, plant a tree, interview a survivor, or organize an event or activity. The main objective is to commemorate victims, honor survivors, and commit to tackling prejudice, discrimination, and racism in the present day.

Then ask students to research one or more instances of genocide and design a way to commemorate those who perished. Two excellent Web sites that provide resources for educators include Teaching Tolerance ([www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)) and the United States Holocaust Museum ([www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)).

- A memorial can range from the offering of a single flower to erecting a large-scale permanent monument. It can honor an event, a person, group of people, or even a beloved pet. Think about something or someone that you would like to pay tribute to. Sketch the design and consider:
  - What material(s) will it be made from?
  - How large or small will it be?
  - Will it be permanent or last for only a short time?
  - Where is the best site for it?
  - What inscription would you add?When you are done, share your plan with your classmates and compare the various possibilities.
- Boltanski states, “I never take photographs myself. I don’t feel like a photographer, more like a recycler.”<sup>5</sup> The teacher should distribute a photocopy of an anonymous person culled from the Internet, newspapers, or magazines. Ask students to write a character profile that invents the details of this person’s life, including what Boltanski calls both “large” and “small” memories. The written profile should support the information in the photograph. When the writing assignment is complete, students should share the profiles they have created.

*“Black and white had more to do with memory and the past. Color was too much about the present, I associated it with color TV, which was not a part of my past. I wanted the images to be related to a sense of history, let’s say, whether personal or social. And I think black and white adds a certain level of abstraction.”<sup>6</sup>*

## < JAMES CASEBERE LANDSCAPE, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME >

Since the mid-1970s James Casebere (b. 1953, Lansing, Michigan) has been carefully constructing architectural models and photographing them, yielding images somewhere between realism and obvious fabrication. His photographs are stripped of color and detail to evoke a sense of emotional place rather than the physicality of a place’s forms. Casebere is interested in the memories and feelings that are brought to mind by the architectural spaces he represents. The resulting works are dramatic, surreal, and remarkably true to life, embracing qualities of photography, architecture, and sculpture.

His tabletop models imitate the appearance of architectural institutions (home, school, library, prison) or common sites (tunnel, corridor, archway), representing the structures that occupy our everyday world. These models, made from such featureless materials as Foamcore, museum board, plaster, and Styrofoam, remain empty of detail and human figures. It is only when Casebere casts light on

their bland surfaces and spartan interiors that the models are transformed. By eliminating the details, and taking advantage of dramatic lighting effects and the camera’s ability to flatten space, Casebere is able to transform familiar domestic spaces to find the extraordinary in the everyday. He asks viewers to rely on their memory to fill in the gaps and to create a context in which to understand his images.

Casebere stages his photographs to construct realities inspired by contemporary American visual culture that blur the line between fiction and fact. In this way, his images suggest psychologically charged spaces and have an otherworldly quality. The notion that these may be actual places seems plausible, but the lack of human presence leads us to wonder what has happened here. The viewer may imagine a human story within the abandoned spaces. Without people or color, the photographs are about our own associations with these spaces and what they may represent.

James Casebere, *Garage*, 2003. Chromogenic print, face-mounted to acrylic, 181.6 x 223.5 cm, edition 2/5. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Anonymous gift, 2005.1



# VIEW + DISCUSS

Before showing *Garage*, ask students to imagine what an artwork titled *Garage* might look like. Have them get a clear picture of it in their mind. Create a list of things they might expect to find in a photograph with this title.

Show: *Garage*, 2003

- ▶ What do you notice?
- ▶ How is this image similar to or different from what you imagined?
- ▶ Describe the mood of this photograph. How has Casebere conveyed that mood?
- ▶ To create this work, Casebere did not photograph the interior of an actual garage. Instead he built a tabletop model, decided on the lighting and point of view, and then photographed it. Examine the image carefully. What clues can you detect to confirm that this is not an actual garage but rather a carefully constructed model?
- ▶ Why might an artist decide to work in this way? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

### EXPLORATIONS

- More of James Casebere's work is available at the artist's Web site at [www.jamescasebere.com](http://www.jamescasebere.com). After you have gotten a sense of the breadth of his work, experiment with his approach to photography by creating an architectural model out of simple materials and then photographing it with a digital camera to make it appear to be an actual structure. Once you have completed your photograph, consider what parts you are pleased with and what parts were difficult. What you would do differently if you were to attempt this approach again? How did trying out this method of working alter your thinking about Casebere's work?
- Casebere's work has focused on various types of structures, from generic stairways, hallways, and windows to historic sites including the Acropolis in Greece and Thomas Jefferson's home, Monticello. What architectural structure(s) do you think would be interesting to investigate? Why is that particular structure of interest to you?

