

WHITNEY

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Press Release

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RETROSPECTIVE OF PIONEERING ARTIST DAN GRAHAM TO BE PRESENTED AT WHITNEY, JUNE 25-OCTOBER 11, 2009



Dan Graham performing *Performer/Audience/Mirror* at P.S.1 Institute for Contemporary Art, Long Island City, NY, 1977. Photo courtesy of the artist.

NEW YORK, March 26, 2009 -- Dan Graham, one of the pioneering figures of contemporary art, is the subject of a landmark retrospective opening at the Whitney Museum of American Art on June 25. *Dan Graham: Beyond* is the first-ever comprehensive museum survey of Graham's career to be done in the United States. The show is co-curated by Chrissie Iles, the Whitney's Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Curator, and Bennett Simpson, MOCA associate curator. Organized by The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in collaboration with the Whitney, it examines Graham's extensive body of work in photographs, film and video, architectural models, indoor and outdoor pavilions, conceptual projects for magazine pages, drawings, prints, and writings.

Dan Graham: Beyond is the latest in a trio of collaborations between the Whitney and MOCA, following *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure* and *Lawrence Weiner: As Far As the Eye Can See*, celebrating the work of three major figures in American art, each of whom emerged in the 1960s. Following its presentation at the Whitney from June 25 to October 11, 2009, the Graham exhibition travels to the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, from October 31, 2009 to January 31, 2010.

Graham (b. 1942) has been a central participant in the development of contemporary art since the 1960s—from the rise of minimalism, conceptual art, video art, and performance art, to explorations of architecture and the public sphere, to collaborations with musicians and the culture of rock and roll. This exhibition traces the evolution of Graham's work through each of its major stages, exploring his principal motifs and concerns, among them his key theme: the changing relationship of the individual to society, as filtered through American mass media and architecture.

Graham was born in Urbana, Illinois, and grew up in suburban New Jersey, a landscape that served as the inspiration for one of his earliest projects, *Homes for America* (1966–67). While riding the train back from New York City to his parents' house in New Jersey, Graham took numerous photographs of the tract housing he passed, using a Kodak Instamatic camera. Reveling in the repetition, mass production, and reductive logic of this landscape, these images echoed many of the central concerns of minimalism and led Graham to conceive of his work as a "structure of information." Presented as a slide show as well as a magazine layout incorporating text, *Homes for America* is now regarded as one of the seminal artworks of the 1960s. It announced a conception of art grounded in the everyday—in common architecture, in the language of advertising, and made with cheap, disposable tools for mass circulation—and it merged Graham's interest in cultural commentary with art's most advanced visual modes.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Graham was also at the forefront of a move by many artists into performance, film, and video. In 1969, he began a series of time-based works, first in film and performance, later in video, that were inspired by the perceptual conditions—feedback, looping, delay—accompanying these modes of art experience. The most culturally profound invention of the postwar era, television, had made an enormous impact on Graham's generation, and at the heart of his new work was an investigation of the performer-audience relationship as it was filtered and distorted by the technology of

the camera. In films like *Roll* (1970) and *Body Press* (1970–72), Graham second-guessed the supposed objectivity of the camera by giving the device to actors who performed simple movements (rolling across the floor, circling one another).

At the same time, Graham became closely involved with underground music, writing a series of free-ranging, yet serious speculations on bands like the Kinks, the Fall, and the Sex Pistols. The attempt to shake off social control—to break free of the ideological norms of postwar life—resonated with the artist's own work in conceptual and media art. One of Graham's signature works, *Rock My Religion* (1982–84), is an hour-long "video-essay" in which Graham traced a continuum between the Shakers, the early-American religious sect that sought spiritual transcendence through collective dance and song, and rock music. In the latter's cathartic sounds and social rites, Graham located an ongoing, if latent, spirit of separatism that has demarcated American culture from its origins. With its bracing footage of Patti Smith, Sonic Youth, and Black Flag, mingled with historical images of a rapt Ann Lee, the founder of the Shaker religion, the work is a classic of underground video and one of the most penetrating commentaries on American youth culture ever made.

For the past two decades, while continuing to make work in numerous media, Graham has been particularly involved with the creation of architectural installations that he refers to as "pavilions." Extending Graham's longtime interest in architecture – and, in particular in transparency and mirrors – these pavilions are created of glass and steel and are simply shaped structures with varying degrees of translucency. Some pavilions invite viewers to enter inside, exploring notions of permeability, reflection, and disorientation. Within *Triangular Solid with Circular Inserts*, for instance, viewers see their own reflections and the vague outline of people outside. Graham continues his work with performance and photography as well as creating site-specific pavilions throughout the world; the exhibition also includes some of the artist's most recent photographic work.

