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**GROUNDBREAKING ART INSTITUTE EXHIBITION FIRST TO EXPLORE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN CONCEPTUAL ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Light Years Features More Than 140 Works by Antin, Baldessari, Nauman, Ruscha, and More  
Exhibition Opens December 13, 2011: On View Only in Chicago  
Special Public Screening of Andy Warhol's Empire on December 9, 2011**

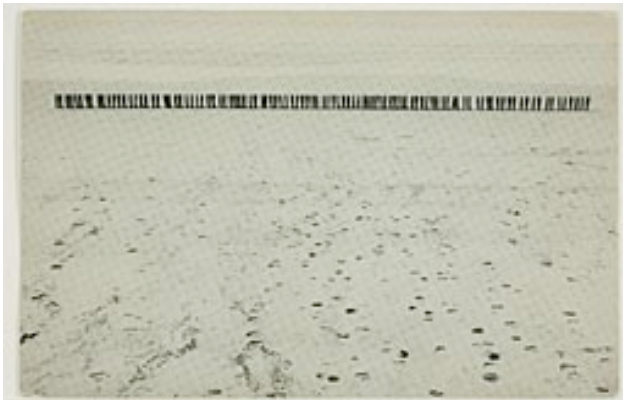
The 1960s and 1970s are recognized as the defining era of the Conceptual Art movement, a period in which centuries-held assumptions about the nature of art itself were questioned and dissolved. Until now, the pivotal role that photography played in this movement has never been fully examined. The Art Institute of Chicago has organized the first major survey of influential artists of this period who used photography in ways that went far beyond its traditional definitions as a medium—and succeeded thereby in breaking down the boundaries of all mediums in



contemporary art. ***Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977***—on view **December 13, 2011 through March 11, 2012**—is the first exhibition to explore how artists of this era used photography as a hybrid image field that navigated among painting and sculpture, film, and book arts as well as between fine art and the mass media. More than 140 works by 57 artists will fill the Art Institute's Regenstein Hall in this major exhibition that will be seen only in Chicago. Bringing to the fore work from the Italian group Arte Povera as well as artists from Eastern Europe who are rarely shown in the United States, *Light Years* also includes many pieces that have not been on public display in decades by such major artists as Mel Bochner, Tony Conrad, Michael Heizer,

Gordon Matta-Clark, and Emilio Prini. To open the exhibition, the Art Institute has arranged a special outdoor screening of Andy Warhol's *Empire*, an eight-hour film of the Empire State Building. In a first for the United States, Warhol's *Empire* will be projected from the Modern Wing's third floor to be seen on the exterior of the Aon Center on **Friday, December 9**.

The acceptance of photography as fine art was an evolutionary process. Early 20th-century avant-garde movements such as Dada, Surrealism, and Constructivism articulated a new set of standards for art in which photography played a major role. By the 1930s, modernist photography found a small but influential niche in museum exhibitions and the art market, and vernacular forms such as photojournalism and amateur snapshots became a source of artistic inspiration. Engagement with mass media, exemplified in Pop Art, became prominent in the 1950s. Yet only with the advent of



Conceptual Art did artists with training in painting, sculpture, and the graphic arts begin to make and exhibit their own photographs or photographic works as fine art.

Some Conceptual artists, such as Bruce Nauman, Ed Ruscha, and Valie Export took up photography seriously only for a few key months or years;

others, like Eleanor Antin, John Baldessari, Jan Dibbets, and Annette Messager have worked in photography their entire careers. Photography showed the way forward from Minimal Art, Pop Art, and other movements in painting and sculpture. But it came with its own set of questions that these artists addressed with tremendous innovation. Questions of perspective, sequence, scale, and captioning which have a rich history in photography, were answered in entirely new ways and made into central concerns for art in general.

Photography in these artists' hands was the antithesis of a separate and definable "medium." It became instead "unfixed": photobooks, photolithographs, photo canvases, photo grids, slide and film pieces, and even single prints all counted as valid creative forms. The variety of work showcased in *Light Years* is crucial to conveying the greatest contribution of the Conceptual era: to turn contemporary art into a field without a medium.

*Light Years* showcases a great number of works that have not been seen together—or at all—since the years around 1970. Victor Burgin's *Photopath*, a lifesize print of a 60-foot stretch of flooring

placed directly on top of the floor that it records, has not been shown in more than 20 years and never in the United States. Likewise being shown for the first time in the U.S. are pieces by Italian artists Gilberto Zorio, Emilio Prini, Giulio Paolini, and others associated with the classic postwar movement Arte Povera. Paolini's early photcanvas *Young Man Looking At Lorenzo Lotto* (1967), an icon of European conceptualism, has only rarely been shown at all after entering a private collection in the early 1970s. Mel Bochner's *Surface Dis/Tension: Blowup* (1969) has not been seen since its presentation at Marian Goodman Gallery in the now legendary 1970 exhibition *Artists and Photographs*, from which no visual documentation survives. Equally rare and important early works by Laurie Anderson, Marcel Broodthaers, Francesco Clemente, Tony Conrad, Gilbert & George, Dan Graham, Michael Heizer, and many others make the show a revelation for those interested in key figures of new art in the 1960s and '70s. A special emphasis is placed on artists from Hungary, a center for photoconceptual activity that has long been overlooked in Western Europe and the United States.



