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Atomic Afterimage: Cold War Imagery in Contemporary Art

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ATOMIC AFTERIMAGE

COLD WAR IMAGERY IN CONTEMPORARY ART

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

Boston University Art Gallery



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COLD WAR IMAGERY IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Exhibition and Catalogue
By Keely Orgeman

Boston University Art Gallery
September 4–November 2, 2008

On the Cover: Trevor Paglen, *Surveillance Site/Bald Mountain, NV/Distance-24 miles/5:56pm*, 2005, C-Print, 20 x 20 in.,
© Trevor Paglen, *Courtesy of the Artist and Bellwether, New York*

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The Boston University Art Gallery (BUAG) is delighted to present *Atomic Afterimage: Cold War Imagery in Contemporary Art*. For much of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, depictions of atomic weapons testing have both fascinated and haunted citizens around the world, especially in the United States. This exhibition and accompanying catalogue explore the diverse ways that contemporary artists have reinterpreted Cold War images of “the bomb.” As part of BUAG’s ongoing commitment to collaborate with graduate students in Boston University’s Art History program, we were delighted to work with Keely Orgeman, the Jan and Warren Adelson Curatorial Fellow in American Art and a doctoral student in art history, as curator of this exhibition. In addition, we are grateful to Patricia Hills, Boston University Professor of Art History, for her contributions to this project, including the foreword to this catalogue.

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Marc Mitchell
Director ad interim
Boston University Art Gallery

FOREWORD

ATOMIC IMAGERY IN CONTEXT

By Patricia Hills, Professor of Art History, Boston University

Atomic Afterimage will always be a timely exhibition as long as nuclear devastation and annihilation remains a potential scenario for the twenty-first century. As we know, the atomic bomb—and its offspring, the hydrogen bomb, the neutron bomb, and the “dirty bomb”—is the premier weapon of mass destruction stockpiled by nations to use against other nations. Although concerns within the United States have shifted to the more immediate threat of terrorist attacks or the long-term consequences of global warming, atomic destruction still hovers in the national imagination.

In the mid-twentieth century atomic attack emerged suddenly as a real, palpable threat. At war with Japan, the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, followed by another on Nagasaki on August 9. The immediate consequence was Japan's surrender. But was it worth it? Did the United States really have to drop the bomb on Japan? Weren't the Japanese already defeated? These questions remain hotly debated today.¹

Another consequence, however, was the realization that there existed an ultimate weapon. Jolting the world were photographs of the horror of the devastation, of the epicenters of the cities wiped out, as well as the heartrending stories of stricken people and statistics on property damage. John Hersey makes vivid the cumulative destruction with his account, *Hiroshima*, first published on August 31, 1946, in *The New Yorker*.² Hersey follows the lives of six people living near the epicenter of the Hiroshima blast, and incorporates their descriptions of events into his narrative. He speaks of the “noiseless flash” and “the silence in the grove by the river, where hundreds of gruesomely wounded suffered together.” He makes horrifyingly graphic the “faces . . . almost blotted out by flash burns” and “the great burns . . . yellow at first, then red and swollen, with the skin sloughed off, and finally, in the evening, suppurated and smelly.”³ What artist could represent the horror, the unrepresentable? Philip Evergood tried when he painted *Renunciation*, 1946 (Private Collection, Brooklyn, NY), an image of a mushroom cloud bursting above the rubble of buildings, with ships tossing in the air while apes frolic or read books in the foreground.⁴ Evergood's message seems to be: as civilization collapses, only beings less than human will survive and take control.

When the government tested another bomb at Bikini Atoll in 1946, *Fortune* magazine sent artist Ralston Crawford to record the event.⁵ Crawford's abstract paintings captured the jolting experience of the shock waves and the instantaneous destruction of property through jagged forms and color dissonances, but he removed people from his equation. Possible long-range health problems for people within the site area seemed insignificant to the government's master plan. The United States had proven to the world that it was in control, and that it had bigger and better bombs to deploy against its enemy, the Soviet Union. To many, human annihilation became abstract—too

horrible to contemplate and imagine.⁶ In their book, *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (1977), historians Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak assess the effects of the bomb on the daily lives of Americans: "The psychic consequences were great. Americans in general felt powerless, helpless, nervous. Many other factors had contributed to these emotions: the Red Scare, the spread of corporate bureaucracy into daily life, mass conformity. But the nuclear threat motivating the Cold War was the medium helping these factors succeed. Americans were manipulated by and through the bomb."⁷

Indeed, the Cold War was in full swing. During the late 1940s and 1950s few artists dared express their fears of nuclear annihilation directly and overtly in art, although many figurative artists displaced their anger and alienation by presenting the contemporary situation abstractly, as an expression of "the human condition," with abject and crippled men and grotesque faces presented as the norm.⁸

The Beat poets, on the other hand, were not afraid to be more explicit. Allen Ginsberg shocked the establishment when he read his poem "Howl," a lament against conformity, at a poetry reading in an alternative San Francisco art gallery on October 13, 1955. When City Lights Bookstore published his poems the following year, the vice squad moved in. In the poem "America," published along with "Howl," Ginsberg asked when "the human war" would end. Instead of answering his own question, he spat out the expletive: "Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb."⁹ Bruce Conner, a young artist living in the San Francisco area, knew the Beats, shared their antiestablishment ethos, and became preoccupied with the image of the bomb, as we see in this exhibition.

During the 1980s there was a resurgence of atomic bomb imagery. The Cold War was dragging on, and the US and USSR were still at a standoff. Ostentatious consumption by the wealthy during the Reagan years, in contrast with the visible sight of the homeless on city streets, seemed to define the decade, but behind it was the lingering fear of the bomb. Independent curator Nina Felshin noted this and organized an exhibition, *Disarming Images: Art for Nuclear Disarmament*, which opened in New York in 1983 and traveled throughout the country from 1984 to 1986. Her selection of the works by forty-four artists reflected her view that: "As we approach the middle of the decade it is becoming increasingly clear that the consciousness of the '80s is being shaped by the threat of nuclear war." To bolster her assertion, Felshin quotes artist Robert Morris (1983): "It's out there, the possibility. . . Every day you can find something in the news that reminds you it's there. How can you not think of it?"¹⁰

When the Boston University Art Gallery mounted the exhibition *Social Concern in the '80s: A New England Perspective* in February 1984, it included twenty-five artists, of whom four (Donald Desmett, Alex Grey, Suzanne Hodes, and Sarah Sutro) presented art that related to nuclear destruction.¹¹ Grey's painting *Nuclear Crucifixion*, 1980, represents a Grünewald-like Christ, with arms outstretched, hanging against the mushroom cloud of a cross. Measuring 10 ½ by 9 ½ feet, the painting dominated the show, then went on the road with Felshin's exhibition.

When the 1980s ended, so did the Cold War. On November 9, 1989, thousands of East Germans burst through into West Berlin at the checkpoint at Bornholmer Strasse, heralding the beginning of the end of the Soviet bloc. Events moved quickly, and on December 2, President George Bush and President Mikhail Gorbachev declared the "official end" of the Cold War.

Since then, one might think atomic imagery would phase out in the work of artists. But as Keely Orgeman shows in the exhibition *Atomic Afterimage*, that is not the case. Not only has Bruce Conner continued to dwell on the mushroom cloud as a metaphor and as a reality, but so, too, have the eight other artists: Joy Garnett, Vincent Johnson, Robert Longo, Richard Misrach, Trevor Paglen, and the collaborative team of Anthony Dunne, Fiona Raby, and Michael Anastassiades. The fear of an atomic attack is ever-present as, increasingly, nations acquire the technology and raw materials to manufacture nuclear warheads. Our anxieties are only heightened by our knowledge that stockpiled atomic missiles missing from their previously guarded silos in the former USSR can fall (and perhaps already have fallen) into the hands of independent military groups. Moreover, the long-term effects of nuclear testing in the deserts of the United States, accidents at sites like Three Mile Island in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1979, as well as the secrecy that prevents disclosure of the facts remain troubling reminders of the unfathomable power of atomic fission. Meanwhile, the terrible and sublime beauty of that persistent mushroom cloud reminds us that all is not well.

1. During 1994 and 1995, controversy arose over the interpretative materials connected to the exhibition proposed for the Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC, marking the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Called the Enola Gay controversy, the key issue was how many US lives were saved by the bombing. See Steven C. Dubin, *Displays of Power: Memory and Amnesia in the American Museum* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), Chap. 6.
2. John Hersey, "Hiroshima," *The New Yorker* 22, no. 29 (August 31, 1946).
3. *Ibid.*, 15, 25, 25, 28.
4. Reproduced in John I. H. Baur, *Philip Evergood* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1975), plate 81.
5. Crawford's paintings were published in *Fortune*, December 1946.

6. One artist who did not think nuclear devastation too abstract was Ben Shahn. When the US tested a hydrogen bomb in March 1954, again near the Bikini atoll, a Japanese fishing boat called the *Lucky Dragon* was within the path of fallout. The crew suffered radiation sickness and one died. As the result of a commission from *Harper's*, Shahn made a series of fourteen paintings, many of which were shown at the Downtown Gallery, New York, in 1961 as *The Saga of the Lucky Dragon*. The pictures focused on the people affected and symbols of their endurance. See Susan Chevlowe, "A Bull in a China Shop: An Introduction to Ben Shahn," in Chevlowe, *Common Man, Mythic Vision: The Paintings of Ben Shahn* (New York: The Jewish Museum and Princeton University Press, 1999), 27-30.
7. Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak, *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 60.
8. This imagery peaked in the *New Images of Man* exhibition, curated by Peter Selz, held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1959.
9. Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems* (San Francisco: City Lights Pocket Bookshop, 1956). "America" is reprinted in its entirety in Patricia Hills, *Modern Art in the USA: Issues and Controversies of the 20th Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001).
10. Both quotations in Nina Felshin, "Disarming Images," in *Disarming Images: Art for Nuclear Disarmament* (New York: Adama Books, 1984), 15. The original source for the Morris quotation is Phil Patton, "Robert Morris and the Fire Next Time," *Art News* (December 1983): 90. The exhibition was organized by Bread and Roses, the cultural project of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, AFL-CIO, and Physicians for Social Responsibility, New York City, and circulated by the Art Museum Association of America.
11. Boston University Art Gallery, *Social Concern in the '80s: A New England Perspective*, intro. by Patricia Hills and essays by the artists (Boston: Boston University Art Gallery, 1984). A twenty-sixth artist, Margia Kramer, pulled out of the exhibition the day of the opening.

TIMELINE OF NUCLEAR EVENTS

1945

On July 16, the US successfully detonates the first atomic bomb in history. Code named *Trinity*, the secret test takes place at Alamogordo Bombing Range in south-central New Mexico.

On August 5 and August 9, President Harry Truman orders atomic bomb strikes on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

1946

Two underwater atomic explosions, called *Operation Crossroads*, commence testing activities at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.

1949

In August, the Soviet Union conducts its first atomic test, *Joe 1*, at the Semipalatinsk Test Site in Kazakhstan.

Longo uses a photograph of this explosion as a source image for Study for Joe, Russian Bomb Test.

1950

An American court convicts Klaus Fuchs, a German-born physicist who worked on the Manhattan Project, of sharing top-secret information on nuclear weapons with the Soviet Union.