"I taught myself to use a camera—it's not very difficult to use a camera, but I never bothered looking at any textbooks on how to make a picture. I had a much more casual relation to it. For me at the time it was much more about the process rather than the results."<sup>7</sup>

## < GILLIAN WEARING TRAUMA AND THE UNCANNY >

Photography has not only profoundly impacted our understanding of historical events, it has also changed the way we remember our personal histories. Beginning at birth, all aspects of our lives are recorded as images alongside our own experiences of them. These parallel recording devices, the camera and personal memory, produce alternate realities that may sometimes be synchronized but at other times are askew.

Gillian Wearing (b. 1963, Birmingham, England) uses masks as a central theme in her videos and photographs. The masks, which range from literal disguises to voice dubbing, conceal the identities of her subjects and free them to reveal intimate secrets. For her 2003 series of photographs *Album*, Wearing used this strategy to create an autobiographical work. Donning silicon prosthetics, she carefully reconstructed old family snapshots, transforming herself into her mother, father, uncle, and brother as young adults or adolescents. In one of the works, Wearing recreated her own self-portrait as a teenager—and in fact the artist considers all the photographs in this series as self-portraits. She explains: "I was interested in the idea of being genetically connected to someone but being

very different. There is something of me, literally, in all those people—we are connected, but we are each very different."<sup>8</sup>

To make the *Album* series, Wearing collaborated with a talented team (some of whom have worked for Madame Tussaud's wax works) who sculpted, cast, painted, and applied hair to create the masks, wigs, and body suits used in these photographs. The elaborate disguises the artist wears, when combined with the snapshot "realism" of the original images on which they are based, create an eerie fascination that serves to reveal aspects of her identity rather than conceal it.

*Self-Portrait at Three Years Old* (2004) carries this role-playing further back in time. Confronting the viewer with her adult gaze through the eyeholes of the toddler's mask, Wearing plays on the rift between interior and exterior and raises a multitude of provocative questions about identity, memory, and the truthfulness of the photographic medium. Wearing says, "What I love about photographs is that they give you a lot and also they withhold a lot."<sup>9</sup>



Gillian Wearing, *Self-Portrait at Three Years Old*, 2004. Chromogenic print, 182 x 122 cm, edition 5/6. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Purchased with funds contributed by the International Director's Council and Executive Committee Members: Ruth Baum, Edythe Broad, Elaine Turner Cooper, Dimitris Daskalopoulos, Harry David, Gail May Engelberg, Shirley Fiterman, Nicki Harris, Dakis Joannou, Rachel Lehmann, Linda Macklowe, Peter Norton, Tonino Perna, Elizabeth Richebourg Rea, Mortimer D. A. Sackler, Simonetta Seragnoli, David Teiger, Ginny Williams, and Elliot K. Wolk, and Sustaining Members: Tiqui Atencio, Linda Fischbach, Beatrice Habermann, Miryam Knutson, and Cargill and Donna MacMillan, with additional funds contributed by the Photography Committee 2004.125

# VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *Self-Portrait at Three Years Old*, 2004

- ▶ Project the image for 10 seconds and then turn off the projector. Ask students what they noticed.
- ▶ Show the image again. This time let students look more carefully and closely examine the photograph. What else do they notice?
- ▶ The artist, Gillian Wearing, made this photograph by recreating a lifelike mask based on a snapshot of herself when she was only three years old. When she donned the mask, her image as a child is combined with the eyes of an adult. How does this information change your understanding of this photograph?
- ▶ Describe the mood of this self-portrait. What might she be thinking or feeling? What about her pose or expression suggests this to you?

