

Rosen, Miss. "In Case You Weren't Sure About Modern Art, "It's All True"," *Crave*, 27 July 2016.

 CRAVE

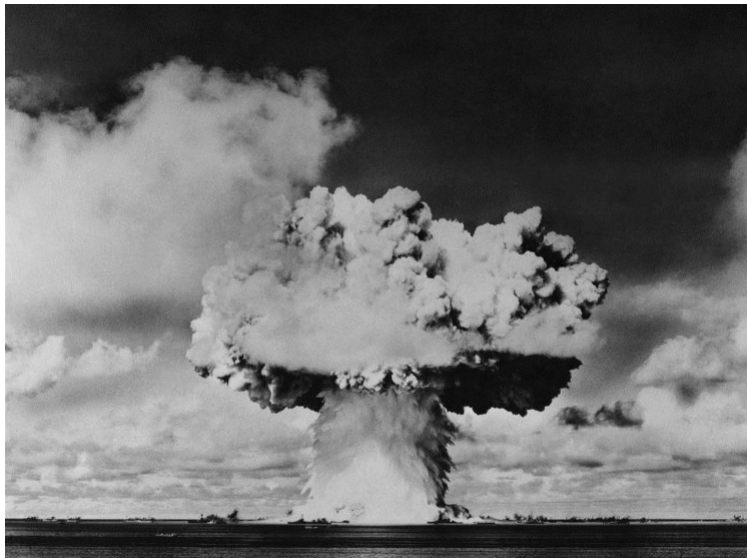
ART

## IN CASE YOU WEREN'T SURE ABOUT MODERN ART, "IT'S ALL TRUE"

See the first complete retrospective of American's premier avant-guardian, Bruce Conner.

by [Miss Rosen](#)

Jul 27th, 2016

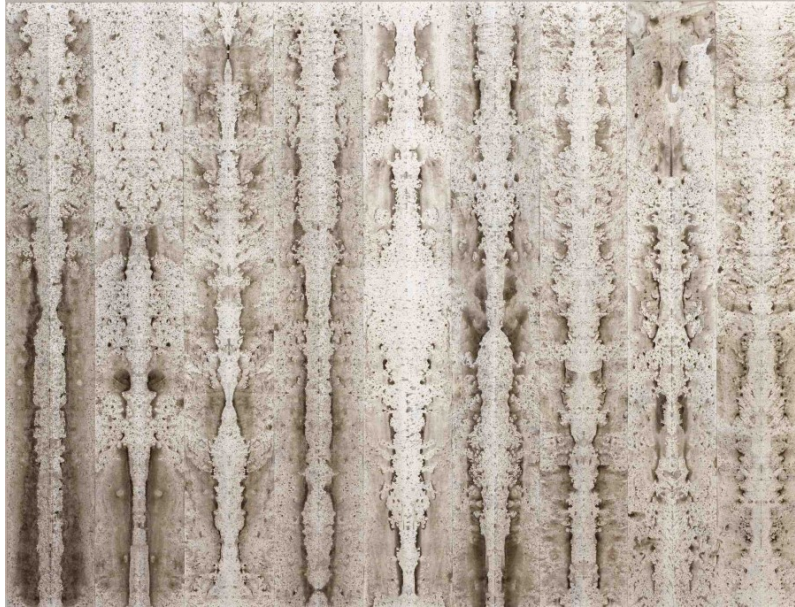


*Artwork: Bruce Conner. CROSSROADS, 1976. 35mm film (black and white, sound) transferred to video. 37 min. The Museum of Modern Art, New York and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (Accessions Committee Fund purchase), with the generous support of the New Art Trust. © Bruce Conner 2016. Courtesy Conner Family Trust.*

"The artist has his role in our society that the madman had, that the fool had, that the prophet had ...he's a protected fool. The fool with his bells says foolish, stupid things, but every once in a while he also comes out with the truth," American artist Bruce Conner (1933–2008) observed in an oral history interview for the [Archives of American Art](#). "It's a very dangerous job to be the fool. He's got to eat at the king's table and be part of the process. The king really wants him around because all the other people (who are real fools) wouldn't say what they really meant."