The US Atomic Energy Commission purchases land for nuclear testing grounds, known as the Nevada Test Site (NTS).

1951

Nuclear testing at NTS opens with *Operation Ranger*, which includes the detonation of five atomic bombs.

1963

The United States, Soviet Union, and United Kingdom sign the Limited Test Ban Treaty on August 5. All nuclear tests must now be conducted underground.

1970

After ratification by the US and Soviet governments, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty goes into effect. Fifty-nine countries agree to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to permit inspections of nuclear facilities.

By 2008, 153 nations have signed the accord.

1979

A partial-core meltdown of a nuclear reactor at the Three Mile Island plant in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, causes widespread panic about so-called “peaceful” nuclear activities.

1986

An explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukraine leads to thirty-one deaths and injures hundreds of people. Scientists estimate that the unprecedented amount of radioactive fallout from the accident will cause thousands of future deaths.

1987

After a brief moratorium, the Soviet Union recommences nuclear testing. Despite discussing long-range plans with the Soviet Union for a total nuclear-test ban, the US says that it will continue to use explosive, underground testing in the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, US officials express concerns about Pakistan’s nuclear program, which appears to be working toward weapons capability rather than peaceful uses.

Misrach photographs animal pits in the desert.

1989

The US government focuses its efforts on disposing of radioactive nuclear waste. At the end of the year, it abandons plans to create a repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, and intends to find a new location; however, as of 2008, the George W. Bush administration is still pursuing the development of a nuclear waste dump at the Nevada site.

Conner has his idea for BOMBHEAD.

1996

Spearheaded by the five nuclear powers—the United States, Russia, Great Britain, China, and France—the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty outlaws nuclear testing throughout the world.

1998

Violating the worldwide ban, India conducts its first nuclear test since 1974. Pakistan responds days later with a series of underground tests, marking the beginning of a nuclear arms race on the Indian continent. President Bill Clinton imposes economic sanctions on both countries.

Garnett paints Test; Baker; Shockwave, Jeeps; and Forest Shockwave.

2003

North Korea announces that it possesses nuclear weapons and has begun production of weapons-grade plutonium. Unable to verify these claims, the George W. Bush administration also suspects Iran of planning to make nuclear weapons.

BOMBHEAD creates Baker Day: July 25, 1946 and Puff. Longo draws Grable (B) and Untitled-Mike Test (Head of Goya). Light photographs Romeo, Sugar, and Truckee.

2004

Despite holding diplomatic talks, the US fails to curb Iran’s uranium-enrichment activities or North Korea’s nuclear program.

Anastassiades, Dunne, and Raby design “Priscilla, 37 kilotons Nevada, 1957” Huggable Atomic Mushroom.

2005

Satellite photographs of North Korea show apparent preparations for a nuclear weapons test. US officials remain skeptical of the evidence, arguing that the supposed test site might have been staged for American spy satellites. However, North Korea did conduct a nuclear test in 2006.

Paglen creates Surveillance Site/Bald Mountain, NV/Distance-24 miles/5:56 pm.

2008

Moving toward a denuclearization agreement, North Korea turns over documents on its plutonium production to the US but has not yet offered information about uranium enrichment. Both activities could be associated with constructing nuclear weapons.

The International Atomic Energy Agency accuses Iran of engaging in questionable nuclear activities.

Johnson produces A-BOMB; American Cold War Shelter; and London Blitz.

ATOMIC AFTERIMAGE

By Keely Orgeman

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, pictures played a central role in the US government's campaign to raise public awareness—not to mention alarm—about the global race to develop the most powerful nuclear weapon. Photographs of nuclear tests, in particular, became iconic images through publication in mass-circulation American magazines, though the terrible aftermath of these visually striking explosions was not shown. Instead, the blasts' arresting spectacle at once elicited aesthetic contemplation and seemed an aptly grandiose tribute to the Los Alamos scientists' technological achievement. The pictures tugged the observer in both directions: one moment posing as aesthetically compelling images, and the next as scientific documentation. This binary division "haunts photography" in general, according to artist and cultural critic Allan Sekula, who observes that a photograph "stak[es] its claims to cultural value on both the model of truth upheld by empirical science and the model of pleasure and expressiveness offered by romantic aesthetics."¹ That the bomb pictures could provide truth and pleasure, not only because they shared these qualities in common with all photographs but also because their subject matter lent itself to both interpretations, rendered them doubly powerful.

In this exhibition, pictures from the era of aboveground nuclear testing (1945–1962) serve as both subject matter and the source of imagery for contemporary works of art. According to Sekula, aesthetically pleasing photographs have proven vulnerable to manipulation by authoritative powers, which employ beauty to conceal unfavorable messages in a veil of optimism. In the case of nuclear test photographs, the images' beautiful veneer masks the actual explosions' underlying threats of toxic poisoning and annihilation. The government orchestrates this seduction discreetly, allowing the aesthetic qualities to speak for themselves.² Contrary to what one might expect, given this politically charged material, current artistic responses to the ideology of nuclear defense avoid overt signs of activism. Rather, the participants in *Atomic Afterimage* expose governments' deceptive use of nuclear-themed pictures by consciously engaging with the very strategies of secret politics, also known in military jargon as the "black world."³ The artworks presented here tend to exaggerate or alter their source images' beauty, pointing to a typically "black" strategy that Sekula calls "aesthetics of power."⁴

By examining this Nuclear Age aesthetic, the ten contemporary artists in *Atomic Afterimage* employ an iconography that primarily consists of mushroom clouds. With the exception of the London-based design team of Michael Anastassiades, Anthony Dunne, and Fiona Raby, the artists reside in the United States, where explosions—and their related imagery—were abundantly produced during the Cold War. While some grew up viewing nuclear tests in magazines or on television within hours of the actual events, others have encountered the same pictures well after 1962, when atmospheric testing ceased. Bruce Conner and Joy Garnett represent these two generations, yet both borrow imagery from declassified films to comment on aesthetic manifestations of power. For Conner, who belongs to the earlier generation, his childhood memories of the bomb have powerful and long-lasting psychological effects, which lead him to repeat a small set of mushroom-cloud images in his cinematic and printed work. Garnett's luridly colored paintings explore the power of mediation, focusing on instruments and institutions that limit what the American public sees of nuclear tests.

Garnett's contemporaries often make use of still, rather than moving, images, mined from online databases, governmental archives, or personal memorabilia. After conducting Internet research on a specific subject, such as the history of air-raid siren manufacture in Los Angeles, Vincent Johnson transforms his pictorial findings into composite prints and large-scale signage. Michael Light spends a good deal of time in the National Archives' reading rooms searching for the most striking nuclear-test images to re-photograph as a means of generating new, post-Nuclear Age contexts. Robert Longo radically enlarges the pictures he finds in his collection of books and magazines, drawing monumental, black-and-white nuclear explosions in charcoal to emphasize their destructive powers. Anastassiades, Dunne, and Raby begin with similar images but render them cute by making soft, three-dimensional replicas that resemble stuffed toys.

Some contemporary artists create a new aesthetic to represent our nuclear past and present, partly based on the premise that official, documentary photographs cannot offer a full picture of

this narrative. Both Richard Misrach and Trevor Paglen have traveled to areas surrounding nuclear sites in the American desert, recording the things that inhabit the land more than the land itself. Misrach prefers to take detailed photographs of decaying animals that have fallen victim to human violence, whereas Paglen prefers to shoot his abstract views of hidden military installations from a distance. But rather than presenting us with another form of historical documentation, they treat their photographs as art—art that intentionally possesses terrible beauty.

If the works in this exhibition provide a clear indication, the visual arts show a growing concern with the bomb's majestic allure, to the point that artists in some cases self-consciously surpass the standard of beauty in photographic and pictorial propaganda. This has resulted in an impressive inversion of ideology, in which the US and British governments' "aesthetics of power" is upended and upstaged by the artists' power of aesthetics. Taken together, the works of art display a contrived aestheticism—a telling artificiality—that seems intended to arouse the viewer's suspicion. We are meant to question not only the ethics of testing, documenting, and archiving sensitive material, but also the ethical impact of the artists inserting themselves into a morally questionable discourse. Reflecting on the dilemma posed by beauty in general and dark beauty in particular, art critic and writer Rebecca Solnit eloquently observes:

Beauty undermines the attempts to develop an authoritatively impersonal analysis of culture, [for it] speaks of pleasure, desire, subjectivity... Resisting evil often means resisting beauty; and many evils are tempting because of their aesthetics, from the fascinating fascism of large-scale coordinated athletic and military maneuvers to...the billowing clouds of atomic explosions, which look less like mushrooms than like roses unfurling in a time-lapse film.⁵

On behalf of his colleagues, Misrach provides one possible defense for refusing to resist the beauty and, instead, using it self-reflexively: "I've come to believe that beauty can be a very powerful conveyor of ideas. It engages people when they might otherwise look away...and subversively brings us face to face with news from our besieged world."⁶ Our inability to look away from this nuclear-themed art is precisely what causes uneasiness in the face of its seductive imagery.

EXPLORATIONS IN FILM

Two artists stand apart from their colleagues as pioneers in working with nuclear-test documentaries. Bruce Conner was the earliest to combine declassified footage and other found clips in his own films, beginning in the late 1950s. He chose not to address the nuclear theme in traditional media until recently, whereas Joy Garnett pursued nuclear imagery in painting before turning to film.

Although Garnett's film *Dominic Sunset* (2002) contains color footage, in contrast to Conner's black-and-white, it echoes his technique of forming sequences of detonations and accompanying them with soundtracks. Together their work constitutes a sub-genre of artistic explorations in declassified film, continually made fresh by their reinventing uses for the material.

Conner discovered once-secret footage in government archives well before his contemporaries—even before those filmmakers whom scholars consider the most experimental. In his essay on Cold War films, Bob Mielke credits Kevin Rafferty, Jayne Loader, and Pierce Rafferty's satirical movie *The Atomic Cafe* (1982) with introducing the American public to nuclear-test documentaries but overlooks Conner's earlier contributions, albeit to a much smaller audience.⁷ Conner's first work in the medium, *A Movie* (1958), includes a shot of an atomic explosion that opens a montage on the detonation's bizarre aftermath. This cataclysmic image sets the stage for the rest of the film, which ends, appropriately, with an aerial view of another nuclear test.⁸ Conner's next cinematic project, *Cosmic Ray* (1961), also makes reference to an atomic bombing in a short sequence of stills. A mushroom-cloud image is followed by an aerial view of Nagasaki, whose imminent fate becomes even clearer (as if it were not already obvious) with the final inclusion of a countdown leader.⁹ In *Crossroads* (1976), he re-uses this declassified material, except much more of it, composing the entire thirty-six-minute picture of footage from the 1946 underwater tests at Bikini Atoll.¹⁰

Conner repeats the same nuclear imagery not only in separate films but also within *Crossroads* and his recent graphic works. Created under the pseudonym BOMBHEAD, *Baker Day: July 25, 1946* and *Puff* both contain stills from the film, although the artist adds an element of the new by scanning and editing these grayscale prints with digital technologies. The subject, however, still alludes to his lifelong visions of nuclear holocaust. As Conner succinctly notes, "I was 11 or 12 years old when they tested the atomic bomb, and it [has] been an obsession with me and everybody else ever since."¹¹

Throughout Conner's diverse body of work, repetition emerges as one dominant theme that corresponds to a formal technique, but there are analogous examples. In his self-portrait, *BOMBHEAD*, which features a declassified mushroom-cloud image in place of Conner's head, the act of substitution refers directly to Conner's past and, at the same time, serves as a technical device. The image harks back to a period in the mid-fifties and early sixties when the artist refused to have his face photographed.¹² Protecting against intrusion on his privacy or exploitation of his identity, Conner devised a strategy of facial concealment whereby he would insert a picture of another man, or an actual human stand-in, whenever his presence was requested in press photographs. *BOMBHEAD* demonstrates that this strategy can be effective in a new context—Conner's own art—using a far less benign substitute.