For more than 40 years, Dan Graham has been at the center of the most vital revolutions in American art and culture. His works can be seen as complex analyses layered with critical reference, anarchistic humor, and an appeal to the broader culture. Resonating with a general attempt of the 1960s to leave the safety of high culture by going into the field—whether that of suburban sprawl, urban planning, or rock and roll—Graham's art invites the engaged participation of the viewer and, at its core, attempts a physical and philosophical intervention in the public realm.

About the Artist

Dan Graham has had numerous solo exhibitions throughout North America, Europe, Japan, and Australia, including *Dan Graham* (1998) at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, Spain; and *Dan Graham: Works 1965–2000* (2001), a major retrospective organized by the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto, Portugal. His group exhibitions have included *Information* (1970), The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Documenta (1972, 1977, 1982, and 1992), Kassel, Germany; the Venice Biennale (1976 and 2003); the Whitney Biennial (1997 and 2005), New York; *1965–1975: Reconsidering the Object of Art* (1995), The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA); *A Minimal Future?: Art as Object 1958–1968* (2004), MOCA; and *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c. 1970* (2005), Tate Modern, London. Graham is also a widely published critical and cultural commentator. His essays and articles—touching widely on topics ranging from Gestalt psychology to Dean Martin—testify to one of the most prescient voices of his time, one whose mode of cultural observation is influenced by French philosophy, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud. Graham lives and works in New York.

Catalogue

Dan Graham: Beyond, a comprehensive volume, accompanies the exhibition; it uses a magazine format in recognition of the artist's early work in that medium. Designed by Michael Worthington and co-published by MIT Press, the publication includes essays by exhibition co-curators Chrissie Iles and Bennett Simpson, along with essays by Rhea Anastas, Beatriz Colomina, Mark Francis, Alexandra Midal, Mark von Schlegell, and Philippe Vergne; and interviews with Dan Graham by musician Kim Gordon, artist Rodney Graham, and artist Nicolás Guagnini. There is also a biographically inclined manga by Fumihiko Nonomura and Ken Tanimoto. Graham's own well-known writings—on his own work, that of his peers, and aspects of popular culture such as design—are also featured in a special section, highlighting his accomplishments as a critic.

Public Programs for *Dan Graham: Beyond*

Artist-curator Howie Chen is organizing a series of Whitney programs in conjunction with *Dan Graham: Beyond*. Taking the exhibition as a point of departure, Chen looks to musicians and artists for an imaginative approach to Graham's work. Programs include: a music event to kick off the series; the U.S. premiere of "Put Blood in the Music" (1989), an experimental documentary on the late-nineties New York downtown music scene, introduced by filmmaker Charles Atlas; a conversation between Dan Graham and Glenn Branca, followed by

a screening of Graham's "Westkunst (Modern Period): Dan Graham Segment" (1980); and a roundtable discussion exploring key themes in the work, such as sound, perception, and performance.

Whitney Live Performances for *Dan Graham: Beyond*, Four Friday Evenings in July

Fun and raucous rock concerts in the Whitney's Lower Gallery are being scheduled on four successive summer Friday evenings, **July 10, 17, 24, and 31 at 7pm**. These events feature young bands that have inherited the New York rock scene from bands that Dan Graham has written about and/or worked with, such as The Feelies, Television, and Sonic Youth. As always, admission to the Whitney on Friday evenings is pay-what-you-wish from 6 to 9pm.

Dan Graham: Beyond is organized by The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in collaboration with the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

The exhibition is made possible by generous support from Marian Goodman Gallery, The MOCA Contemporaries, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, John Morace and Tom Kennedy, Bagley and Virginia Wright, and Marieluisse Hessel.

Additional support for the Whitney's presentation is provided by Eileen and Michael Cohen.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th- and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is regarded as the preeminent collection of American art and includes major works and materials from the estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in America today. First housed on West 8th Street, the Whitney relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and in 1966 inaugurated its present home at 945 Madison Avenue, designed by Marcel Breuer. The Whitney is currently moving ahead with plans to build a second facility, designed by Renzo Piano, located in downtown New York at the entrance to the High Line in the Meatpacking District.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art:

Alex Bag	Through April 12, 2009
Synthetic	Through April 19, 2009
Sites	Through May 3, 2009
Artists Making Photographs	Through May 17, 2009
Jenny Holzer	Through May 31, 2009
Sadie Benning	Opens April 22, 2009
Photoconceptualism, 1966-73	Opens May 22, 2009
Dan Graham: Beyond	Opens June 25, 2009
Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction	September 17, 2009-January 17, 2010
Roni Horn aka Roni Horn	November 6, 2009-January 24, 2010
Alice Guy Blaché: Cinema Pioneer	November 6, 2009-January 24, 2010

The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission is \$15 for adults; Members, children (ages 11 and under), and New York City public high school students free. Senior citizens (62 and over) and students with valid ID: \$10. There is a \$6 admission fee for a pass to the Kaufman Astoria Studios Film & Video Gallery only. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6-9 pm. For information, please call 212-570-3600 or visit whitney.org