

## Jack Goldstein

### **The story actually begins in the middle somewhere.**

Aphorism, Jack Goldstein.

Goldstein has been called the most important “artist’s artist” of the last 30 years. Jenni Lomax, previewing this exhibition in *The Independent*, wrote: “Since his death in 2003, Jack Goldstein’s influence has become more widely recognised, particularly in terms of how he deals with appropriated images. He’s a continual presence, really, in the minds of contemporary artists both in America...and here.”

The work shown at Nottingham Contemporary is Goldstein’s first solo exhibition in the UK. It brings together his work in film, sculpture, paintings, words and performance.

Born in 1945 in Montreal, Canada, Goldstein moved to Los Angeles as a child. A postgraduate student at CalArts, he was one of a generation taught by John Baldessari, many of whom became influential artists by the late 70s.

In 1977 he was one of five artists – including Sherrie Levine and Robert Longo – whose work was showcased in the famous *Pictures* exhibition in New York. The artists had a “shared interest in the photographically-based mass media as a resource to be raided and re-used,” David Evans has stated.

Goldstein described his own influences as encompassing sculpture, minimalism and pop art. “The ease with which Warhol was able to span the chasm between mass culture and fine art laid the groundwork for Goldstein’s appropriation of the tools of one

in order to reconstruct the other,” wrote Chrissie Iles.

Elsewhere he said: “My work has always been very much involved with sculpture in the sense that it’s about defining something in space and time, very much about our relationship to it, our distance to that thing. I still feel that I have the same concerns, except that I’ve moved into subject matter; I’ve stayed away from the abstract form and moved into something that is a little more personal. I’m interested in the gap between minimalism and pop art and the subject matter from our culture that’s in pop art. But there’s also a link to conceptual art. It’s more about the content than the form, that it’s the same whether it’s performance, film, records, etc, and that a lot of the experiences take place in your head. Real time and real space don’t matter.” (*Interview with Morgan Fisher.*)



Jack Goldstein, Still from MGM, 1975,  
16mm colour film, courtesy Galerie Daniel Buchholz,  
Köln/Berlin and the Estate of Jack Goldstein

## Film

**“If I had all the resources of Hollywood at my disposal I’d make weather films: blowing trees, twisting trees, floods, walking on the ocean. I would love to be able to do a performance where a black cloud comes over a hill and it would rain for thirty seconds..It’s just incredible to be able to control nature. It’s so artificial. I love it.”**

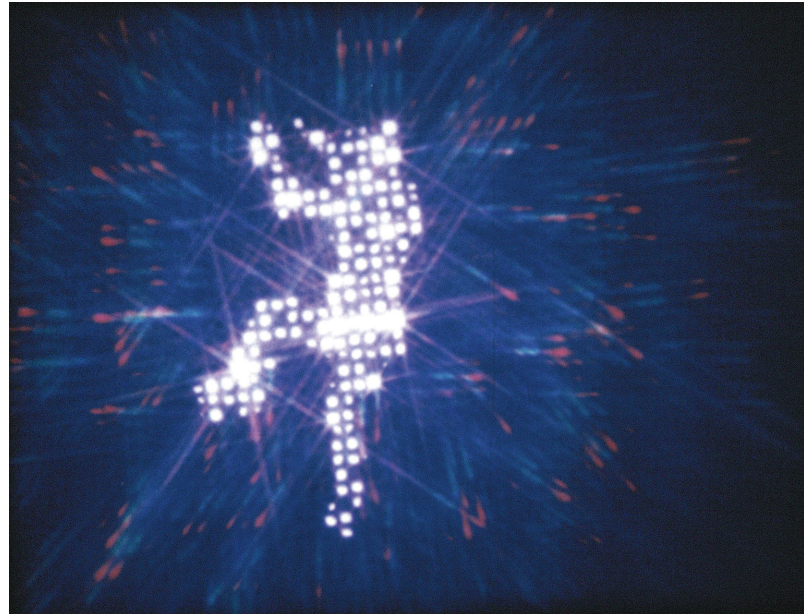
Jack Goldstein.

“Goldstein’s films...use movement to create still images in the mind and eye of the viewer, rendering time concrete,” Chrissie Iles has written.

His early black and white films mix performance and image. In *A Glass of Milk* (1972) a fist pounds the table on which the milk is placed, spilling it on to the black surface - the action creating the image.