FILM IN PAINTING

Joy Garnett has also found declassified footage to be a rich source of imagery, but she primarily incorporates these extracts into luminous paintings. Her ongoing engagement with apocalyptic landscapes and narratives, including a current project on mass-media images of the Middle East, derives less from primal fear than from philosophical inquiry. Early in her career, Garnett worried about a cultural tendency to accept photographs of scientific and technological subjects at face value. Collecting images from science textbooks and magazines, she made reference to this material in her paintings as a means of showing that all images were mediated versions of some underlying reality. When attempting to gather nuclear-themed material in the late 1990s, Garnett encountered mediation of a different kind—government bureaucracy. The process of obtaining nuclear-test films involved several steps: calling the Department of Energy’s office in Nevada, receiving a catalogue of their inventory, and placing an order for VHS tapes based solely on the catalogue’s brief descriptions.¹³ Soon afterward the government archived much of their film and photographic collections online, a move that proved highly important to Garnett’s future work.

For me this was a watershed moment, as all of my image research from that point on became an online activity. My concept of “mediation” grew to include more than purely optical modes of filtration and contextualization: government secrecy and declassification was a rich area of inquiry that led me to all kinds of “open” online military archives.¹⁴

Like Conner, Garnett translates ideas into a formal language. Her visual vocabulary expresses the extent to which official controls, although ostensibly more lenient under the Freedom of Information Act, affect one’s ability to see clearly.

Where Conner’s works in black-and-white yield crisp and detailed imagery, Garnett’s multi-chromatic scenes of explosions appear blurry, as though the radioactive plumes of dust or blasts of wind obscure our vision. This impression has partly to do with her method of removing the source material from its context. While playing nuclear-test videos on a television set, Garnett shoots photographs directly from the screen. The photographs then become slides and color prints, which ultimately serve as references for her thinly painted compositions. Calling attention to the paintings’ complex construction, she creates smooth surfaces that blend and bind together distinct patches of color. In her polyptych *Forest Shockwave*, evenly applied, horizontal brushstrokes span from one edge of the canvas to the other, flattening forms into a unified image. The sinuous streaks of gray that run through more vivid colors also convey the lightning speed with which the bomb’s shock wave ripped through the desert and set ablaze the trees in its path.

PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES

While Conner and Garnett examine the psychological, social, and visual effects of nuclear testing through documentary films, other artists use photographic reproductions to investigate related issues. Given the current availability of digitized nuclear imagery online, Vincent Johnson is able to avoid the bureaucratic obstacles Conner and Garnett once faced. They culled material from the Department of Energy’s relatively limited selection, whereas Johnson encounters an overwhelming abundance. In spite of this immensity, pictures of the same nuclear tests appear on several different websites, creating an occurrence of repetitive images—an iconography of pop-nuclear culture—much like the personal iconography Conner cultivates in his work. For Johnson, too, repetition is an important formal device, not because of an obsession with the images’ content (as Conner admits to having) but, rather, because of his curiosity about their pervasive cultural presence.

A spirit of inquiry links Johnson to Garnett, as they both question the open-ended nature of history. Johnson became interested in Cold War culture as a result of photographing vernacular architecture in Los Angeles, where he currently lives. Upon researching the sites he had recorded with his camera, Johnson discovered that several were former military installations. Most of the places—including a hospital, an airfield, and a Nike missile base—had long since been demolished or abandoned, save for a single, ninety-foot tower, on top of which was mounted a six-thousand-pound Chrysler air raid siren. It stood as a relic of the two dozen sirens that once dotted Los Angeles’s cityscape, prepared to warn the citizens of nuclear attack.¹⁵ Mimicking this 1950s Civil Defense strategy, Johnson recently made a life-sized, sculptural model of the siren and installed it alongside other Cold War icons. A large decal of the government’s ubiquitous Civil Defense logo, re-created for the current exhibition, provides an apt complement to the theme of propaganda.

Johnson’s artistic interpretations of his own research often reveal little-known information about our nuclear history that many Americans and the government might prefer to forget. Some of his composite prints, like Conner’s experimental films, represent imagined scenarios, but are based on real fears of nuclear obliteration and composed of actual Cold War documentation. His digital print *Shelters* presents the American phenomenon of fallout shelters as a case in point. These nuclear defense plans were realized more in pictures than in practice and have since become a source

of national embarrassment. Other works by Johnson, however—from the Civil Defense emblem to his *London Blitz* (a photo-assemblage portraying a catastrophic presage to the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki)—remind us of cases in which governments actually executed their designs on a grand scale. By contrasting real and imagined representations of bomb culture, Johnson delivers a well-rounded pictorial history for viewers to contemplate.

If Johnson's criteria for selecting images have a strongly historical basis, Michael Light's are just as informed by aesthetic judgments. Sitting in the reading rooms at archival institutions,¹⁶ Light looks carefully at photographs of atmospheric tests—some of the same images that Johnson finds online—and singles out the ones that strike him as the most salient; this does not necessarily mean the most beautiful. He enjoys re-photographing prints that, as fascinating artifacts in their own right, show signs of wear and tear, or depict forms that deviate from “the typically known mushroom cloud.”¹⁷

Although Light uses digital technology to make minor adjustments to his photographs, such as the removal of dust spots, he strives to retain the source images' inherent qualities. According to him, the historical material should be approached with respect: “I personally feel that iconic subjects, and the archives that house them, are not the right arenas for me to get overtly ‘artistic’ or ‘inventive.’”¹⁸ This statement may seem to contradict the aims of some of his colleagues, whose works often consciously rival the beauty of their declassified analogues. But Light's refusal to enhance his photographic subjects has no bearing on his political investment in the work. In fact, he is deeply committed to exposing the secret politics behind nuclear testing.

Of the ten artists in *Atomic Afterimage*, Light expresses a view of nuclear imagery that most closely aligns with Sekula's concept of the “aesthetics of power.” Light describes his book *100 SUNS*, a compilation of his re-photography, as “beauty, horror, violence and seduction...all tangled up with each other.”¹⁹ These meanings, on one level, arise from a new, twenty-first-century context in which his photographs are interpreted; on another, they constitute the “dark splendor” (to borrow Light's term) that was already present in the test images at the time of their creation. Because Light preserves the archival prints' original appearances, his works inherit their aesthetic power—a power the US government routinely exploited in the 1950s. As a landscape photographer and self-proclaimed environmentalist, he considers the nuclear tests' devastating effect on the natural world to be one of the highest costs of unethical Cold War politics.

DRAMATIC ALTERATIONS

Light's photographs remain partially imbedded within a Nuclear Age context, emphasizing faithfulness to the documentary images from which they reproduce visual information. Some artists who work in different media, however, boldly exaggerate certain formal qualities to make a dramatic impact. Taking liberties with regard to scale, Robert Longo demonstrates extraordinary skill in rendering hyper-realistic and monumental charcoal drawings of mushroom clouds, based on documentary photographs. The small studies he produces beforehand show a close affinity to Light's photographs of comparable size; both artists select unusual cloud forms for the sake of variety, and both stress the blasts' terrible beauty. In Longo's view, the aftermath has proven just as terrifying, considering the current speculation about nuclear weapons produced and tested by the United States' enemies abroad.²⁰ His colossal drawings, standing as tall as seven feet, become menacing reminders of the persistent nuclear threat—the metaphorical dark cloud—that looms over us.

In addition to expressing the escalation of political tensions, the dramatic aspects of Longo's work recall the theatricality of his figural drawings, for which he has been known since the early 1980s. Picturing large, solitary figures engaged in strange movements and contortions, these works are also intended to disturb, but their human subjects present only vague threats to our psyche.²¹ The artist's recent involvement with movie production has a clearer influence on the mushroom-cloud creations—what one critic characterizes as “a cinematic sense of scale.”²² Longo himself draws a direct link between the bomb pictures and a contemporaneous series that depicts moonlit waves crashing atop one another. For Longo, the waves symbolize the “pure ultimate power of nature unleashed.”²³

Longo recalls the specific moment when the wave imagery suddenly bore an uncanny resemblance to a nuclear explosion. The frothy crests had already begun to take on a cloudlike quality after the World Trade Center's collapse on September 11, 2001, to which he responded by incorpo-

rating smoking imagery from 9/11 photographs into the breakers. While printing a copy of one source image, Longo caught a glimpse of it upside-down, with the swelling cloud at the top of the frame and the building's column at the bottom. "I realized immediately that it looked like an atomic bomb's mushroom cloud," he remembers. Another epiphany soon followed: "These bombs were mankind trying to become nature."²⁴ In this way, Longo's monstrous clouds can be seen as expressions of the human quest to rival the very forces of nature portrayed in his wave drawings.

London-based designers Michael Anastassiades, Anthony Dunne, and Fiona Raby offer an antidote to the nuclear threat, similar to the impressions Longo's work evokes. In response to contemporary fears and feelings of vulnerability, they produce two versions of "Huggable Atomic Mushrooms," one of which is included in this exhibition. These whimsical, stuffed objects, whose forms derive from nuclear-test photographs, call to mind children's toys. Yet, despite poking fun at the irrational nature of our anxieties, the designs accommodate these psychological conditions as a way of acknowledging their inescapable presence, even in an ostensibly post-nuclear age.²⁵

Like Longo's grand-scale charcoal drawings, Anastassiades, Dunne, and Raby's miniature designs engage with fear as a growing cultural phenomenon, perpetuated by recent terrorist attacks within the United States and the United Kingdom. In the designers' case, the work preceded the calamitous event—the day on which four suicide bombers detonated explosives throughout central London.²⁶ Rather than a specific attack, therefore, the stimulus for "Huggable Atomic Mushrooms" was the British media's almost apocalyptic anticipation of such a disaster. Raby provides an account of the paranoia that inspired their designs for an entire series of objects, called *Prescription Products: Designs for Fragile Personalities in Anxious Times*:

[The "Huggable Mushroom Cloud" design] was a response to the continuous media obsession (pre 7/7), which described with explicit and relished detail, how in London, we were all going to die horribly in the underground system, or in the capital from dirty bombs, smallpox, and other very imaginative terrorist atrocities. There seemed to be a palpable pleasure in awaiting our fate. Nuclear obliteration represented the most ridiculous and ultimate speculation.²⁷

Matching absurd speculation in the press with an equally absurd design, the trio nonetheless prompts serious questions about the psychological warfare transpiring before acts of terror even take place, if ever.

