THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS RETROSPECTIVE OF DOUGLAS GORDON

First Solo New York Museum Exhibition by Scottish Artist

DOUGLAS GORDON: TIMELINE

June 11–September 4, 2006

The International Council Gallery (6th floor)
The Yoshio and Akio Morita Media Gallery (2nd floor)

NEW YORK, June 6, 2006—The Museum of Modern Art presents a mid-career exhibition of the work of Douglas Gordon, a conceptual artist who alters and challenges viewers' common perception of time and the moving image. The artist's first solo New York museum exhibition, ***Douglas Gordon: Timeline***, focuses on moving image and textual works, including works that Gordon filmed himself, feature films manipulated by Gordon through a range of editing processes, and works conceived by Gordon as an exploration of our understanding of time. Presented June 11–September 4, 2006, the exhibition is organized by Klaus Biesenbach, Curator, Department of Film and Media, The Museum of Modern Art, and Chief Curator, P.S.1. Contemporary Art Center.

Through his work in video, film, photography, and sculpture, Gordon (Scottish, b. 1966) explores universal dualities such as life and death, good and evil, and female and male. His works, many of which are self-referential or of a personal nature, examine opposites, often using his skin as the canvas or his body parts as the subject. *Douglas Gordon: Timeline* addresses these themes with a focus on issues of spatial and temporal dynamics. Among the works featured are several major installations in which Gordon has reinterpreted feature films to create new works that take on a sculptural form when presented in a gallery space.

"Gordon frequently uses his own biography and body as points of origin in his extensive artistic practice, which includes video, photography, text, and sculpture," says Mr. Biesenbach. "He pairs personal references with allusions to popular culture in an ongoing examination of collective memory and shared visual knowledge. By using the formal techniques of slowing down, splitting, doubling, and mirroring, he creates a complex universe in which the personal is balanced with the historical, memory with imagination, and fiction with reality."

The exhibition is presented in two galleries. The second-floor Yoshio and Akio Morita Media Gallery is devoted to a single installation: *Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)* (1997) while among the highlights in The International Council Gallery on the sixth floor are Gordon's *M: FUTILE FEAR* (2006), on view here for the first time, his landmark *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), *left is right and right is wrong and left is wrong and right is right* (1999), and *Play Dead; Real Time* (2003).

In *M: FUTILE FEAR*, the most recent work in the exhibition, Gordon appropriates his own movie *Feature Film* (1999). In that original movie which he uses as material for this new three-channel installation, Gordon filmed the conductor James Conlon with the orchestra of the Paris National Opera, conducting Bernard Herrmann's score to Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). Gordon's camera concentrates on extreme close-ups of Conlon's hands, arms, eyes, and other parts of his upper body, as he conducts. The image on the center screen is mirrored on the left and right screens by the very same image, but projected upside down—only the center image is oriented conventionally. The three separate images are generated from the original, single source and synchronized with a single soundtrack.

Play Dead; Real Time, a work filmed by Gordon, features a trained circus elephant in a large, white-walled gallery space dropping to the floor on command and, as its title infers, remaining still. Two perpendicular screens, each 11.5 feet high, feature life-size projections of the elephant in motion. A monitor in the same space focuses on the animal's eye, following a motif that recurs throughout this exhibition—the observer and the observed. Gordon's camera circles the animal as it falls to the ground, rolls over, rises to its feet, and repeats the action.

Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* consists of an installation of Alfred Hitchcock's thriller *Psycho* (1960) projected at a slow speed onto a translucent, free-standing screen so that the 109-minute film plays in its entirety over a 24-hour period. Due to the slow rate of projection the image appears to tremble on screen. In Gordon's double projection *left is right and right is wrong and left is wrong and right is right* (1999), the artist again distills the moving image to its essence and digitally separates *Whirlpool* (1949), Otto Preminger's thriller dealing with kleptomania and murder, into odd and even frames and projects a set of each as adjacent images. The image on the left is in its original orientation, while on the right it appears in a mirrored version. With the linear sequence of the film both halved and mirrored, an internal dialogue appears to take place.

Gordon also explores religious and moral opposites in his work. *Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)*, one of the few works in this exhibition with an audio component, blends Gordon's manipulation of time with another overarching theme in his work: the conflict between good and evil. *Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)*, recently acquired by the Museum, is a simultaneous projection onto both sides of a translucent screen of two feature films: Henry King's *Song of Bernadette* (1954) and William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1974). The superimposed films present several captivating and unsettling images in which Jennifer Jones as pious Bernadette is juxtaposed with the possessed Regan, played by Linda Blair. This composite work also features both soundtracks set at the same volume, allowing viewers to follow one or both films at once. Because the films are of differing length (at 156 minutes, *Bernadette* is 34 minutes longer) no pair of superimposed images will ever recur during a single day.

Throughout his career, Gordon has presented opposites through the vehicle of his own body, often filming his arms, hands, fingers, and feet. *Blue* (1998) is a single-channel installation showing only the artist's forearms and hands in the frame. Gordon's hands and fingers feign

copulation, with each hand having distinctly male or female characteristics. *Scratch Hither* (2002) is another one of several single-channel works in which the artist films his hands performing a repetitive action: beckoning the viewer with a "come this way" motion of the index finger.

30 Seconds Text (1996) explores the period of neural reaction of the human brain immediately after death. In the installation, a sheet of white text on a black background is illuminated by a single light bulb suspended nearby. The text is a first-person account of the results of a test carried out by a French doctor on a guillotined head. The bulb is extinguished after 30 seconds, the length of time that the physician says he elicited reactions from the head.

In contrast to the monumental work *Play Dead; Real Time*, which features an elephant, the last work in the exhibition, *B-Movie* (1995) shows a fly struggling for its life. In this single-channel installation, Gordon involves the viewer in an ongoing process of empathy and detachment, observing and being observed, and creates a strong resonance of the physicality of time and space.

In three threshold-like locations on the sixth floor, the interim space between one installation and the next is announced by a pair of narrow floor-to-ceiling mirrors installed opposite each other. These continue the themes of split and double, allow views into non-existing areas, and create reflections and dualities allowing the viewer to explore the exhibition in yet another unexpected perspective.

Publication
Douglas Gordon: Timeline, by Klaus Biesenbach, focuses on Gordon's visualization of time. It is an extended meditation on the interwoven themes of film, psychoanalysis, and cultural and global events, and on the way in which all of these have affected the idea of individual biography. Available at the MoMA stores. Hardcover: $55; members: $49.50.

Programs
Mr. Biesenbach presents a lecture in conjunction with the exhibition. Saturday, June 10, 7:00 p.m., Titus 1 Theater.
Mr. Gordon will participate with artist/musicians Chicks On Speed at a PopRally performance Saturday, June 24, 8:00–10:30 p.m., Sculpture Garden.

Sponsorship
The exhibition is supported in part by Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley. The accompanying publication is made possible by The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Travel
The exhibition will travel to the Malba-Colección Costantini/Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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