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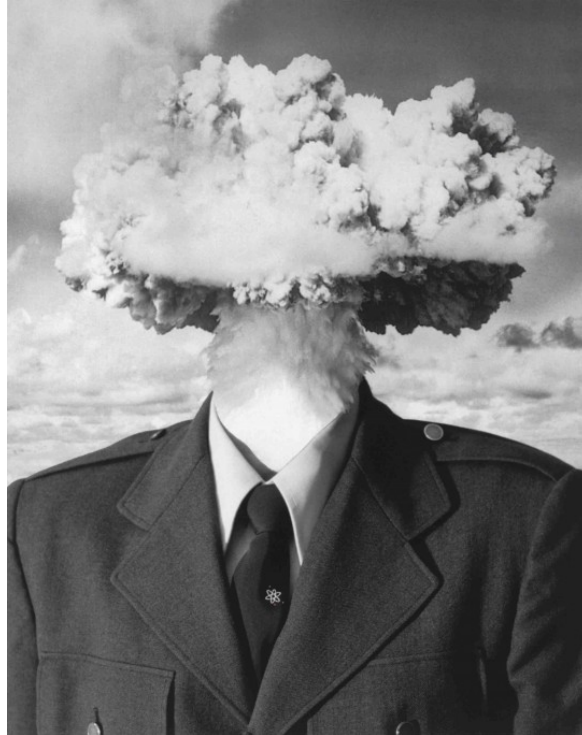
Hailing from Wichita, KS, Conner arrived in San Francisco in 1957 and quickly found himself at the center of the Beat community. As the California art scene took off, Conner helped chart a path in a wide array of media that delved into the dark waters of America's postwar anxiety. With the constant threat of nuclear warfare lurking on the horizon, a profoundly bourgeois sensibility arose to soothe and numb. As mass media consumerism gave Baby Boomers a well-scripted identity, the ability to be comfort and convenience became the salve of mid-century America.



Bruce Conner. BURNING BRIGHT. 1996. Ink on paper mounted on ragboard; 27 5/8 x 36 in. (70.17 x 91.44 cm) Collection SFMOMA, Accessions Committee Fund: gift of the Gerson and Barbara Bakar Philanthropic Fund, Collectors Forum, Diane and Scott Helffond, Patricia and Raoul Kennedy, Phyllis and Stuart G. Moldaw, Byron R. Meyer, Madeleine H. Russell, Chara Schreyer, Elle Stephens, Norah and Norman Stone, and Phyllis Wattis © Estate of Bruce Conner / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; photo: Ben Blackwell

Conner's work was a heady critique to the prevailing norms of the day in a multiplicity of medium, creating hybrids of painting and sculpture, film and performance, drawing and printing. His process was intense. As he recalled, "I had a studio once in back of the mime troupe which was like a giant brain; a huge consciousness. I was doing assemblages. My 'job' was to go in the studio. I set myself a goal: every day I had to produce at least one sculpture, or one collage, or one painting, or one drawing. It was the rationale for my behavior....I would have all sorts of objects in there: photographs, books, feathers, beads, etc. Some would be organized. Sometimes I'd get into a fury of activity and things would get scattered. I'd start painting and it would get to the point where it just didn't make any sense to keep the paint on a limited area and I'd throw it over the whole corner of the room, so that everything had aluminum paint on it suddenly."

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Bruce Conner. BOMBHEAD. 2002. Digital print with acrylic paint additions, composition: 31 13/16 x 25 1/8" (80.8 x 63.8 cm), sheet: 38 5/16 x 31 1/8" (97.3 x 79.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. John B. Turner Fund. © 2016 Bruce Conner / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Conner's intuitive approach allowed him a fluidity between boundaries that many are keen to preserve. But as Conner understood, the role of the artist is to speak Truth. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art understands this and in response has organized **BRUCE CONNER: IT'S ALL TRUE**, the first complete retrospective of his 50-year career. Co-curated by the SFMoMA and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the exhibition is on view in New York now through October 2, 2016, then traveling to San Francisco and Madrid (schedule below). Featuring over 250 objects, from film and video to painting, assemblage, drawing, prints, photography, photograms, and performance, the exhibition is organized both chronologically and thematically, emphasizing Conner's polymathic abilities by integrating objects across the different mediums in which he worked.

Conner's ability to synthesize so many forms renders him something of an alchemist. By approaching the creative process with a freedom of being that few dare to explore, Conner brings us a new way of looking at the world.

The exhibition tour continues:

SFMOMA (October 29, 2016, to January 22, 2017)

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid (February 21 to May 22, 2017)