THE NUCLEAR PRESENT

Although several artists consider and interpret the current state of nuclear politics, only two in *Atomic Afterimage* focus on the potential that the present holds for generating entirely new imagery. Trevor Paglen and Richard Misrach conduct their research on weapons testing not in government archives or online but in the contaminated desert landscapes where the tests occur. Their photographs of "black sites"—including nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons-proving grounds—point to the absence of similar images in official collections, without purporting to fill the place of missing material.²⁸ By participating in gallery and museum exhibitions, Paglen and Misrach insist that their works, however much they may share an aesthetic or technical lineage with documentary photographs, function primarily as art.

Given that his work is often read as a form of political resistance,²⁹ it is somewhat ironic that Paglen's interest in nuclear landscapes can be traced to his experience in an official archive. While a doctoral student in geography at the University of California, Paglen visited the US Geological Survey Archives for his project on unknown prisons, many of which had been built during the Cold War. He noticed, in browsing through the photographic material, that some frames had been edited from the negatives. These classified photographs did not strike him as particularly relevant until he had expanded his concept of secret geography to include military installations.³⁰

In recent years, the US Army and Air Force's testing sites have become the primary subjects of Paglen's long-range photographs, taken from publicly accessible land using the photographic techniques of astronomy. One of Paglen's most frequent destinations for scouting views is the mountainous area surrounding Nevada's Nellis Range Complex, a 3.1-million-acre piece of government property encompassing the secret "Area 51" base, Tonopah Test Range, Creech Air Force Base, and the Nevada Test Site.³¹ Paglen concentrates on the first two locations, but all four share a history of being home to highly classified and secretly funded projects. The Nevada Test Site, where the government conducted its continental, aboveground nuclear tests between 1947 and 1962, initiated a system of controls that continue to prohibit the public's access to the entire Range.

Because the active weapons testing sites are completely restricted zones, Paglen must develop elaborate methods of photographing them. The process of taking even a single picture involves devising the appropriate technical apparatus and the arduous task of finding an unobstructed view. Sometimes Paglen uses his digital camera, modified to fit powerful telescopic lenses,³² while other times he attaches the camera to the scope of a high-powered telescope.³³ The techniques themselves are not necessarily new. As Paglen notes, groups of curious "amateur geographers" have spent years perfecting ways to gather visual and audio information on Area 51.³⁴ Some

of these “stealth-watchers” are also the artist’s friends, with whom he frequently makes trips into the remotest parts of the desert. From high ground, Paglen is able to take blurry and often brilliantly colored images of structures and undefined landscapes, up to 65 miles from a test site. The photographs almost always capture partially discernible forms, which seem on the verge of appearing but ultimately persist in hiding.

Rather than moving around the perimeters of former weapons testing sites, Richard Misrach enters the sites directly to reveal disturbing details of the bombs’ aftermath. In photographing these specific places from the ground, he records close-up imagery of buildings, animals, sky, and land. Early on in his explorations of the desert landscape, he would embark on journeys to find inspiration without knowing exact subjects or destinations. When beginning the *Desert Cantos* project in 1979, for example, he relied solely on his belief that “by wandering through the deserts of the American West, and paying attention, I would discover the issues relevant to our time.”³⁵

Misrach’s exploratory approach has proven remarkably fruitful. Spanning the past three decades, his work in the western deserts has yielded at least fourteen distinct “cantos,” each of which addresses an unsettling aspect of the landscape. Two of the three cantos reproduced in his most recent book are particularly germane to the nuclear theme. His *Project W-47 (The Secret)* shows the spare ruins of a top-secret Air Force base in Utah, where scientists made last-minute modifications to the atomic bomb. *The Pit* canto, included in this exhibition, pictures decaying animal carcasses as a means of exposing the toxic contamination caused by nuclear tests.

Misrach has an exceptional ability to recognize egregious omissions and errors in the declassified documentation on the sites he photographs. By supplementing written accounts with his visual interpretations, or in some cases providing the only interpretation, Misrach aims to enhance the emotional impact of nuclear narratives. In his recent collection of scenes and commentary about the American West, he challenges the Atomic Energy Commission’s findings on a 1953 case concerning the sudden deaths of livestock downwind of the Nevada Test Site.³⁶ While the government agency cited drought and malnutrition as the primary causes of death, all evidence spoke to the contrary, from premature births, defects, and diseases, to the sheer number of deaths. Perhaps most incriminating are the putrid animal carcasses that continue to litter the desert, as documented in Misrach’s large-scale, earth-toned compositions. *Dead Animals #454*, a photographic print from his *The Pit* series, offers a chilling example of a recent victim of the land’s radioactive contamination. The heavy remains of a cow stretch across sandy ground toward the horizon, save for the contorted head, which gazes pleadingly outward with bloodstained eyes. Challenging the ideological belief that institutions provide the American public with a comprehensive picture of our nuclear history and nuclear present, Misrach’s work might be considered a protest of, rather than a documentary substitute for, the official archives’ misinformation.

In *Atomic Afterimage*, dissent rarely stares the viewer in the face. Even when the artwork possesses a clear statement of protest against nuclear politics, as in Misrach’s *Dead Animals* pictures, the artists’ responses are far more complex. Through references to official, nuclear-themed photographs and films, all ten contemporary artists insert their works squarely within the government’s tangled narrative of defense, technology, and science, only to reveal its structure of power. Because this power’s foundation in relation to photography is the exploitation of aesthetics—what Allan Sekula calls the “aesthetics of power”—some recent artistic strategies of exposing governmental secrecy involve consciously upstaging or exaggerating the source images’ beauty. Other strategies use the art of imitation by simply mimicking the aesthetic qualities inherent to the official imagery. And when documentary images are not available or adequate to convey their ruminations on contemporary nuclear culture, some artists create entirely new imagery that places a similar emphasis on the aesthetic. Yet, despite engaging with the very strategies of the secret politics they aim to critique, the artists make no claims to subvert the government in ways viewers should complacently accept. In fact, they encourage us to take a long, hard look at the ethical ambiguities of their indulging in the unique pleasures offered by nuclear beauty.

1. Allan Sekula, “Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital,” in J. Evans and S. Hall, eds. *Visual Culture: The Reader* (London: Sage, 1999), 190.
2. Photographer Michael Light makes an important point about the intrinsic aesthetic power of nuclear-test images. He argues, “I have not aestheticized the bomb—rather, the bomb is inherently aesthetic.” See Michael Light, interview by Robert Hirsch, “100 SUNS and the Nuclear Sublime: An Interview with Michael Light,” *Afterimage* (July/August 2005), 27.
3. See Trevor Paglen, “Groom Lake and the Imperial Production of Nowhere,” in Derek Gregory and Allan Pred, eds. *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), 239. The artist and geographer Trevor Paglen, whose work is included in this exhibition, explains the meaning of the term “black world”: “The ‘black’ world...signifies all the work that is being done in secret: the secret weapons, secret bases, secret laboratories, and secret bureaucracies. It’s enormous—a whole ‘world,’ created by tens of billions of dollars in Pentagon spending (the exact number is, of course, classified...)”
4. Sekula, “Reading an Archive,” 191.
5. Rebecca Solnit, *Crimes and Splendors: The Desert Cantos of Richard Misrach* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co. in association with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1996), 47.
6. Richard Misrach, *Violent Legacies: Three Cantos* (New York: Aperture, 1992), 90.
7. Bob Mielke, “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Nuclear Test Documentary,” *Film Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2005): 28.
8. Bruce Jenkins, “Explosions in a Film Factory: The Cinema of Bruce Conner,” in *2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story Part II*, Exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999), 192–193.
9. Ibid., 197. One finds a similar atomic-bomb image in Conner’s movie *Report* (1963–67), though it does not belong to a sequence of related events, as in the other films.

PLATES

10. Ibid., 192. See also Rebecca Solnit, *Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists of the Cold War Era* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1990), 122. Solnit notes that *Crossroads* is Conner's "longest film to date." It is also the earliest work in this exhibition.
11. Bruce Conner, e-mail message to author via Era Farnsworth, April 15, 2008.
12. Joan Rothfuss, "Escape Artist," in *2000 BC*, 164.
13. Joy Garnett, e-mail message to author, April 4, 2008.
14. Joy Garnett, e-mail message to author, April 10, 2008.
15. Vincent Johnson, e-mail message to author, April 13, 2008.
16. Michael Light, *100 SUNS, 1945-1962* (New York: Knopf, 2003), n.p. Light visited the National Archives in Washington, DC, and the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico to re-photograph the archival photographs.
17. Michael Light, interview by Robert Hirsch, 26.
18. Ibid., 26.
19. Ibid., 27.
20. Robert Longo, e-mail to author, April 17, 2008. Longo holds the current US administration responsible for forcing other countries to take such desperate measures to protect themselves.
21. For a discussion of the ways Longo's figural drawings allude to cinema, see Vera Dika, *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36-41.
22. Eleanor Heartney, "Robert Longo at Metro Pictures," *Art in America* 92, no. 8 (September 2004): 127. The wave and bomb drawings were shown together in an exhibition, entitled *The Sickness of Reason*, at New York's Metro Pictures in 2004.
23. Robert Longo, e-mail to author, April 17, 2008.
24. Ibid.
25. For information on the designers' past collaborations and Anastasiades's solo projects, see Andrew Blauvelt, *Strangely Familiar: Design and Everyday Life*, Exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003).
26. The specific date of the attack was July 7, 2005.
27. Fiona Raby, e-mail to author, April 25, 2008.
28. I borrow the term "black sites" from an article on Paglen's work by Karen Beckman. Paglen himself often refers to these sites collectively as the "black world." See Karen Beckman, "Telescopes, Transparency, and Torture: Trevor Paglen and the Politics of Exposure," *Art Journal* (Fall 2007), 62.
29. Ibid., 62. Interpreting Paglen's work within the framework of activist art, Beckman argues that his photographs from the *Limit Telephotography* series constitute "political interventions."
30. Trevor Paglen, conversation with the artist, April 18, 2008.
31. In his essay, Paglen gives a detailed account of the secret bases within the Nellis Range Complex. For his discussion on the Nevada Test Site, see Paglen, "Groom Lake and the Imperial Production of Nowhere," 240-241.
32. Sonia Zjawinski, "This Art Is Classified," *Wired* (July 2007): 78.
33. A. C. Thompson, "Spying on the Government," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, May 2005, www.sfbg.com/39/31/cover_spying_on_the_government.html (accessed April 25, 2008).
34. Paglen, "Groom Lake and the Imperial Production of Nowhere," 249.
35. Richard Misrach, e-mail to author, April 12, 2008.
36. Misrach, *Violent Legacies*, 39.

