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THIS JUST IN - GETTY MUSEUM EXPLORES ARTISTIC RESPONSES TO JOURNALISM IN *BREAKING NEWS: TURNING THE LENS ON MASS MEDIA*

Exhibition includes work by Donald Blumberg, Sarah Charlesworth, Robert Heinecken, Catherine Opie, Martha Rosler, among others



A Case Study in Finding an Appropriate TV Newswoman (A CBS Docudrama in Words and Pictures), 1984. Robert Heinecken (American, 1931-2006). Silver-dye bleach prints. Frame: 112,4 x 108 cm (44 ¼ x 42 ½ in.). Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Partial Purchase through The Board of Overseers Acquisition Fund and Partial Gift of Marc Selwyn © The Robert Heinecken Trust. EX.2017.4.3.6.

LOS ANGELES – Photographs have helped shape people's perceptions of current events since the late-nineteenth century. The ubiquity of newspapers, magazines, and televised news during the mid-twentieth century gave rise to the modern mass media culture, eventually spawning critical discourse from a variety of perspectives. The philosopher Marshall McLuhan's writings during the 1960s, including the now-famous concept that "the medium is the message," assert that the form in which information is as significant as the content, an insight that has influenced a generation of artists and critics. Featuring photographs and video made over the last forty years, ***Breaking News: Turning the Lens on Mass Media, on view December 20, 2016-April 30, 2017 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center*** explores how artists have responded to the media's coverage of topics ranging from local stories to international politics and military conflict.

"The timeliness of this exhibition could not be greater. With the recent election still at the forefront of national and international news, it is timely to showcase how contemporary artists have, over recent decades, focused on mass media as a rich source of provocative subject matter that reveals its agendas even as it insists on its objectivity," says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "In their need both to represent and to give meaning to their subjects, art and journalism have much in common, and can even feed off each other, as this exhibition demonstrates."

Among the 17 artists featured in the exhibition, here are some selected highlights:

Donald Blumberg (American, born 1935)



Untitled, from the series *Television Political Mosaics, 1968-1969*, 1968-1969. Donald R. Blumberg (American, born 1935). Gelatin silver print. Framed (approx.): 71.1 x 61 cm (28 x 24 in.). Donald R. and Grace Blumberg © Donald Blumberg. L.2015.139.4

In 1968, while teaching photography at the State University of New York, Buffalo, Donald Blumberg began photographing his television screen. The resulting series, *Television Abstractions, 1968-1969* (1968-69) and *Television Political Mosaics, 1968-1969* (1968-69), feature politicians Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and George Wallace as seen on evening broadcasts. The photographer abstracted details and emphasized repetition of content through a variety of darkroom techniques, including reversing tonalities through solarization and utilizing multiple negatives to create a single print.

Blumberg was simultaneously working on the series *Daily Photographs, 1969-1970* (1969-70), in which he photographed images, from war

fatalities to grieving parents, that appeared on the pages of newspapers. He focused on pictures that dealt with highly charged political, social, and religious implications of the Vietnam War, surrounded by fragments of text and segments of advertisements. Together these bodies of work present an intensely politicized moment in American history.

Sarah Charlesworth (American, 1947–2013)

Between 1977 and 1979, Sarah Charlesworth created the series *Modern History* by photographing the front pages of various newspapers after having masked out the text, save for the masthead. Her removal of text reveals editorial decisions that might otherwise have gone unnoticed, including the hierarchy of information conveyed by differences in cropping and sizing of images.

The two multi-part works in the exhibition, both made in 1978 as part of this series, trace newspaper coverage of the abduction and assassination of former Italian Prime Minister Aldo

Moro by a terrorist organization. *April 20, 1978* focuses on the coverage of Moro's capture as reported on a specific day by news outlets from around the world following a statement by the kidnappers indicating that the body was to be found at the bottom of a lake in the mountains north of Rome. *Osservatore Romano, March 17–May 10, 1978*, takes as its subject the Vatican newspaper's treatment of the event, beginning a day after Moro was seized and concluding on the day his body was discovered in the trunk of a car.

Omer Fast (Israeli, born 1972)

CNN Concatenated (2002) utilizes footage Fast recorded from the CNN news network. He edited the clips so that each presenter speaks only a single word, but collectively their words form a series of monologues of varying lengths that are suggestive of personal conversations rather than conventional news reports.

By taking the words of television newscasters out of their original contexts in order to create new narratives, Fast's work comments on the way in which news programs rely on a newscaster's method of delivery and manipulated footage to generate emotional reactions from their audiences. The rapid succession of images assembled by the artist also parodies the nonstop nature of 24-hour news channels and the urgency with which stories are presented.

