

# CORCORAN

GALLERY OF ART • COLLEGE of ART+DESIGN

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**CORCORAN PRESENTS DAVID LEVINTHAL: WAR GAMES**  
*Organized by Corcoran undergraduates in new curatorial seminar*  
**May 11–September 1, 2013**



**WASHINGTON, D.C.**—This May, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design will open *David Levinthal: War Games (May 11–September 1, 2013)* the first exhibition to bring together all of Levinthal's work on the subject of war. For nearly forty years, the New York-based photographer has simulated historic war zones with action figures and dioramas, producing work that comments on the representation of conflict in photography, cinema, and other media. This exhibition celebrates the acquisition of a major, career-spanning body of the artist's work, and coincides with the Corcoran's major summer exhibition, *WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath*, a survey of the history of conflict photography from the mid-1800s to the present, organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

*War Games* invites reflection on the intersection of war and play. Each photograph juxtaposes the inherent humor of toys with the horror and spectacle of war, exploring the boundaries between simulated reality and historical truth. Since

his groundbreaking book *Hitler Moves East* in 1977, Levinthal has retold the history of war as a series of toy stories, from the Civil War to Iraq, from Abraham Lincoln to Saddam Hussein.

Including recent grand-scale photographs, the retrospective shows seven different bodies of work, including *Hitler Moves East*, *Mein Kampf*, and *Wild West*, created between 1972 and the present. *Wild West* (1987–89), Levinthal’s best-known body of work, explores the American frontier and the American Indian Wars, filtered through the lens of Hollywood westerns and late-20th-century advertising. *Mein Kampf* (1993–94) luridly re-enacts Adolph Hitler’s theatrical rallies as well as horrifying scenes from the Holocaust. Levinthal’s *I.E.D.* (2008) echoes contemporary news imagery of our military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Levinthal’s imagery subverts our notion of war as a faraway phenomenon, asserting instead the simple truth that armed conflict affects each and every one of us. As Levinthal’s sole medium, action figures and models hold great significance. Levinthal once wrote: “Ever since I began working with toys, I have been intrigued with the idea that these seemingly benign objects could take on such incredible power and personality simply by the way they were photographed.”

*David Levinthal: War Games* was organized by undergraduate students in the Corcoran College of Art + Design’s first ever Curatorial Seminar, led by the museum’s curators of photography and media arts. Students worked under the guidance of curators Paul Roth and Kaitlin Booher, as well as the artist himself, learning to create the exhibition from start to finish, gaining insight and first-hand experience with the inner-workings of an exhibition.

*Generous support for David Levinthal: War Games is provided by Donald Rosenfeld and Juliana Overmeer.*

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

David Levinthal lives and works in New York City. Born in 1949 in San Francisco, California, Levinthal grew up in a culture saturated with images of war, recounted as news and history and fictionalized in movies and television. This upbringing greatly influenced both his career and choice of subject matter. Levinthal discovered photography in 1966 while an undergraduate at Stanford and drew initial inspiration from Edward Weston and Eugène Atget. As a graduate photography student at Yale University, he studied with Walker Evans and developed a personal aesthetic based on the construction of miniature scenes drawn from popular culture. *Hitler Moves East*, Levinthal’s 1975-77 collaboration with



cartoonist Garry Trudeau, established his fame and helped inspire a rising generation of artists who staged scenes for the camera, including Cindy Sherman and Richard Prince.

The winner of numerous awards, including a 1995 Guggenheim Fellowship, Levinthal has photographs in many important collections, among them the Art Institute of Chicago, Centre Georges Pompidou, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He has been featured in solo exhibitions worldwide, including a 1997 mid-career survey at the International Center of Photography. The Corcoran Gallery of Art first exhibited Levinthal's photographs in *Surrogate Selves* (1989), alongside contemporaries Cindy Sherman and Laurie Simmons; he was later featured in the one-person show *Playing with History* (1997–98).

### **ABOUT THE PUBLICATION**

A hardcover book of the same title accompanies the exhibition. Published by Kehrer Verlag, the book includes essays by Dave Hickey, Paul Roth, and Kaitlin Booher, and is designed by George Corsillo.

### **AN EVENING WITH DAVID LEVINTHAL AND ROGER ROSENBLATT**

Thursday, May 9; 7 p.m.

Free; pre-registration encouraged: [https://getinvolved.corcoran.org/dudley\\_lecture](https://getinvolved.corcoran.org/dudley_lecture)

Photographer David Levinthal discusses his career and upcoming Corcoran exhibition, *War Games*. Celebrated journalist, author, playwright and professor Roger Rosenblatt will open the evening with a reading from his introduction to David Levinthal's 35th Anniversary Edition of *Hitler Moves East*.

Rosenblatt's essays for TIME and PBS have won the Peabody, the Emmy, and two George Polk Awards. He is the author of six off-Broadway plays and sixteen books, including the national bestsellers *Kayak Morning*, *Unless It Moves the Human Heart*, *Making Toast*, *Rules for Aging*, and *Children of War*, which won the Robert F. Kennedy Book Prize and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. He is a Distinguished Professor of English and Writing at Stony Brook University.

The Dudley Memorial Lecture was established in 1984 by Argentina's husband, Robert Whittier Dudley, and their six children to commemorate and perpetuate her life's work and interests. In keeping with Argentina's vision, the objective of the program is to provide memorable and enriching cultural experiences to diverse audiences.

The Dudley family established this endowment fund to secure in perpetuity the annual Argentina Copello Dudley Memorial Lecture.

### **VISITOR INFORMATION**

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission to *David Levinthal: War Games* is \$10 for adults, and \$8 for seniors (62+) and students (with valid ID). Free: children 12 and under, active duty military (with ID), and Corcoran Members.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Corcoran Gallery of Art membership offers special access to the Corcoran's renowned collection, temporary exhibitions, lectures, films, concerts and an array of social events. Members also receive valuable discounts at the Corcoran Shop, Todd Gray's Muse at the Corcoran, and the Corcoran College of Art + Design. Corcoran Members may visit *David Levinthal: War Games* an unlimited number of times for free. For more information, contact the Membership office at (202) 639-1753, [membership@corcoran.org](mailto:membership@corcoran.org) or online at [www.corcoran.org/membership](http://www.corcoran.org/membership).

## ABOUT THE CORCORAN

Established in 1869, the **Corcoran Gallery of Art** was one of America's first museums of art—dedicated, in the words of founder William Wilson Corcoran, to “encouraging American genius.” Today it is Washington, D.C.'s largest nonfederal art museum, known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. A dynamic schedule of special exhibitions complements a range of educational programming, which together enrich the perspectives of the visiting public, support the local arts community, and encourage thoughtful interpretation of today's most compelling social issues. **The Corcoran College of Art + Design** was founded as a school of art in 1890 and stands as Washington's only four-year accredited college of art and design. The College is one of the few in the nation whose educational model includes an integral relationship with a museum, fostering the talent of the next generation of artists. For more information about the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design**, visit [www.corcoran.org](http://www.corcoran.org).



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### Admission

Wednesday through Friday and Sunday: \$10 adults; \$8 full-time students (with ID) and seniors (62+). Free: active duty military, children under 12, Corcoran Members free.

### Images:

David Levinthal, *Untitled* from the series *Hitler Moves East*, 1975. Kodalith print. 8 x 10 inches, Private collection. © David Levinthal.

Page two: David Levinthal, *Untitled* from the series *Wild West*. Polaroid ER Land Film. 20 x 24 inches. Private collection. © David Levinthal.