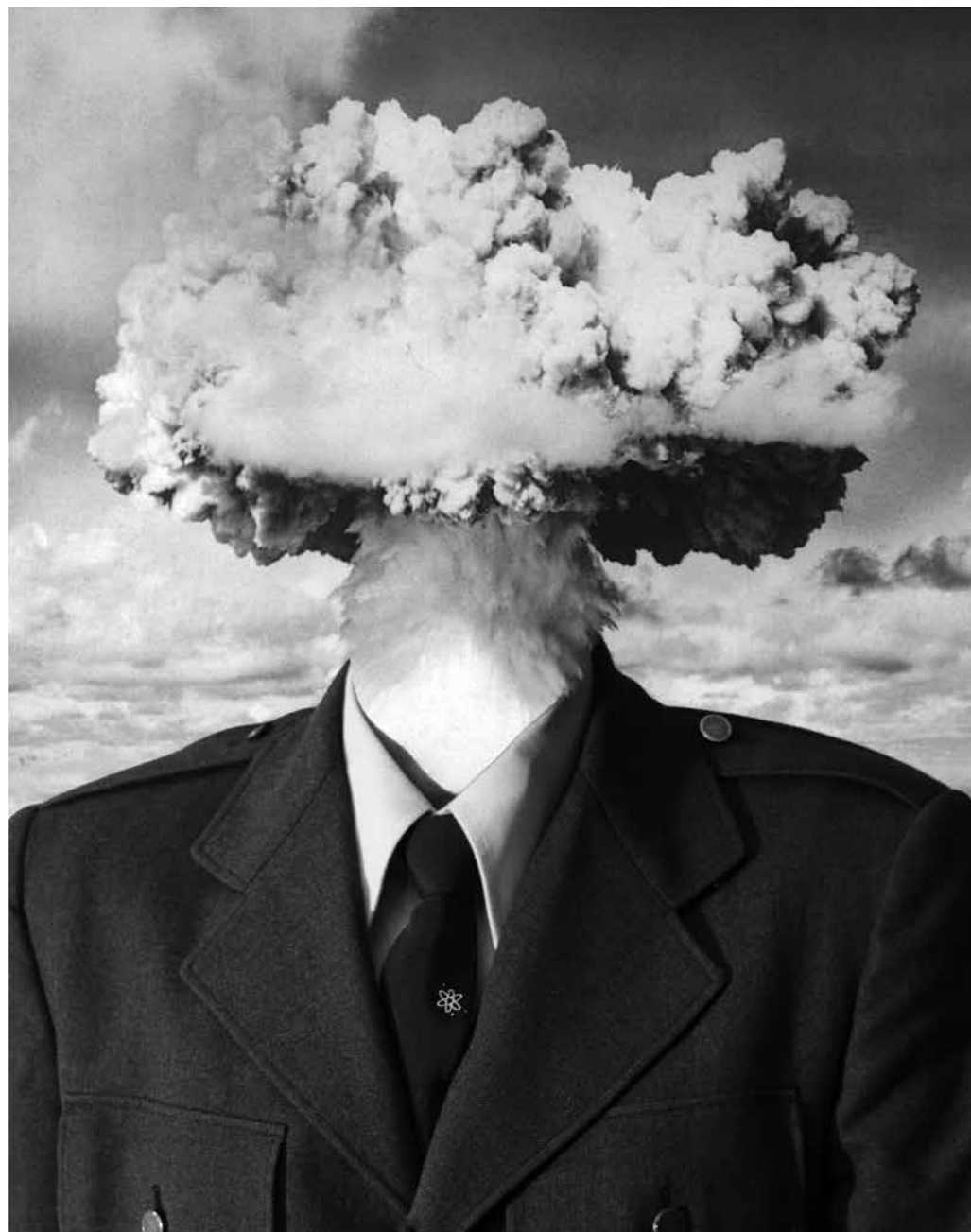


Plate 1
Bruce Conner
BOMBHEAD
1989/2002
Archival pigmented inkjet, acrylic paint on paper
32 x 25 in.
© Bruce Conner
Courtesy of Magnolia Editions, Oakland, CA

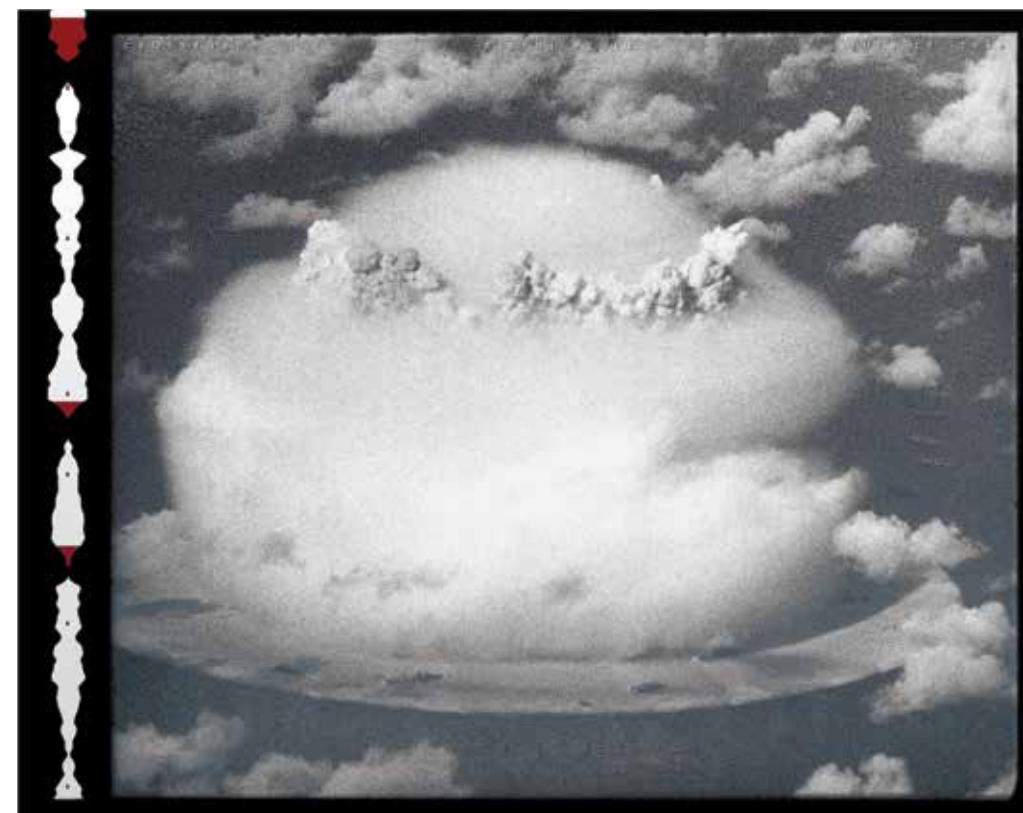


Plate 2
BOMBHEAD
Puff
2003
Archival pigmented inkjet on Somerset
29 1/2 x 37 in.
© Bruce Conner
Courtesy of Magnolia Editions, Oakland, CA

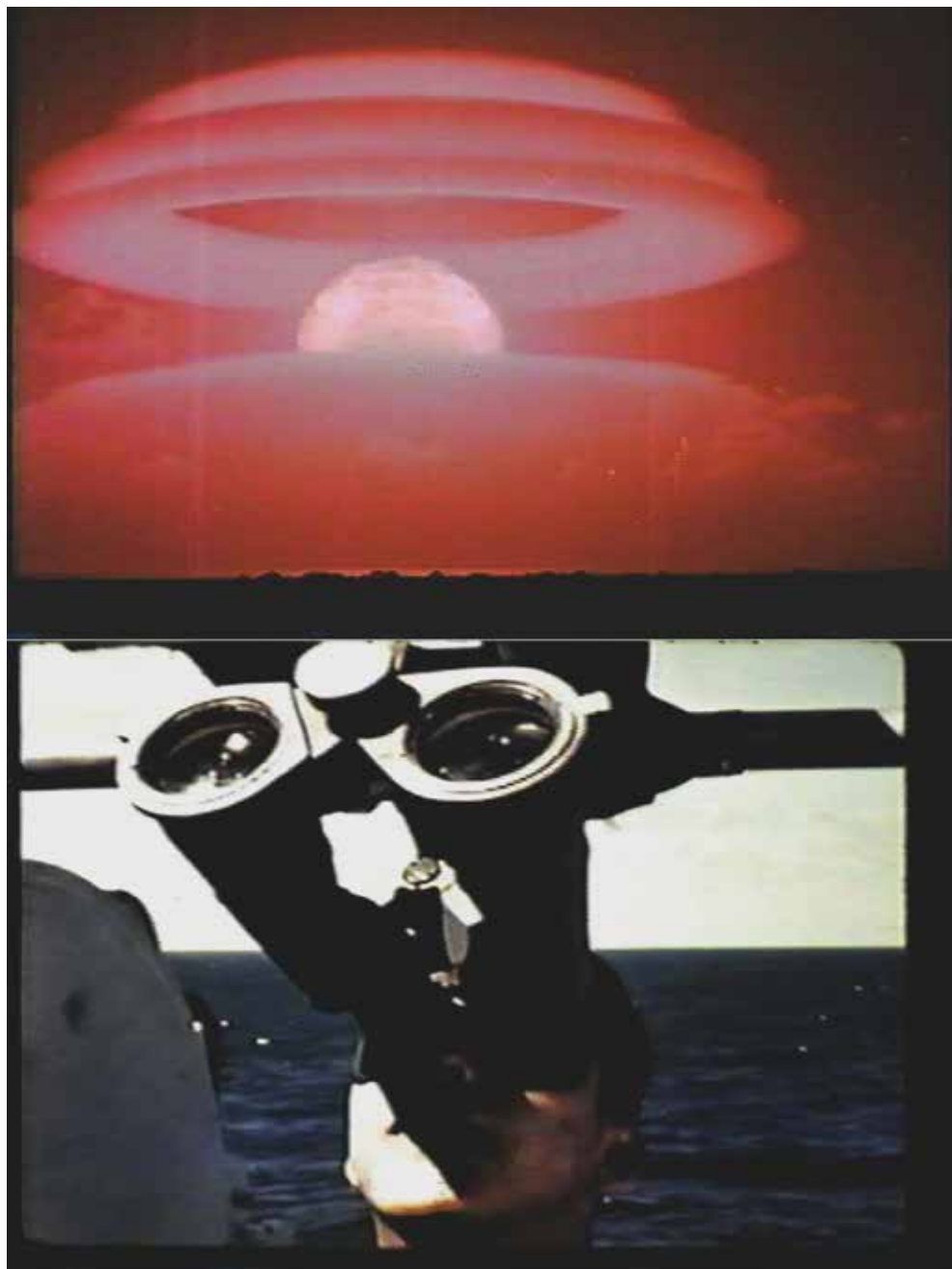


Plate 3
Joy Garnett
Film still from *Dominic Sunset*, DVD
2005
7:13 minutes
Music by Ben Neill, Produced by Bill Jones
Courtesy of the Artist and Winkleman Gallery, New York



Plate 4
Joy Garnett
Shockwave, Jeeps
1998
Oil on canvas
36 x 48 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Winkleman Gallery, New York



Plate 5
Michael Light
100 SUNS: 081 Truckee/210 Kilotons/Christmas Island/1962
2003
Pigment print on aluminum
20 x 24 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco
and New York



Plate 6
Michael Light
100 SUNS: 096 Romeo/11 Megatons/Bikini Atoll/1954
2003
Pigment print on aluminum
20 x 16 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco
and New York



Plate 7
Michael Light
100 SUNS: 015 Sugar/1.2 Kilotons/Nevada/1951
2003
Pigment print on aluminum
20 x 16 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco and New York

