

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on March 22, 2018

Michael Snow: *Closed Circuit*

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- Dates: March 22–July 1, 2018
- Curator: Manuel Cirauqui
- Film & Video gallery (103)

From March 22 through July 1, 2018, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents the exhibition *Closed Circuit*, featuring works by the renowned Canadian artist Michael Snow (Toronto, 1928), a major figure in the development of experimental cinema, moving image installation, and conceptual photography since the 1960s. With this new exhibition, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao launches the 2018 program for its Film & Video gallery, a space that is entirely devoted to the presentation of key works of video art, film, and contemporary practices addressing the moving image.

Besides video art and experimental film, Michael Snow's oeuvre also embraces painting, photography, sculpture, and music. A multifaceted artist, Snow critically blends his knowledge of different techniques and media in the creation of his works. As he has explained, "my paintings are made by a film-maker, my sculptures are made by a musician, my films by a painter... and sometimes they all work together."

Moving freely from one discipline to another, Michael Snow reflects upon the world's systems of representation, visual and not. For him, the materiality of the filmic image—its temporality, sound, color, and luminosity—is as important as what is represented. In this sense, the artist understands film as a kind of sculpture of light and time, and devises objects that will monopolize, deflect or block the spectator's view, thus revealing the artwork's capacity to create specific circuits of attention.

While presenting a variety of formats and production periods, the four works making up the exhibition *Closed Circuit* have a common feature—the image is radically dissociated from film support. *Sight* (1968) is a structure of aluminum and plastic mounted on a window, restricting its view to a limited diagonal. This unusual framing makes perspective disappear, forcing us to look instead at the totality of the art object, which is simultaneously the frame and the landscape it frames, in the manner of an oblique camera. The work *Site* (1969/2016), a deliberate homophone of the previous piece, is a structure of stainless steel accompanied by a short text that evokes the sea and its motion. The artist replaces the image with the word, and the place evoked by the sculpture as site. What is presented is not an image, but the idea of an image.

In proximity to these works, two video devices explore other links between image, sculpture, and place. *The Corner of Braque and Picasso Streets* (2009) uses a fixed camera to project a real-time view of the exterior of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao on a screen made out of pedestals from other exhibitions. This sculptural device gives rise to a form of ephemeral cinema that captures the everyday life of the city with no filter or human direction. Meanwhile, the work contains a dual reference to the history of painting: as a window on the world—a recurrent theme in much of Snow's work—and also as a 'Cubist' piece. The

image wanders amongst the many volumes onto which it is projected, evoking the early works of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. In the meantime, *Observer* (1974) directly involves the viewer's body, which is pushed to stand on a large X marked on the floor where a camera will capture its image in real time. As a result, the viewer enters an odd loop to appear as simultaneously observer and object of vision. Playing with perspective and depth of field, Snow offers each viewer a direct experience of the flattening effects of video representation, a disquieting moment of two-dimensionality.

Michael Snow. Biography

Michael Snow (Toronto, 1928) is one of the towering figures of contemporary art. Multifaceted in spirit, Snow has worked in many disciplines, achieving international recognition thanks to the singularity of his visual production. Most of his oeuvre revolves around the mechanics of perception and its paradoxes.

His cinematic work is found in film archives around the world, and has been shown at countless festivals. His installations, sculptures, paintings and photographs meanwhile form part of important collections in Canada and elsewhere, such as the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ontario (Ottawa), MoMA (New York), the Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris) and the Museum Ludwig (Cologne/Vienna). His work has been the object of major retrospectives, such as the one organized at The Power Plant (Toronto) in 1994, which traveled on to the Centre national de la photographie (Paris) and MAMCO (Geneva), and those held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2014 and La Virreina Centre de la Imatge in Barcelona in 2015. Snow was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1972, and he has received other distinctions, including the title of Officer and Companion of the Order of Canada in 1982 and 2007 respectively, and the Governor General's Award for the Visual Arts in 2000. He was appointed Chevalier de l'ordre des arts et des lettres in France in 1995, and the University of Paris conferred an honorary doctorate on him in 2004.

Encounter with the artist: Michael Snow (March 22 at 18:30)

At 6:30 pm on March 22, in the Auditorium of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Michael Snow will talk to curator Manuel Cirauqui about his creative process and the works shown in the exhibition *Closed Circuit*. After the talk, the audience will be invited to take part in the discussion.

Film & Video (gallery 103)

The Film & Video gallery is a space devoted to video art, video installation, and contemporary practices addressing the moving image. Featuring work from various collections in the constellation of Guggenheim Museums, as well as other international collections, the programming of this gallery began in March 2014 with Christian Marclay's installation *The Clock*, which was followed by *The Visitors*, by the Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson, and *The Crazyhouse (Megan, Simon, Nicky, Philip, Dee)*, *Liverpool, UK*, by Rineke Dijkstra. Shown in 2015 were the *Thread Routes* series by the conceptual artist Kimsooja, *Parallax* by Shahzia Sikander, and *The Cloud of Unknowing* by the Singaporean artist Ho Tzu Nyen. In 2016, the turn came for *The Annunciation – Marian Ilmestys* by the Finnish artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila, *Sigh* by Sam-Taylor Johnson, and *Disorient* by Fiona Tan. In 2017, the Film & Video gallery featured the disturbing (*Untitled*)

Human Mask (2014) by the French artist Pierre Huyghe, along with *The Guests* by experimental cinema pioneer Ken Jacobs, and the ambitious performance-based film work *Winter* (2013) by Amie Siegel.

Cover image:

Michael Snow

The Corner of Braque and Picasso Streets, 2009

Closed circuit video camera, video projection, plinths

Variable dimensions, site-specific arrangement of wall screen structure

composed by the artist for each installation

Courtesy Michael Snow and àngels barcelona

© Michael Snow



For more information:

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All information about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus (press room).

Press Images for
Michael Snow: *Closed Circuit*
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 359 008 and email: media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus

Michael Snow

The Corner of Braque and Picasso Streets, 2009

Closed circuit video camera, video projection, plinths

Variable dimensions, site-specific arrangement of wall screen structure composed by the artist for each installation

Courtesy Michael Snow and Àngels Barcelona

© Michael Snow



Michael Snow

Sight, 1968

Aluminum, plastic

142.2 x 106.7 x 2.0 cm

56.0 x 42.0 x 0.8 inches

Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Foundation Endowment Fund and Canada Council Matching Funds.

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Michael Snow

Site, 1969/2016

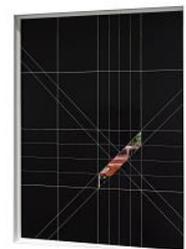
Stainless steel, text card

172.7 x 71.1 x 71.1 cm

68 x 28 x 28 inches

Courtesy Michael Snow and Christopher Cutts Gallery, Toronto

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Michael Snow

Observer, 1974

Video camera, video projection, adhesive tape

80.0 x 100.0 cm

31.5 x 39.4 inches

Courtesy Michael Snow and Àngels Barcelona

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