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**DOUBLE FEATURE HIGHLIGHTS EARLY WORKS BY
MARY LUCIER AND GORDON MATTA-CLARK**

From October 7, 2004, through January 23, 2005, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present *Double Feature: Mary Lucier and Gordon Matta-Clark*. Organized by Benjamin Weil, SFMOMA curator of media arts, the exhibition presents the only edition of Mary Lucier's video installation *Dawn Burn* and three Gordon Matta-Clark films: *Fire Child*, *Fresh Kill*, and *Day's End*. The exhibition juxtaposes works by two media art pioneers from the early 1970s in order to foster dialogue between their conceptual and technical explorations, offering viewers the opportunity to experience experimental works that represent defining moments in the history of media art.

The pieces in SFMOMA's third *Double Feature* presentation attempt to articulate the spaces between sculpture, video, landscape, and architecture, and the slippage between these modes of representation. Each explores the layering of time and event to suggest a multiplicity of tenses. Notes Weil, "Both Lucier and Matta-Clark are concerned with the time-based properties of media art, but their use of the format is quite different: Matta-Clark's focus is to capture an event otherwise traced only through sculptural relics and still photographs, while Lucier's work is more formally grounded in film."



Mary Lucier, *Dawn Burn* (detail), 1975; seven-channel video installation; dimensions variable; Collection SFMOMA; Accessions Committee Fund purchase: © Mary Lucier

Mary Lucier

Lucier's seven-channel video installation, *Dawn Burn*, 1975, considers the nature of narrative in video art, as well as the way the recording apparatus itself degrades through use. In this work, Lucier videotaped the sun rising over the East River in New York City for thirty minutes on seven consecutive days on seven separate tapes. Prolonged exposure to the intense light destroyed the photo-sensitive material on the camera tubes, leaving behind a burn that deepened and lengthened in each subsequent tape. Consequently, both the footage and the apparatus recorded a "memory" of the event. Lucier embraced the lyricism and documentary quality of this technical flaw, which yielded imagery reminiscent of abstract painting. As the sun etched its path in the camera tube, it created a line measuring both time and event,

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extended the artist's expressive gesture into the medium of video, and juxtaposed a manifestation of gradual decay with the continual renewal of dawn.

Installed in SFMOMA's large media gallery, the seven channels of video—revealing seven levels of burn—play on seven monitors of increasing size ensconced in an enormous, obelisk-like sculptural form. Like a monument to time, this monolithic video-object houses a complex historical continuum, exploring themes of permanence and memory. Part of SFMOMA's media arts collection, *Dawn Burn* greatly influenced later generations of artists and introduced new dimensions to the video medium. The work has been restored for this presentation.

Lucier (b. 1944) is internationally regarded as part of the vanguard of video art. Often described as “cinematic objects,” her work integrates the two- and three-dimensional, deriving meaning through the merged associations of film, sculpture, and performance. Other well-known works by Lucier include *Fire Writing: Performance*, 1976; *Denman's Col (Geometry)*, 1981; *Ohio at Giverny*, 1983; and *Wintergarden*, 1984.

Gordon Matta-Clark

Double Feature continues in the small media gallery with a screening of short films by Matta-Clark documenting three of the artist's architectural and industrial destructions produced in the 1970s, considered his most vital period. Much of Matta-Clark's work was event-based and therefore temporary; the results of these actions exist only as sculptural fragments, photographs, and film/video documentation. More than simple records of his artistic activities, these three films stand independently as cinematic explorations and are characterized by the same creative provocation that informs his famous architectural deconstructions.

Fire Child (1971, 9:47 min., color, silent, Super-8 film transfer) records Matta-Clark's site-specific performance under the Brooklyn Bridge in which he meticulously builds a small wall out of refuse, then sets it on fire. As the sculptural assemblage burns to ash, it leaves behind only the slightest trace, raising questions about the ephemeral nature of urban environments and waste as architecture.

Fresh Kill (1972, 12:56 min., color, sound, 16 mm film transfer) shows the artist destroying his beloved truck (which he named “Herman Meydag”) with a bulldozer in a garbage dump. The work was made as part of 98.5, a compilation of films by artists including Ed Baynard, Susan Hall, and George Schneemar which originally was shown in 1972 at *Documenta 5* in Kassel, Germany.

Day's End (1975; 23:10 min., color, silent, Super-8 film transfer), one of Matta-Clark's most adventurous projects, documents the sectioning of Pier 52, an abandoned warehouse on the Hudson River in New York City. Over the course of two months Matta-Clark responded to the building by making a series of cuts in the walls, floorboards, and roof that allowed natural light to illuminate previously obscured interiors and layers of structural history, creating what he referred to as “a sun- and-water temple.”

Matta-Clark (1943–1978), one of the most influential Post-Minimalists, is known primarily for his large architectural excisions, called “building cuts,” wherein he literally sliced abandoned structures according to precise geometric schemes, engaging in an active dialogue with architecture.

An integral component of SFMOMA's media arts program. *Double Feature* is an ongoing series that pairs works by two artists from the Museum's permanent collection to create new dynamics between artistic concepts and to fit early media art into the larger context of contemporary art practice.

Double Feature: Mary Lucier and Gordon Matta-Clark is made possible through the generous support of the James Family Foundation.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays) 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays until 8:45 p.m.; summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day) open at 10 a.m.; closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day. Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays) 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays until 8:30 p.m.; summer hours: open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$10; seniors \$7; students \$6. SFMOMA members and children twelve and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings, 6 to 8:45 p.m., admission is half price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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