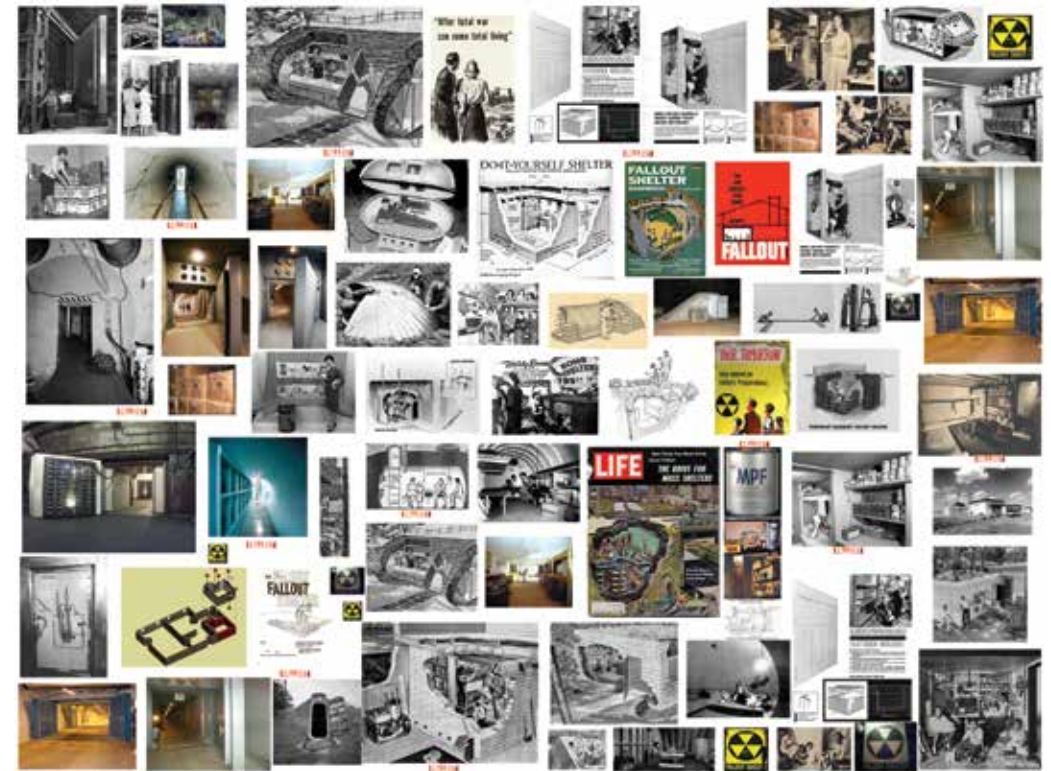


Plate 8
Vincent Johnson
American Cold War Shelters
2008
Lightjet print
30 x 40 in.
Courtesy of the Artist



Plate 9
Vincent Johnson
A-BOMB
 2008
 Lightjet print
 30 x 40 in.
 Courtesy of the Artist



Plate 10
Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, with Michael Anastassiades
"Priscilla, 37 kilotons Nevada, 1957" Huggable Atomic Mushroom
 2004
 Reflective fabric, polyester stuffing
 (Height) 10.6 x (Circumference) 11.8 in.
 Courtesy of the Artists



Plate 11
Robert Longo
Study for Yeso, Christmas Island
2004
Ink and charcoal on vellum
10 1/2 x 21 3/4 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures



Plate 12
Robert Longo
Untitled-Mike Test (Head of Goya)
2003
Charcoal on mounted paper
72 x 96 in.
Collection of the Artist
Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures



Plate 13
Trevor Paglen
*Canyons and Unidentified Vehicle/Tonopah Test Range, NV/
Distance-18 miles/12:45pm*
2006
C-Print, Edition of 5
30 x 36 in.
© Trevor Paglen
Courtesy of the Artist and Bellwether, New York

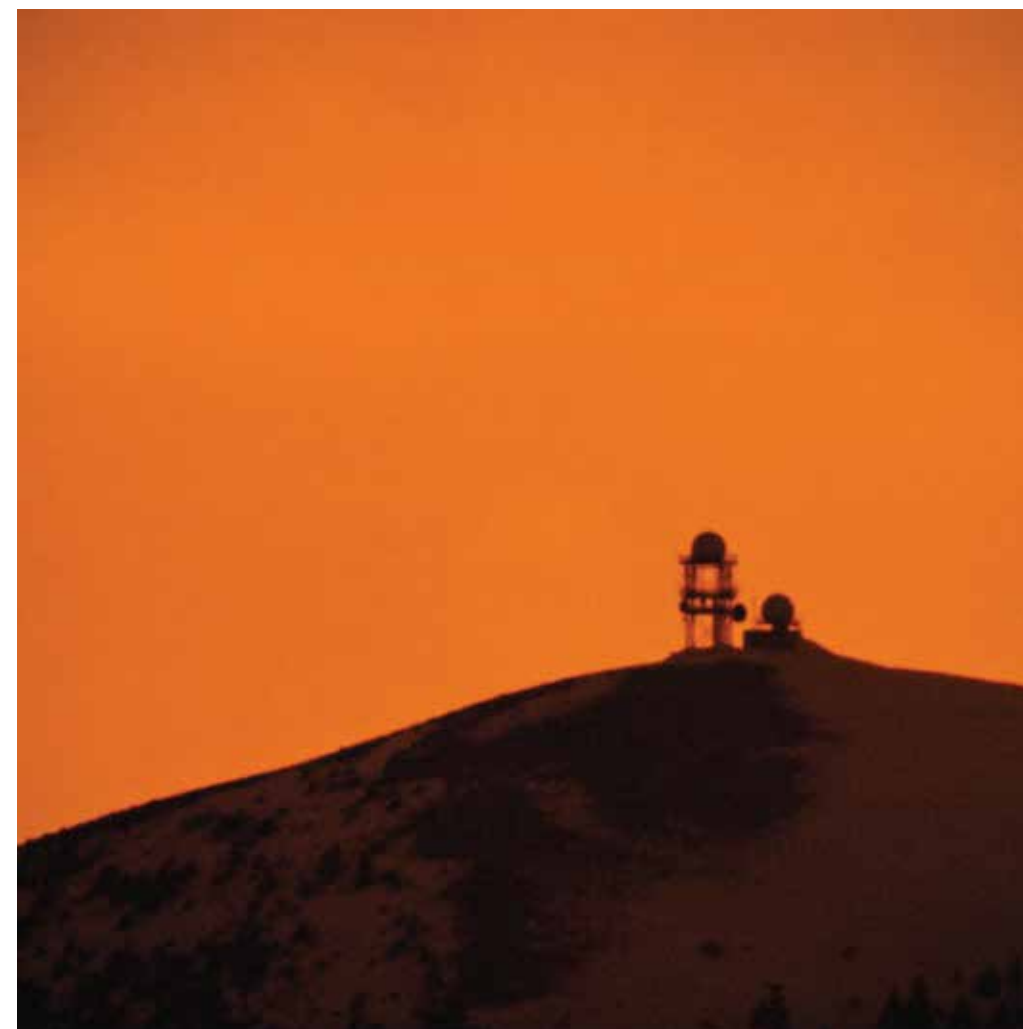


Plate 14
Trevor Paglen
Surveillance Site/Bald Mountain, NV/Distance-24 miles/5:56pm
2005
C-Print, Edition of 5
20 x 20 in.
© Trevor Paglen
Courtesy of the Artist and Bellwether, New York



Plate 15
Richard Misrach
Dead Animals #93
1987
Digital chromogenic color print
48 x 60 in.
Collection of the Artist
Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, Marc Selwyn Fine Art,
Los Angeles, and Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York



Plate 16
Richard Misrach
Dead Animals #454
1988
Digital chromogenic color print
48 x 60 in.
Collection of the Artist
Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, Marc Selwyn Fine Art,
Los Angeles, and Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York

CATALOGUE ENTRIES

MICHAEL ANASTASSIADES

Born in Athens, Greece, 1968. Lives in London, England.

ANTHONY DUNNE

Born in London, England, 1964. Lives in London, England.

FIONA RABY

Born in Singapore, 1963. Lives in London, England.

The design team Dunne & Raby, working with fellow designer Michael Anastassiades, focuses more on the psychological aftermath of “broken technological utopias,”¹ such as the Atomic Age, than on the historical periods in which technologies were invented. Although all three designers share a commitment to critically examining how everyday objects affect people, they all bring different areas of expertise to their designs. Both Dunne and Anastassiades have backgrounds in industrial design, though the latter also holds a degree in civil engineering; Raby is an architect by training. Before collaborating on *Prescription Products: Designs for Fragile Personalities in Anxious Times*, for which they produced the “Huggable Atomic Mushrooms,” the trio created a series of home and garden objects that communicated with humans through movement or sound.²

In significant ways, the “Huggable Atomic Mushrooms” reverse and extend the earlier collaborative project’s conceptual underpinnings. Where the designs had previously elicited verbal and psychological responses, they now serve as responses to pre-existing behaviors. Unlike their products that facilitated more meaningful interactions with nature, “Huggable Atomic Mushrooms” do not possess the same universal appeal to the public at large. These stuffed creations treat a specific condition—fear of nuclear annihilation—suffered by only a portion of the population. The designers base both projects, however, on the premise that people form psychological relationships with products and, further, that design can reveal “the cracks and the disillusionment” (to borrow Raby’s phrase) within these relationships.³

Selected recent exhibitions:

“Designing Critical Design,” Z33, Hasselt, Belgium, 2007 (solo)

“Weeds, Aliens, and Other Stories,” Permanent Collection, Twentieth-Century Design Gallery, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England, 2003-05 (solo)

“Design and the Elastic Mind,” Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2008 (group)

Selected bibliography:

Antonelli, Paola. *Design and the Elastic Mind*. New York: Museum of Modern Art; London: Thames & Hudson, 2008.

Dunne, Anthony, and Fiona Raby. *Design Noir: The Secret Life of Electronic Objects*. London: August; Basel: Birkhäuser, 2001.

Strangely Familiar: Design and Everyday Life. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003. Exhibition catalogue.

BRUCE CONNER

Born in McPherson, Kansas, 1933. Died in San Francisco, 2008.

Bruce Conner had been afraid of “the bomb” since a young and impressionable age. In the late 1950s, when nuclear imagery first began to appear in Conner’s cinematic work, his fear seemed to have intensified. At that time, Conner lived in San Francisco, where he was an active participant in a small but dynamic 1950s subculture, popularly known as the Beat Generation. Jess Collins, one of Conner’s close friends in the San Francisco group, once held a career as a radio-chemist for the Manhattan Project but later renounced nuclear weapons as a result of an apocalyptic vision. Having experienced similar premonitions of nuclear holocaust, Conner decided to move with his wife, Jean, to Mexico in 1961:

‘I went to Mexico for many reasons. One of them was that I was sure the bomb was going to drop and we’d be annihilated. So I’d go to Mexico and figure out how to live in the mountains after the bomb dropped. I got rid of all my worldly goods and decided to change my life forever, and my wife and I got into the car and drove off for Mexico. What I found, though, in retrospect, was that I was basically running away from death.’⁴

The Conner family returned to the United States a year later, only to discover that the atmosphere of Cold-War paranoia followed them no matter where they went.