His second group of colour films employed the skills of Hollywood’s technicians. “The work is pure subliminal images. They’re all Freudian in some sense only because they are personal: knife, dog, door, bird, lion...It’s taking loaded images and reducing the symbolism. Then all of a sudden they take on new meaning, but you’re still left with some of the old meaning that lingers in the back of your mind. What interests me is that space between your head and your heart...” Goldstein said.

**Technology does everything for us, so that we no longer have to function in terms of experience. We function in terms of aesthetics.** Aphorism, Jack Goldstein.



Jack Goldstein, Still from *The Jump*, 1978,  
16mm colour film, courtesy Galerie Daniel Buchholz,  
Köln/Berlin and the Estate of Jack Goldstein

## Records

Regarded by Goldstein as “cousins” to a film, between 1977 and 1983 he made records from clear, coloured and black vinyl. Each refers to a single object, action or event, ranging from trees being felled, a murder, a drowning, and the wind. The sound is taken from a sound effects library.

“The colours came first, then the images,” Goldstein said. “It’s not the sounds that I’m actually interested in, but the images.”

“I wanted to do a film of the wind, for instance, but somehow I just couldn’t seem to realise it. As a transparent record it works beautifully. I can hold the wind in my hand... It’s physically present. I wanted to do a drowning man as a film but it wasn’t possible, so I made the record instead. The record gives you the same experience. That’s the direction my work is moving in, letting you experience the sense of an extreme situation, but at a distance, so that you can control it. I don’t believe that you actually have to experience something in real time and space to know it. You can experience it in your head without having to experience it in your body.”

## Performance

Goldstein’s first films, made while a student at CalArts, documented his performance of simple, but threatening actions. By the 70s he had substituted himself with images and objects. His performances from that period, which he documented in a series of image and text works (in Gallery 4), have a similarly cinematic sense.

Nottingham Contemporary will re-stage one of these performances – *Two Boxers*, (1979) – for the first time since Goldstein’s death. Goldstein re-staged it for his retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, curated by Chrissie Iles. The performance, presented in *The Space* on 27 January, will begin with a lecture by Iles.



Jack Goldstein, *The Burning Forest*, 1976,  
7 inch coloured vinyl, courtesy Galerie Daniel Buchholz,  
Köln/Berlin and the Estate of Jack Goldstein



Jack Goldstein, Still from *Shane*, 1975,  
16mm colour film, courtesy Galerie Daniel Bachholz,  
Köln/Berlin and the Estate of Jack Goldstein

## Paintings

**“I was never interested in war images in terms of destruction. I was looking at what made those images beautiful.”** Jack Goldstein, (*interview with Chris Dercon, 1985.*)

Jack Goldstein's paintings were executed by assistants, using the airbrush technique that characterised popular imagery in the 80s. These images of war, cataclysm and natural disaster are highly cinematic in terms of lighting, framing and arrested action. They appear to represent the earth's last images, yet they remain coolly detached from the disasters represented, without moral commentary.

Goldstein's work is not directly autobiographical, yet it can be read as giving a sense of his life. The artist himself often disappears, whether avoiding a spotlight in an early film, or absenting himself from the production of these paintings. He fell from favour in the 90s and withdrew from the art world altogether. Despite a renewed interest in his work with a retrospective at New York's Whitney Museum in 2002, he took his own life the following year.

**An explosive is beauty before its consequences.**

Aphorism, Jack Goldstein.



Jack Goldstein, *Untitled (Fireworks Exploding)*, 1984, (detail), acrylic on canvas, courtesy B.Z. + Michael Schwartz and the Estate of Jack Goldstein

## Words

Goldstein's final finished work was a series of drawings he called Totems – columns of phrases, both everyday and enigmatic, arranged in a highly graphic and pictorial manner.

His Aphorisms can be read on the screen in Reception between Galleries 3 and 4.

“In many respects Jack Goldstein remains his own best critic...  
The aphorism...is well suited for training the would-be spectator.”  
John Muller, 2003.

**Art should be a trailer for the future.**

Aphorism, Jack Goldstein.



Logo by Ryan Gander

## Nottingham Contemporary

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### Front Cover

Jack Goldstein, Still from Butterflies, 1975,  
16mm, colour. Courtesy Galerie Daniel Buchholz,  
Köln/Berlin and The Estate of Jack Goldstein

Logo by Loris Greaud

### Back Cover

Anne Collier, Eye (Enlargement of Color Negative), 2007.  
C-print. Courtesy of Anton Kern Gallery, New York,  
Marc Foxx Gallery, LA and Corvi-Mora, London

Logo by Lucy Skaer