Robert Heinecken (American, 1931–2006)

Heinecken's work and teachings, which focused primarily on images appropriated from magazines and television, radically expanded the range of possibilities for photography as art. The rise in popularity of televised news, and of the newscaster as a personality, were subjects of fascination to which Heinecken repeatedly returned. In the mid-1980s, he made several works that feature newscasters, often in isolated bust-length views and arranged according to similar facial expressions, as seen in *TV Newswomen (Faith Daniels and Barbara Walters)* (1986).

One of Heinecken's most ambitious projects involving televised news is *A Case Study in Finding an Appropriate Newswoman (A CBS Docudrama in Words and Pictures)* (1984). For this multi-panel work, the artist captured photographs of individual newscasters from the television screen, then made composite images by printing two negatives on one sheet, and added text detailing a fictitious effort by the CBS Network to create the ideal newscaster.

Alfredo Jaar (Chilean, born 1956)

Alfredo Jaar's politically motivated work often incorporates images recycled from the news in order to present a critical commentary on the ways in which media outlets utilize images to shape public understanding of stories.



Untitled (Newsweek) (detail), 1994. Alfredo Jaar (Chilean, born 1956). Inkjet print. Mount: 50.5 x 34.9 x 4.4 cm (19 7/8 x 13 3/4 x 1 3/4 in.). Courtesy of Alfredo Jaar and Galerie Lelong, New York. © Alfredo Jaar, courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York. EX.2017.4.6.1 - .17.

Untitled (Newsweek) (1994) is a multi-part work for which Jaar photographed the front pages of *Newsweek* magazine over a seventeen-week period during the height of the genocide in Rwanda. Jaar pairs the pictures on each issue's cover—often illustrating a cultural, social, or political concern in the United States—with text detailing the number of fatalities in Rwanda during the same week.

With *Searching for Africa in LIFE* (1996), he took a similar approach. Surveying every cover of *Life* magazine, starting with the inaugural issue published in 1936, Jaar draws attention to how this respected and widely circulated American periodical has shaped perceptions of Africa. Over a period of sixty years, only five covers were dedicated to stories from the continent, all of which feature images of wildlife or the widespread scarcity of food. Such cover images represent what an editorial board deems journalistically important and also what they hope may drive sales.

Catherine Opie (American, born 1961)

Between 2004 and 2005, while working on the series *In and Around Home*, Catherine Opie used a hand-held Polaroid camera to photograph her television screen. The United States was then in the midst of a national election campaign and experiencing large-scale public protests against the war in Iraq, a continuing fear of terrorism, rising threats to civil liberties in the name of national security, and, in the summer of 2005, the decimation of major urban areas on the Gulf Coast by Hurricane Katrina. The near instantaneous prints allowed her to keep pace with the abundance of information broadcast on 24-hour news channels.

Opie's Polaroids depict some of the most pressing social and political issues that infiltrated her living room via news outlets during this period, and many of these broadcast images have come to define important moments in American history. Often arranged in groups that document multiple views of a single event or that juxtapose similar stories, the prints mark the photographer's deep-seated frustration with the news media's coverage of current events.

Martha Rosler (American, born 1943)

Martha Rosler's series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967/2011) was conceived and produced as a set of collages during the height of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. As the first major armed conflict to be broadcast on television, and as people witnessed atrocities in their own homes, it became known as the "living-room war."

Rosler collected issues of *Life* magazine and cut out pictures of the conflict and of sumptuous and stylish interiors. Images of these discordant subjects were often printed on adjacent pages, yet they represented distant and unrelated worlds. After assembling these disparate illustrations, with an emphasis on jarring juxtapositions between the suffering of Vietnamese citizens and the comforts of American homeowners, she circulated photocopied reproductions of the collages in underground newspapers, antiwar journals, and flyers. Several decades later, noticing an abundance of similar images in popular publications, Rosler revisited the original collages to make these prints.



First Lady (Pat Nixon), from the series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*, c. 1967 – 1972. Martha Rosler. Inkjet print. Framed: 53.3 × 63.5 cm (21 × 25 in.) The Museum of Modern Art New York, Committee on Photography and The Modern Women's Fund. © Martha Rosler, courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, NY. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. EX.2017.4.4.7

Breaking News: Turning the Lens on Mass Media is on view December 20, 2016-April 30, 2017 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center, and is curated by Arpad Kovacs, assistant curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum. The exhibition features the work of John Baldessari, Dara Birnbaum and Dan Graham, Donald Blumberg, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, Sarah Charlesworth, Omer Fast, Robert Heineken, Alfredo Jaar, Ron Jude, David LaMelas and Hildegarde Duane, Masao Mochizuki, Antoni Muntadas, Catherine Opie, and Martha Rosler.

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