

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

January 25, 2016

CHRIS BURDEN BRIDGES

JANUARY 19-FEBRUARY 20, 2016

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PARK & 75, 821 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK
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As a sculptor, I'm interested in architecture, and I've made artworks that are literally architectural. All buildings can be converted: a church can become a nightclub. What I like about bridges as a kicker is that a bridge's function is extremely pure and clear. Yet, if you look through the history of bridges, the solutions are infinite.

—Chris Burden

Gagosian is pleased to present a selection of Chris Burden's small-scale bridges at Park & 75, in tandem with the large-scale installation *Buddha's Fingers* currently on view at 980 Madison Avenue.

In 1997, compelled by a drawing of an unrealized iron bridge from the nineteenth century, Burden generated *The 1/4 Ton Bridge* from vintage Meccano and Erector sets. This first work in what would become an ongoing series dissolved the distinction between sculpture and structure: the bridge had to support 500-pounds before it could be deemed complete—and it did. Grasping the mechanics of proportion and weight, with *Antique Bridge* (1998) he tackled the structure gracing the cover of vintage Erector manuals with the bulky drama of the Mysto Type I Erector. When parts became scarce, he commissioned stainless steel replicas of the Mysto Type I Erector to resist rust and corrosion, and to allow the series to continue. *Indo-China Bridge* (2002), *Tower of London Bridge*, and *Victoria Falls Bridge* (both 2003) were created with these remastered components. The availability of materials thus sparked a shift in Burden's distribution: he began generating multiple editions of the bridges in conjunction with the unique version. *Tyne Bridge Kit* (2004) reflects this impulse: in a rustic wooden cabinet reside 200,000 specially made pieces (tools and instructions included) that enable the 31-foot model of the Tyne Bridge, first constructed in 2002 for the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, to be recreated. Combining industrial ingenuity and childhood whimsy, Burden's bridges comprise the very material that fuels his imaginative precision.

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Buddha's Fingers (2014–15) is a dense cluster of thirty-two antique cast-iron vernacular street lamps, electrified with cool, bright LED bulbs and standing almost twelve feet tall. The work is related to *Urban Light* (2008), Burden's celebrated permanent installation of 202 lamp posts, which stands at the entrance to LACMA in Los Angeles. In 2000, Burden began collecting the street lamps that use to line residential streets in Los Angeles during the 1920s and 1930s, and repurposed them as sculptural installations. In *Buddha's Fingers*, the hexagonal lamp bases are set in a tight honeycomb formation. The whimsical title refers to the fingered citrus fruit, a recurrent still-life motif and subject in classical Asian art, and a religious symbol of happiness, longevity, and good fortune.

Beginning with a series of startling actions in the early 1970s, Burden challenged his own mental and physical limitations, as well as the boundaries of art and performance. Shut inside a locker for five days (*Five Day Locker*, 1971); shot in the arm (*Shoot*, 1971); and nailed through the palms of his hands to the roof of a car (*Trans-fixed*, 1974), he sought to reflect the violence that defined American politics, society, and media at the time. Burden soon channeled the daring spirit of these early performances into imposing technical feats that similarly explored challenges both individual and social. He used toys (figurines, train sets, Erector parts) as the building blocks for expansive scale models of buildings, dystopic cities, and battlefields, while deploying actual vehicles (ships, trucks, and cars) in surreal and improbable ways.

Chris Burden was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1946, and died in Topanga Canyon, California in 2015. Public collections include Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and Tate Gallery, London. Solo museum exhibitions include "Chris Burden: A Twenty Year Survey," Orange County Museum of Art, CA (1988, traveled to Carnegie Mellon Art Gallery, Pittsburgh; and Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, through 1989); "When Robots Rule: The Two Minute Airplane Factory," Tate Gallery, London (1999); "Tower of Power," Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna (2002); "Chris Burden," Baltic Center of Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2002); "14 Magnolia Doubles," South London Gallery (2006); "Chris Burden," Middleheim Museum, Antwerp (2009); "Chris Burden: Three Ghost Ships," Portland Art Museum (2011–12); "Chris Burden," Magasin III, Stockholm (2012–13); "Chris Burden: Extreme Measures," New Museum, New York (2013-14); "Chris Burden: The Master Builder," Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts (2014); and "Chris Burden: Ode to Santos Dumont," Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2015).

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Image: *Tower of London Bridge*, 2003, stainless steel reproduction Mysto Type I Erector parts and wood base
Bridge: 28 1/2 x 80 1/4 x 8 1/2 inches (72.4 x 203.8 x 21.6 cm) © Chris Burden

Gagosian Gallery was established in 1980 by Larry Gagosian.

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