In conjunction with *Light Years*, a special opening event is scheduled for **Friday, December 9, 2011** at

**6:00 pm:** the Art Institute will project **Andy Warhol's** film *Empire* in its entirety from the museum's Bluhm Family Terrace across Millennium Park onto 12 upper stories (150 feet tall) of the Aon Center. *Empire* consists of a single stationary shot of the Empire State Building filmed from 8:06 p.m. until 2:42 a.m. on July 25 and 26, 1964. Slowed down to make the passage of time even more "artificially real," the eight-hour, five-minute film, which is typically shown in a theater or gallery, lacks a traditional narrative or characters. It is the very passage from daylight to darkness that becomes the film's narrative, while the protagonist is the iconic building in New York City. The projection in Chicago—birthplace of the modern skyscraper—is in keeping with key themes in Conceptual uses of photography, foremost among them the desire to test whether an image of a thing can not just depict but somehow "stand in for" that thing. According to Warhol, the point of his classic, highly influential film was quite simply to "see time go by."

*Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977* is accompanied by a 272-page catalogue, published by the Art Institute of Chicago and distributed by Yale University Press. The book features a lead essay by Matthew S. Witkovsky, Richard and Ellen Sandor Chair and Curator of Photography at the Art Institute, which provides the larger context for photography within

Conceptual Art. Curator and historian Anne Rorimer, herself a significant figure in the early history of Conceptual Art, provides insightful typological distinctions that help make sense of the movement as a whole, while Italian art historian Giuliano Sergio gives the first account ever written of photography's uses in Arte Povera. Harvard photography professor Robin Kelsey focuses on the role of chance in several pioneering works by John Baldessari, especially *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get A Straight Line (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts)*, showing the work's debt to Marcel Duchamp but also to Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Weston. Further essays by Mark Godfrey, curator at Tate Modern, and University of Maryland professor Joshua Shannon concentrate on Douglas Huebler, an artist increasingly seen as a father figure to much work coming out of Los Angeles especially in the 1970s and '80s. The book also contains a previously unpublished "essay" by artist Allen Ruppersberg. The catalogue will be available for \$60 in the Art Institute of Chicago's Museum Shop beginning December 11, 2011.

Major funding for *Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977* is generously provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional funding is provided by the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, the Mondriaan Foundation, Amsterdam, and the Glenstone Foundation. Major funding for the catalogue is generously provided by the Lannan Foundation. Additional funding is provided by Sotheby's. The outdoor screening of Andy Warhol's *Empire* is presented with a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. Generous support is also provided by the Exhibitions Trust: Goldman Sachs, Kenneth and Anne Griffin, Thomas and Margot Pritzker, the Earl and Brenda Shapiro Foundation, Donna and Howard Stone, and Melinda and Paul Sullivan.

**Images:**

Alighiero Boetti (Italian, 1940–1994). *AW:AB =L:MD (Andy Warhol: Alighiero Boetti = Leonardo: Marcel Duchamp)*, 1967. Silk screen print with graphite on paper. 58.8 x 58.8 cm (23 5/16 x 23 5/16 in.). Colombo Collection, Milan. Artists Rights Society (ARS).

Eleanor Antin (American, born 1935), *100 Boots*, 1971-73. Fifty-one photolithographic postcards Each 11.1 x 17.8 cm (4 3/8 x 7 in.). The Art Institute of Chicago, Margaret Fisher Endowment, 2000.106.1-51. © Eleanore Antin. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, NY.

Andy Warhol, *Empire* (still), 1964. 16mm, black and white, silent, 8 hours 5 minutes at 16 frames per second. ©2011 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved. ©2011.

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#### **MUSEUM HOURS**

10:30 am–5:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday

10:30 am–8:00 pm Thursday

10:30 am–5:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

**Museum free to Illinois residents on first and second Wednesdays of every month.**

Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

#### **ADMISSION**

Adults \$18.00 Includes all special exhibitions

Children 14 and over, students, and seniors \$12.00 Includes all special exhibitions

Chicago residents receive a \$2.00 discount with proof of residency

Children under 14 always free

Members always free

**City of Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Museum Passport" card from any library branch for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park, including the Art Institute of Chicago.**