

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY
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DOUGLAS GORDON: *The End of Civilisation*

Saturday, September 8–Saturday, October 13, 2012

Opening reception for the artist: Saturday, September 8th, from 6:00 to 8:00pm

I wanted to do something with a piano in a landscape of some significance and I suppose, as a Scotsman, there's nothing more significant than the border. I thought it was beautiful to look from one country into another and I liked the idea that Hadrian's Wall is, under a certain interpretation, a great end of civilization... I was overwhelmed to be in a landscape of such beauty, and with such a huge unfathomable history.

—Douglas Gordon

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce *The End of Civilisation*, a major film installation by Douglas Gordon.

Gordon is a conjurer of collective memory and perceptual surprise whose tools include commodities and mechanisms of everyday life. Into a diverse body of work—which spans narrative video and film, sound, photographic objects, and texts both as site-specific installation and printed media—he infuses a combination of humor and trepidation to recalibrate reactions to the familiar. An early example, *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), slowed down Alfred Hitchcock's legendary film into a full day's duration, attenuating the horror until any sensation of suspense ceased to exist. In 2006, he collaborated with Philippe Parreno on the general release feature film *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait*, in which multiple cameras tracked every action and emotion of the soccer star during an important game.

In *The End of Civilisation*, a grand piano burns at a remote site deep in the Cumbrian landscape. This lushly green and desolate locale overlooking the boundary between England and Scotland was once the border of the Roman Empire. The grand piano, emblematic of high culture as both a finely crafted instrument and a beautiful sculptural object, is destroyed at the primeval edge of civilization. With this symbolic conflagration, Gordon re-enacts an ancient local tradition of igniting beacons as an admonition or communication. Inspired in part by the journey of the 2012 Olympic torch across the British Isles, *The End of Civilisation* is both a celebration and a warning—of fire as a symbol of optimism and hope, but also of risk, danger, and destruction.

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The film is shown on multiple screens and with layered sound. One screen is devoted to a close recording of the burning piano, from when it is first set alight to when it has been reduced to ashes. Another presents a panning shot of the tranquil surrounding landscape—occasionally, licks of flame or wisps of smoke invade the periphery of the screen, the only indication that the seemingly serene landscape is in close proximity to a raging fire. *The End of Civilisation* was first screened on July 5, 2012, at the Tyne Theater, on the site of Hadrian's Wall in Newcastle City Center as part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Commissioned by Great North Run Culture and Locus+, the film was funded by Arts Council England. It is part of the London 2012 Festival.

Douglas Gordon was the recipient of the 1996 Turner Prize, the 1997 Venice Biennial's Premio 2000 award, the 1998 Hugo Boss Prize awarded by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the 2008 Roswitha Haftmann Prize, and the 2012 Käthe Kollwitz Prize. His work has been the subject of numerous museum exhibitions, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2001); the Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (2006); "Timeline," The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2006, traveled to MALBA Colección Costantini, Buenos Aires through 2007); "Pretty much every word written, spoken, heard, overheard from 1989....," the MART, Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Rovereto, Italy (2006); "Superhumanatural," the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh (2006); "Between Darkness and Light: Works 1989–2007," Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany (2007); "Blood, Sweat, Tears," DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague (2009); Tate Britain, London (2010), and Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main (2011) and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (Will open January 2013). *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* premiered at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival before screenings at numerous international venues. *k.364* premiered at the Venice Film Festival in September 2010, and *Henry Rebel: Drawing and Burning* premiered at Art Basel's Art Unlimited in 2012.

Gordon lives and works in Berlin and Glasgow.

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