After leaving Mexico, Conner spent some time in Boston but did not encounter a receptive audience to his work. By 1965, he settled back in San Francisco and continued to develop new formal strategies, including play with optical effects—specifically, what curator Peter Boswell calls “persistence of vision.” As Conner himself explained, when one looks at two contrasting colors in an image and then looks away, “a certain amount of the impression is kept on the retina or eyeball.”⁵ Conner’s description of this phenomenon closely relates to the notion of the afterimage—the visual impression retained in one’s mind or on an object’s surface after receiving some form of stimulus. That Conner had identified and articulated a theme in his work that also underlies this exhibition is an indication of his pioneering influence on other artists, who similarly engage with enduring images throughout time and in popular memory.

Selected recent exhibitions:

- “Bruce Conner,” Susan Inglett Gallery, New York, 2007 (solo)
- “Bruce Conner: EVE-RAY-FOREVER and punk collages,” Michael Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles, 2007 (solo)
- “Pioneers,” CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, 2007 (group)

Selected bibliography:

- 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story Part II*. Contributions by Peter Boswell, Bruce Jenkins, and Joan Rothfuss. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999. An exhibition catalogue.
- Beat Culture and the New America, 1950–1965*. Contributions by Lisa Phillips et al. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995. An exhibition catalogue.
- Solnit, Rebecca. *Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists of the Cold War Era*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1991.

JOY GARNETT

Born in New York, 1960. Lives in New York City.

New York-based artist Joy Garnett recalls that her inquiries into the secrets of science and technology began at a young age. Her father, a biochemist, enlisted her help to take photo-microscopy of cellular phenomena, which would later form part of Garnett’s collection of scientific images. At first, the collection also consisted of mass-reproduced pictures of anything for which, as Garnett puts it, “lenses or scientific instrumentation [were] needed to deliver visual approximations”—mainly astronomical and sub-atomic subjects. This led to her interest in gathering the imagery of science fiction films, such as *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* and *The Andromeda Strain*, by shooting slides off her television screen. But it was satirical films, not sci-fi, that eventually sparked a desire to produce paintings from source material; *Dr. Strangelove* inspired Garnett to employ declassified clips of nuclear tests, just as Stanley Kubrick had done in the film’s ending sequence. Before such footage could be accessed electronically, she obtained several VHS tapes through the Department of Energy’s mail-order service and embarked on her creative endeavors into the “apocalyptic sublime.”⁶

Garnett’s body of work on the nuclear theme also invokes the personal experiences of soldiers. In addition to exploring government websites, Garnett views online resources devoted to “atomic veterans,” the popular name given to eyewitnesses of aboveground tests. She finds snapshots of tests taken by soldiers, as well as letters that describe their awestruck reactions to seeing the mushroom clouds. Before comprehending the horrific aftermath, eyewitnesses would often marvel at “the coral tones of the clouds and the extraordinary light,” as Garnett explains.⁷ Her vibrant and luminous paintings capture such raw aesthetic experiences.

Selected recent exhibitions:

- “Joy Garnett, New Paintings,” Winkleman Gallery, New York, 2008 (solo)
- “Strange Weather,” National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC, 2006 (solo)
- “Image War,” Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2006 (group)

Selected bibliography:

- Buster-Jangle*. New York: Debs & Co., 1999. Exhibition catalogue.
- Greene, Rachel. *Internet Art*. London; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004.
- Sheets, Hilarie M. “Reinventing the Landscape.” *ARTnews* 100, no. 3 (March 2001): 128–33.

VINCENT JOHNSON

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, 1956. Lives in Van Nuys, California.

Vincent Johnson has a long, personal history of exposure to nuclear culture. He spent his childhood in Cleveland, Ohio, living near a Nike Hercules missile battery, a launch site for guided missile systems that detect and destroy enemy weapons. While playing along the shore of Lake Erie, Johnson would occasionally spot trucks transporting missiles to a location on the lakefront, “where the earth would open up, a large square of earth would rise, and the missiles would be loaded.” Johnson later conducted research on the site to confirm his memory, discovering that it was indeed correct. His research further revealed the location of another missile battery in Van Nuys, California, within blocks of the artist’s current residence. In addition to childhood experiences, Johnson cites his service in the US Air Force as influential in shaping his fascination with defense technologies. He joined the military in 1973, only two weeks after graduating from high school.⁸

Johnson’s composite prints of nuclear-themed images represent the Cold War as a series of snapshots, as though arranged in a personal scrapbook. Yet, while these collage-like compositions invoke his memories, they are among his first works comprised of popular imagery. Until this year, Johnson photographed books from his extensive collection of nineteenth-century literature to create images for composite works.⁹ *Firebird* (1997), for example, depicts burning books, including Hegel’s *The Philosophy of History*, which the artist set ablaze in his backyard. After losing his library in a storage dispute, Johnson began to use the Internet as a primary resource. The works in this exhibition refer to a collective American memory, though one that overlaps with Johnson’s personal background.

Selected recent exhibitions:

“Patriot Acts,” 18th Street Arts Center, Santa Monica, CA, 2008 (group)

“Civil Air Defense Project #1,” LA><ART, Los Angeles, 2007 (two-person)

“Philosophy of Time Travel,” The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, 2007 (collaborative installation)

Selected bibliography:

Hull, Steven. *Ab Ovo*. Santa Monica, CA: Nothingmoments Publishing, 2005.

———. *Nothing Moments*. Santa Monica, CA: Nothingmoments Publishing, 2007.

Philosophy of Time Travel. New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 2007. Exhibition catalogue.

MICHAEL LIGHT

Born in Florida, 1963. Lives in San Francisco.

Michael Light was born on the same day that the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty, an agreement that ended the era of aboveground nuclear testing.¹⁰ This coincidence had a positive affect on Light’s childhood; it meant that he, unlike the artists who grew up in the 1950s, could live without pervasive fear of the bomb. In college, Light read Jonathan Schell’s 1982 book *Fate of the Earth*, which introduced him to the imminent danger posed by international stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Light’s continued fascination with global issues informs his creative process, such as the conceptual framework for his nuclear-themed project *100 SUNS*. The idea to photograph one hundred archival prints of nuclear detonations formed as a result of his contemplating the human impact on the environment and notions of the sublime and the icon in landscape representation.

The official ban on nuclear testing, by extension, also effectively halted the creation of detonation photographs taken in real time. Light’s work is not intended as a tribute to this genre but, rather, as an interventionist revision of pre-existing images. While retaining the original appearance of the source images, the photographs reproduced in his book *100 SUNS* have descriptive titles and captions to underscore their historical and scientific significance. The captions elaborate on the basic information provided in the titles—including the amount of energy released by and the location of each blast—and reference the team of photographers responsible for making the images. As Light notes in his closing remarks, the Air Force’s 1352nd Photographic Group created most of the nuclear-test photographs and films, as well as used their “Lookout Mountain” facility in Hollywood, California, to produce propaganda for various US agencies.¹¹

Selected recent exhibitions:

“Dry Dreams: The Inhabited West,” Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, 2008 (solo)

“100 SUNS,” Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, Burlington, 2008 (solo)

“Something That I’ll Never Really See: Contemporary Photography from the V&A,” Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England, 2007 (group)

Selected bibliography:

Hirsch, Robert. “100 SUNS and the Nuclear Sublime: An Interview with Michael Light.” *Afterimage* 33, no. 1 (July/August 2005): 24–29.

Light, Michael. *100 SUNS, 1945–1962*. New York: Knopf, 2003.

Thompson, David. “Exposure: Michael Light Profile.” *Eye* 13, no. 51 (Spring 2004): 18–24.

ROBERT LONGO

Born in Brooklyn, New York, 1953. Lives in New York City.

The Nuclear Age's culture of fear has left a lasting impression on Robert Longo. As a student in elementary school, he participated in standard "duck-and-cover" drills, despite sensing that this method of hiding beneath desks would be futile if a nuclear bomb actually hit New York City. Longo laments that now his own children "have to live with a new fear of the bomb, bombs more powerful than those of my childhood." The Second Nuclear Age, according to the artist, is a direct result of the US government's use of intimidation tactics abroad.¹² Many Americans share his belief that these same policies prompted terrorist groups to plot the attacks of September 11, 2001, including one in Longo's native city.

For Longo, the events of 9/11 have a clear connection to his understanding of the cross-generational subjection to the nuclear threat. After his experience of visualizing the World Trade Center's smoking ruins as a nuclear explosion, Longo immediately searched his studio for mushroom-cloud images in old books and magazines. While he studied the pictures at home that night, his then-seven-year-old son looked on, unable to recognize the images depicted. From his child's perspective, the columns of dust resembled tornadoes or hurricanes. This simple observation led Longo to consider the relationship between natural and man-made disasters, a concept that in turn inspired his drawings of waves and nuclear tests. These works were shown together at Metro Pictures in New York, marking Longo's most recent approach to exploring the human condition.

Selected recent exhibitions:

"Children of Nyx," Metro Pictures, New York, 2007 (solo)

"Beginning of the World," Galerie Hans Mayer, Düsseldorf, Germany, 2007 (solo)

"Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll since 1967," Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL, 2007-08 (group)

Selected bibliography:

Dika, Vera. *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Heartney, Eleanor. "Robert Longo at Metro Pictures." *Art in America* 92, no. 8 (September 2004): 127.

Miller, Francine Koslow. "Robert Longo—Metro Pictures." *Tema Celeste* (May/June 2004): 90.

RICHARD MISRACH

Born in Los Angeles, 1949. Lives in Emeryville, California.

Richard Misrach has photographed deserts in the American West for more than thirty years, largely because of the mysterious allure of these places. He considers the desert a rich subject on personal, political, and aesthetic levels, the latter two of which most inform his interest in locations associated with nuclear testing. The desert appeals to Misrach's preference for working in solitude and allowing unexpected encounters within this environment to inspire him. It is his political consciousness, however, that draws him to areas of the land kept secret by the government. Rather than incorporating "found" imagery into his works of art, Misrach finds hidden sites, unmentioned or underrepresented in declassified documentation. He notes that his ongoing project *Desert Cantos*, which includes the *Pit* series shown here, "is built around the found metaphor."¹³ In 1987, following a lead on the general location of pits of dead livestock, Misrach discovered these grotesque heaps of animals locked in "a surreal, fraternal death embrace."¹⁴

Misrach's landscape photographs, however linked to specific locations, tell us more about broader environmental and ethical issues. In the *Pit* series, for example, the animal carcasses symbolize a particularly dark period in our nation's past, when aboveground nuclear tests in American deserts polluted the environment with radioactive fallout. But because the photographs capture scenes from the present landscape, they also call attention to ongoing health problems faced by people who live downwind from former testing sites or consume water that has been contaminated by recent leaks of hazardous waste. The US government's role in ignoring or denying the extent of this contamination adds another layer of complexity to the images. Misrach points to the long history of these secret politics by documenting places that official archives would not dare to represent in their photographic collections.

