

Hegert, Natalie, "Bruce Conner: The High Priest of Collage", ARTSLANT, 22 February 2010.

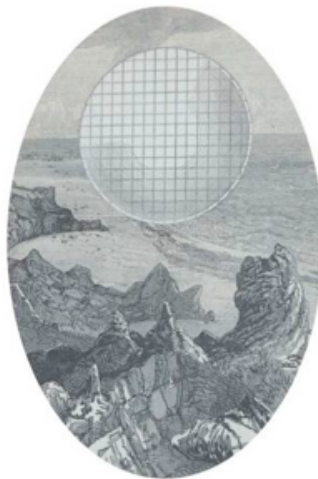
**Bruce Conner: The High Priest of Collage**  
by Natalie Hegert

**THE LATE BRUCE CONNER**  
Susan Inglett Gallery  
522 W. 24 St., New York, NY 10011

**January 28, 2010 - March 13, 2010**



Bruce Conner's collages, now on view at Susan Inglett Gallery, most of them from the last ten years, share a similar aesthetic to the Victorian photocollages, but only in one respect, that much of the imagery is extracted from woodcut engravings of Victorian-era magazines. The arrangements Conner created however are starkly different: darker, more esoteric, mystical and somber. Though culled from period sources, the images are decontextualized from any reference to their original sources, and take on a cryptic symbolism. These small scale compositions, many in egg-shaped frames or featuring floating metaphysical orbs, evoke a quiet meditation on death coming from a man in his last years. The installation in the gallery, midnight-blue in coloring, supports this interpretation, with the works concentrated on only two walls, the other two blank save for two collages on the peripheries, forming a sort of crescent arrangement.



(BRUCE CONNER, "UNTITLED" (Oval Mountains With Circle and Cross Hatch), Circa 2005. Engraving collage, 6 1/2" by 4 1/2" / 14 3/4" by 11 3/4". Courtesy Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.)

As one walks around the room, the faint strains of music can be heard--strings and bells--emanating from the back room where Conner's last major film work, *EASTER MORNING*, is shown. With music composed by minimalist composer Terry Riley, performed by an orchestra of Chinese instrumentalists, *EASTER MORNING*'s images quiver with the percussive notes, flashing and moving in tempo. Conner's floating orbs reappear here, brought out of focus from a flickering candle at the beginning of the film and accompanying us like a glowing spirit guide, briefly disappearing, again reappearing.



(ANONYMOUS, "UNTITLED", 2000. Photocopy collage, 10" by 8" / 15 1/2" by 15 3/4". Courtesy Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.)

It's easy to miss, but an early Conner assemblage from the late 50's hung above the reception desk provides an important counterpoint to his later work. Though still working with fragments, be they film edits or paper cut-outs, his later work stresses a more seamless, unified, harmonious vision. The repetition, the subdued colors, the orbs and ovals have a quiet presence, a spiritual quality like the stillness of a chapel with a single glowing candle.

In conjunction with the exhibition at Susan Inglett Gallery, AT 44½ will be showing a "**mini-retrospective**" of Bruce Conner's video work on the mega-MTV-screen at Times Square, every hour at the top of the hour until February 28th. Three of his films-- *TEN SECOND FILM* (1965), *CROSSROADS* (1976), and *EASTER MORNING* (2008)--will be shown in varying combinations. Check the schedule [here](#) to see when they're playing what. And if you find yourself in Times Square between now and February 28th, check your watch, it'll be worth it to catch these on such a magnificent scale.

--Natalie Hegert

(top image: BRUCE CONNER, "UNTITLED", Circa 2005. Photocopy collage, 4 1/2" by 5" / 11 1/2" by 12". Courtesy Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.)