## EXPLORATIONS

### FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- Look through photographs of yourself at younger ages. What do you remember about yourself at that age? What things about you have remained the same? What things have changed?
- In her series *Album*, a group of six larger-than-life-size digital prints, Wearing recreated old family photos. Using specially made masks, wigs, body suits, and clothing, the artist transformed herself into various members of her family including her father, mother, sister, and brother. Also included is an image of Wearing herself, not as she looks today but as a teenager. In each case, the artist's eyes are the only evidence of her actual adult features. She considers all of these works to be self-portraits. How could that be the case? In what ways are you similar to your family members? In what ways are you unique?
- Both Wearing and Cindy Sherman (whose work is also included in this guide) use the element of disguise in their work. Whereas Sherman transforms herself using makeup, wigs, and costumes, Wearing creates a mask to link her to her younger self. Compare and contrast these two approaches. Which do you find most interesting? Why?

*“Violence used to be part of life in America and had a positive reputation. . . . There was a kind of righteousness about violence—the break with England, fighting for our rights, the Boston Tea Party. Now, in our culture, there is one official social norm—and acts of violence, expressions of dissatisfaction are framed in atomized view as being ‘abnormal.’”<sup>10</sup>*

## ◀ CADY NOLAND DEATH, PUBLICITY, AND POLITICS ▶

Since the early 1960s, artists have delved into the media culture that has become an integral part of everyday life. Artist Cady Noland (b. 1956, Washington, D.C.) focuses on media stories that challenge the promise of the American Dream. She addresses what she sees as America’s anxiety over the country’s failed pledge of freedom, security, and success for all. Her work looks at aspects of the dark side of the American psyche, including our fascination with violence, celebrity, and abnormality. She incorporates press photographs, newspaper copy, and advertisements to comment on a culture in which the media and corporate interests distort events and objectify people. The anxious America that Noland depicts developed in part in the wake of the Vietnam War, the Kennedy assassinations, the brutal treatment of protestors at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, and Watergate—events that threatened the country’s image as a united, just, and invincible society.

Noland has devoted many works to antiheroes. In 1974, 19-year-old media heiress Patricia Hearst was kidnapped from her Berkeley, California, apartment by members of the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), a left-wing guerilla group. Several months later, Hearst publicly announced that she had become a member of the SLA, and soon thereafter she was photographed wielding a semi-automatic rifle while taking part in a bank robbery in San Francisco.

Cady Noland’s *SLA #4* features a torn newspaper photograph of Patty Hearst and members of the SLA—her “kidnappers” and later comrades—standing in front of the group’s symbol, a seven-headed cobra. The clipping has been enlarged, distorted, and silkscreened onto a sheet of aluminium. Silkscreen is a process associated with mass production and consumption, and by using it, Noland asks the viewer to look closely at the media and to question the power it holds over the American public. She emphasizes the complicated nature of the situation by using polished aluminium as the ground for the work, so that the viewer faces his or her own reflection alongside the image of Hearst and the SLA, forcing one to see oneself as implicated in the situation.

Noland examines American culture, focusing on the public’s interest in violence and the mass media’s transformation of criminals into celebrities. For Noland, this perverted process is a symptom of how American culture objectifies individuals for purposes of mass amusement.



Cady Noland, *SLA #4*, 1990. Screenprint on aluminum, 199 x 153.9 x 1 cm, edition 4/4. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift, Noah Garson and Ronald Schwartz 99.5276

# VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *SLA #4*, 1990

- ▶ What do you notice? Create two lists. On the first, list all the things that you can identify. On the second, include all the things that are puzzling or difficult to decipher about this work. Which list is longer? What questions do you have?
- ▶ In order to understand this work, it is helpful to know something about the event that Noland is referencing. Television news reports following the 1974 story of Patty Hearst's abduction are archived at [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/32089504/ns/dateline\\_nbc-newsmakers/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/32089504/ns/dateline_nbc-newsmakers/). Hearst's kidnapping and the events that followed became a major news story and commanded the attention of the America people. Why do you think this story was so compelling?
- ▶ Now that you know more about the events that this work alludes to, what questions from your lists can you answer? Which are still puzzling?

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- Cady Noland's work has focused on other events rooted in the 1960s and '70s that forced Americans to consider the discrepancy between the professed and actual values of their society, including:
  - the Vietnam War era (1964–75)
  - the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Lee Harvey Oswald (1963)
  - the brutal treatment of protestors at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago
  - the Watergate scandal (1972–74)

Research one of these episodes and report on how it challenged the ideals of the nation.