Selected recent exhibitions:

"13 Dark Pictures," Pace MacGill Gallery, New York, 2008 (solo)

"On the Beach," The Art Institute, Chicago, 2007 (solo)

"Time is of the Essence: Contemporary Landscape Art," Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, North Carolina, 2008 (group)

Selected bibliography:

Tucker, Anne Wilkes and Rebecca Solnit. *Crimes and Splendors: The Desert Cantos of Richard Misrach*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. in association with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1996. Exhibition catalogue.

Misrach, Richard. *Richard Misrach: The Sky Book*. Text by Rebecca Solnit. Santa Fe, NM: Arena Editions, 2000.

———. *Violent Legacies: Three Cantos*. New York: Aperture, 1992.

TREVOR PAGLEN

Born in Maryland, 1975. Lives in Berkeley, California.

It might be argued that Trevor Paglen creates the most overtly activist art in this exhibition. In a recent interview, he discusses the need for his activism to address the “militaristic underpinnings” that permeate not just government institutions but also many aspects of broader American culture.¹⁵ His artistic exploration, however, extends beyond the political. In characterizing himself as an “experimental geographer,” Paglen refers to his dual academic training in art and geography, both of which he approaches through empirical investigation. For the past five years, he has been leading trips to remote and barren locations in the American Southwest, often focusing the lenses of his hybrid telescope-cameras on the legendary grounds of Area 51. While he embarks on some of these trips alone, other times small groups of friends accompany him. Among his friends are those with whom he became acquainted as a result of his interest in secret geographies—people who have specialized knowledge of these sites, from plane-spotters and sky-watchers to professional engineers. The information Paglen receives from and shares with Area 51 buffs has proven immensely important to his work, particularly with regard to photographic techniques. Their mutual openness provides a fitting counterpoint to the secrecy of the places Paglen photographs.

As a general rule for practicing responsible activism, Paglen strives to diversify his creative projects. At the Bellwether Gallery (New York), where his work on the “black world” of secret military operations was shown in 2006, Paglen exhibited five different approaches to this general topic. In addition to the *Limit Telephotography* series, represented in the current exhibition, the installation at Bellwether included a set of six inkjet prints depicting the passports of fugitive CIA officers, as well as a series of twenty embroidered patches given to participants in classified operations. Both of the other works were completely textual and listed code names of people or programs. By providing several different types of evidence, Paglen expands the context in which viewers contemplate the problems associated with secrecy and silence.

Selected recent exhibitions:

“The Other Night Sky/MATRIX 225,” Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA, 2008 (solo)

“Black World,” Bellwether Gallery, New York, 2006 (solo)

“The New Normal,” curated by Michael Conner through Independent Curators intercontinental, Artists Space, New York, NY; Huarte Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Huarte, Spain; Canzani Center Gallery, Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus, OH, traveling 2008 through 2010 (group)

Selected bibliography:

Beckman, Karen. “Telescopes, Transparency, and Torture: Trevor Paglen and the Politics of Exposure.” *Art Journal* 66, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 62–68.

Paglen, Trevor. *I Could Tell You but Then You Would Have to Be Destroyed by Me: Emblems from the Pentagon's Black World*. Brooklyn, New York: Melville Publishing House, 2007.

Paglen, Trevor and A.C. Thompson. *Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights*. Hoboken, NJ: Melville House, 2006.

1. Fiona Raby, e-mail message to the author, April 25, 2008.
2. This project is entitled *Weeds, Aliens, and Other Stories* (1994–1998).
3. Raby, e-mail message to the author.
4. Bruce Conner, quoted in Rebecca Solnit, *Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists of the Cold War Era*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1991), 97. (No further citation provided).
5. Bruce Conner, interview by Peter Boswell, February 11, 1986, quoted in Peter Boswell, “Bruce Conner: Theater of Light and Shadow,” in *2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story Part II*, Exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999), 54.
6. Art critic Christopher Phillips uses the term “apocalyptic sublime” to characterize Garnett’s work. See Christopher Phillips, “Joy Garnett at Debs & Co.,” *Art in America* 87, no. 11 (November 1999): 135. Most of the information in this entry is drawn from correspondence with the artist. Joy Garnett, e-mail message to the author, April 10, 2008.
7. Joy Garnett, quoted in Hilarie M. Sheets, “Reinventing the Landscape,” *ARTnews* 100, no. 3 (March 2001): 129.
8. Vincent Johnson, e-mail message to the author, April 13, 2008.
9. Vincent Johnson, e-mail message to the author, May 1, 2008.
10. Michael Light, interview by Robert Hirsch, “100 SUNS and the Nuclear Sublime: An Interview with Michael Light,” *Afterimage* 33, no. 1 (July/August 2005): 25.
11. Michael Light, “A Note on the Photographs,” in *100 SUNS, 1945–1962* (New York: Knopf, 2003), n.p.
12. Robert Longo, e-mail message to the author, April 17, 2008. This biographical information is drawn from correspondence with the artist.
13. Richard Misrach, *Violent Legacies: Three Cantos* (New York: Aperture, 1992), 88.
14. *Ibid.*, 86.
15. Trevor Paglen, interview by Rene Gabri, “Interview with Trevor Paglen—The Black World of the Military,” *16 Beaver*, July 27, 2005, www.16beavergroup.org/journalisms/archives/001612.php (accessed April 25, 2008).

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- De Groot, Gerard J. *The Bomb: A Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Featherstone, David, ed. *Observations: Essays on Documentary Photography*. Carmel, CA: Friends of Photography, 1984.
- Fermi, Rachel, Richard Rhodes, and Esther Samra. *Picturing the Bomb: Photographs from the Secret World of the Manhattan Project*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995.
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- Gallagher, Carole. *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993.
- Goin, Peter. *Nuclear Landscapes*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1991.
- Hersey, John. *Hiroshima*. New York: Knopf, 1946.
- Hirsch, Robert. "100 SUNS and the Nuclear Sublime: An Interview with Michael Light." *Afterimage* (July/August 2005): 24-29.
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- Misrach, Richard. *Richard Misrach: The Sky Book*. Text by Rebecca Solnit. Santa Fe, NM: Arena Editions, 2000.
- . *Violent Legacies: Three Cantos*. New York: Aperture, 1992.
- Peterson, Stephen. "Explosive Propositions: Artists React to the Atomic Age." *Science in Context* 17, no. 4 (2004): 579-609.

Rapaport, Brooke Kamin, and Kevin L. Stayton. *Vital Forms: American Art and Design in the Atomic Age, 1940–1960*. New York: Brooklyn Museum of Art, 2001.

Rosenthal, Peggy. "The Nuclear Mushroom Cloud as Cultural Image." *American Literary History* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 63–92.

Sekula, Allan. *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973–1983*. Halifax, NS: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984.

———. "Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital." In *Visual Culture: The Reader*, edited by J. Evans and S. Hall, 180–192. London: Sage, 1999.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Landscape Wars of the American West*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Titus, A. Costandina. *Bombs in the Backyard: Atomic Testing and American Politics*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1986.

Tucker, Anne Wilkes and Rebecca Solnit. *Crimes and Splendors: The Desert Cantos of Richard Misrach*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. in association with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1996. Exhibition catalogue.

Wear, Spencer. *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

BOMBHEAD

Baker Day: July 25, 1946, 2003

Archival pigmented inkjet on Somerset
21 3/4 x 19 in.

© Bruce Conner

Courtesy of Magnolia Editions, Oakland, CA

BOMBHEAD

Puff, 2003

Archival pigmented inkjet on Somerset
29 1/2 x 37 in.

© Bruce Conner

Courtesy of Magnolia Editions, Oakland, CA

Bruce Conner

BOMBHEAD, 1989/2002

Archival pigmented inkjet, acrylic paint on paper
32 x 25 in.

© Bruce Conner

Courtesy of Magnolia Editions, Oakland, CA

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, with Michael Anastassiades

"Priscilla, 37 kilotons Nevada, 1957"

Huggable Atomic Mushroom, 2004

Reflective fabric, polyester stuffing
(height) 10.6 x (circumference) 11.8 in.

Courtesy of the Artists

Joy Garnett

Baker, 1998

Oil on canvas, 20 x 26 in.

*Courtesy of the Artist
and Winkelman Gallery, New York*

Joy Garnett

Dominic Sunset, DVD, 2005

7:13 minutes

Music by Ben Neill, Produced by Bill Jones

*Courtesy of the Artist
and Winkelman Gallery, New York*

Joy Garnett

Forest Shockwave (4-panel polyptych), 1998

Oil on canvas, 15 x 20 in. each

*Courtesy of the Artist
and Winkelman Gallery, New York*

Joy Garnett

Shockwave, Jeeps, 1998

Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in.

*Courtesy of the Artist
and Winkelman Gallery, New York*

Joy Garnett

Test (diptych), 1998

Oil on canvas, 28 x 30 in. each

Courtesy of the Artist
and Winkleman Gallery, New York

Vincent Johnson

A-BOMB, 2008

Lightjet print, 30 x 40 in.

Courtesy of the Artist

Vincent Johnson

American Cold War Shelters, 2008

Lightjet print, 30 x 40 in.

Courtesy of the Artist

Vincent Johnson

Civil Defense Logo, 2008

Vinyl, 42 x 42 in.

Courtesy of the Artist

Vincent Johnson

London Blitz, 2008

Lightjet print, 30 x 40 in.

Courtesy of the Artist

Michael Light

100 SUNS: 096 Romeo/11 Megatons/Bikini Atoll/1954, 2003

Pigment print on aluminum, 20 x 16 in.

Courtesy of the Artist and Hosfelt Gallery,
San Francisco and New York

Michael Light

100 SUNS: 015 Sugar/1.2 Kilotons/Nevada/1951, 2003

Pigment print on aluminum, 20 x 16 in.

Courtesy of the Artist and Hosfelt Gallery,
San Francisco and New York

Michael Light

100 SUNS: 081 Truckee/210 Kilotons/Christmas Island/1962, 2003

Pigment print on aluminum, 20 x 24 in.

Courtesy of the Artist and Hosfelt Gallery,
San Francisco and New York

Robert Longo

Grable (B), 2003

Charcoal and ink on vellum, 13 x 10 1/8 in.

Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures

Robert Longo

Study for Joe, Russian Bomb Test, 2004

Ink and charcoal on vellum, 16 x 20 in.

Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures

Robert Longo

Study of the Mike Bomb Test, 2004

Ink and charcoal on vellum, 16 x 20 in.

Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures

Robert Longo

Untitled-Mike Test (Head of Goya), 2003

Charcoal on mounted paper, 72 x 96 in.

Collection of the Artist

Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures

Richard Misrach

Dead Animals #93, 1987

Digital chromogenic color print, 48 x 60 in.

Collection of the Artist

Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco,
Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles,
and Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York

Richard Misrach

Dead Animals #454, 1988

Digital chromogenic color print, 48 x 60 in.

Collection of the Artist

Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco,
Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles, and Pace/MacGill
Gallery, New York

Trevor Paglen

Chemical and Biological Weapons Proving Ground/Dugway, UT/Distance-42 miles/10:51am, 2005

C-print, 50 x 50 in.

Edition of 5

© Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of the Artist and Bellwether,
New York

Trevor Paglen

Surveillance Site/Bald Mountain, NV/Distance-24 miles/5:56pm, 2005

C-Print, 20 x 20 in.

Edition of 5

© Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of the Artist and Bellwether,
New York



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