

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**American Academy In Rome and Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò Presents
Milton Gendel: A Surreal Life**Milton Gendel, *Portico of the Galleria Borghese, Rome, 1996*

NEW YORK and ROME, 28 March 2014 – The American Academy in Rome, in collaboration with Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò (New York University), is pleased to present the photographs of American photographer and art critic Milton Gendel. The exhibition, *A Surreal Life*, is drawn from a recent Gendel career retrospective jointly held at the Museo Carlo Bilotti – Aranciera di Villa Borghese and at the American Academy in Rome, in collaboration with the City of Rome.

Born in New York, Gendel has lived and worked in Rome since 1949. He is widely regarded as being central to the cultural dialogue between Italy and the United States over the last sixty years. *Milton Gendel: A Surreal Life* comprises thirty photographs, which bear the subtle imprint of his time in the Surrealist orbit. Gendel was closely associated with the exiled Surrealist artists gathered around figures such as André Breton in 1940s Greenwich Village. According to Anaïs Nin (as recalled in *The Diary of Anais Nin*), Gendel and his then girlfriend Evelyn Wechsler kept one of the Village's most welcoming avant-garde salons: "They keep open-house for all the artists, tirelessly hospitable. Almost every week we meet there: Lipchitz and his wife, Paul Goodman, Matta, Pajarita, Noguchi, Kay and Yves Tanguy, Moira, André Breton."

Gendel continued to meet and photograph talented and influential friends in Italy; his resulting images emerged out of the cultural ferment of post-war Rome, combined with the glamour of *la dolce vita*. As a correspondent for *ArtNews*, he is credited with doing a great deal to promote Italian art in the United States. One of Gendel's most prescient

articles, “Burri Makes a Picture,” published in 1954, focused on the early Sack paintings of Alberto Burri.

“Casa Italiana is very excited to host the works of Milton Gendel” said Stefano Albertini, Director of Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò and Professor at New York University’s Department of Italian Studies. “His work and life embodies the fruitful and lively collaboration between the Italian/European and American cultural traditions that is at the core of Casa’s mission”

Drawing on a loosely worn erudition, many of his images are inflected by the neo-realist aesthetic pioneered by Italian filmmakers in the late 1940s. Other images are infused with wry playfulness, demonstrating important affinities with strains seen in Surrealist photography, such as accidental juxtapositions and the collage-like effects reminiscent of Joseph Cornell’s dioramas. In 1957, Gendel helped create the Rome-New York Art Foundation, a contemporary art gallery on the Tiber Island, which was considered “the center of the center of Rome.” Gendel lived upstairs from the foundation. In 1959, his friend Michelangelo Antonioni borrowed both the gallery and the apartment for the opening scenes of *L’avventura*. Like Antonioni, Gendel dissects complex modern social interactions. The ineffable charm of Gendel’s photographs, and the chance encounters they capture, owes a great deal to a subtle *aller-retour* between past and present.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue edited by Peter Benson Miller and Barbara Drudi (published by Hatje Cantz Verlag in Ostfildern, Germany). The catalogue for *Milton Gendel: A Surreal Life* features essays by Peter Benson Miller, Barbara Drudi, Alberta Campitelli, Lindsay Harris, and Marella Caracciolo Chia, exploring the diverse aspects of Gendel’s fascinating career and his enduring relationship to the Eternal City.

Select Images Available to Media Upon Request

Related Event:

In conjunction with the opening of *Milton Gendel: A Surreal Life*, the Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò will host a round-table discussion about Gendel’s career and the artistic exchanges between Italy and the United States captured in his photographs. Participants include:

- Milton Gendel, photographer, writer, cultural critic
- Ara Merjian, Assistant Professor of Italian & Art History (NYU)
- Peter Benson Miller, Andrew Heiskell Arts Director (American Academy in Rome)
- Irving Sandler, Art historian/writer; Professor (SUNY Purchase)

The American Academy in Rome

Founded in 1894, originally as the first graduate school of architecture for the United States, the American Academy in Rome emerged in its present form – a hybrid center for the arts and humanities – by 1912. It remains the premier American overseas center for independent study and advanced research, a not-for-profit, private entity, the only one of the 30 foreign academies in Rome not supported primarily or entirely by its government. With an 11-acre campus on the highest point within the walls of Rome, the Academy annually offers the Rome Prize to approximately 30 individuals, following a national competition presided over by rotating independent juries of peers in each discipline, which include ancient, medieval, Renaissance and early modern, and modern Italian studies, and literature, music composition, visual arts, architecture, landscape architecture, design, and historic preservation and conservation.

The annual application deadline is 1 November. The Academy community also includes a carefully selected group of Residents, distinguished artists and scholars invited by the Director, Affiliated Fellows, and Visiting Artists and Scholars.

To learn more, please visit: www.aarome.org.

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