- *SLA #4* focuses on events that happened in 1974. In the ensuing decades, media influence has grown exponentially. What current event has challenged your previously held beliefs and made you reevaluate your assumptions? Write an essay about that media story and what about it made you question your own beliefs.
- Read Noland's quote at the top of the previous page. Do you believe there are times when violence is justified, even positive, or do you believe that resorting to violence is always negative? Debate this subject in class, with students gathering support for one side of the issue or the other.

## RESOURCES

### GENERAL

Blessing, Jennifer and Nat Trotman. *Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance*. New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2010.

Spector, Nancy, ed. *Guggenheim Museum Collection A to Z*, 3rd rev. edition. New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2009.

### APPROPRIATION AND THE ARCHIVE

#### CINDY SHERMAN

Morris, Catherine. *The Essential Cindy Sherman*. New York: Wonderland Press/Harry N. Abrams, 1999.

Krauss, Rosalind E. *Cindy Sherman, 1975–1993*. New York: Rizzoli, 1993.

Sollins, Susan and Susan Dowling. *Art: 21—Art in the 21st Century*, Season Five. Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2009.

### DOCUMENTATION AND REITERATION

#### CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI

Semin, Didier, Tamar Garb, and Donald Kuspit. *Christian Boltanski*. London: Phaidon Press, 1997.

Boltanski, Christian, and Catherine Grenier. Foreword by Luc Sante. *The Possible Life of Christian Boltanski*. Boston: MFA Publications, 2009.

### LANDSCAPE, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME

#### JAMES CASEBERE

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### TRAUMA AND THE UNCANNY

#### GILLIAN WEARING

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### DEATH, PUBLICITY, AND POLITICS

#### CADY NOLAND

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## NOTES

1. Cindy Sherman quoted in Monique Beudert and Sean Rainbird, eds., *Contemporary Art: The Janet Wolfson de Botton Gift* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1998), p. 99.
2. "Tamar Garb in conversation with Christian Boltanski," in *Christian Boltanski* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), p. 24.
3. Quoted in "Christian Boltanski: Lessons of Darkness," [http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/204/christian\\_boltanski\\_lessons\\_of\\_darkness](http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/204/christian_boltanski_lessons_of_darkness) (accessed January 25, 2010).
4. "Tamar Garb in conversation with Christian Boltanski," p. 19.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
6. Roberto Juarez, "James Casebere," *Bomb* 77 (fall 2001), <http://www.bombsite.com/issues/77/articles/2422> (accessed January 25, 2010).
7. "Gillian Wearing" (interview by Leo Edelstein), *Journal of Contemporary Art*, <http://www.jca-online.com/wearing.html> (accessed January 25, 2010).
8. Quoted in Jennifer Bayles, "Acquisitions: Gillian Wearing," Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, [http://www.albrightknox.org/acquisitions/acq\\_2004/Wearing.html](http://www.albrightknox.org/acquisitions/acq_2004/Wearing.html) (accessed January 25, 2010).
9. Sebastian Smee, "Gillian Wearing: The art of the matter," *The Independent* (London), October 18, 2003, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/gillian-wearing-the-art-of-the-matter-583706.html> (accessed January 25, 2010).
10. "Cady Noland" (interview by Michèle Cone), *Journal of Contemporary Art*, <http://www.jca-online.com/noland.html> (accessed January 25, 2010).

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## VOCABULARY

**APPROPRIATION:** The concept of taking possession of existing material, imagery, or techniques from everyday life, popular culture, or past traditions and reusing it in a context that differs from its original one.

**INSTALLATION:** An artwork designed for a specific gallery space. Its components are to be viewed as a single work of art.

**GELATIN SILVER PRINT:** A general term describing the most common way of making black-and-white photographs since the

1890s. Gelatin, an animal protein, is used to bind light-sensitive silver to paper or another support. Gelatin silver prints replaced albumen prints as the most popular photographic process because they were more stable, resisted yellowing, and were easier to make.

**SILKSCREEN:** A stencil process in which ink is forced through a silk or organdy screen onto the material to be printed.