

## Bill Burke: 30 Years

6 May - 18 June, 2005

### Opening

Thursday, 5 May, 6-8 pm



**New York** - Howard Greenberg Gallery presents *Bill Burke: 30 Years*. The exhibition, a broad survey of Burke's career, is his first at the gallery. Burke gained fame for creating a remarkable body of work documenting his extensive travels throughout Southeast Asia. Returning annually for over two decades, his photographs describe a region and a people trapped between warring factions and devastated by generations of conflict. Yet while nearly every frame carries the memory of war, his work is marked by an overwhelming humanity and sensitivity: careful portraits of soldiers, peasants, farmers and refugees, all rendered with equal compassion, whether a muscular fighter posing with a grenade launcher or the damaged body of the victim of a land mine.

Burke describes the complex motivations behind these journeys: "Though I had been relieved to miss what the Vietnamese called 'The American War,' its importance in American history became more clear and important to me. I began to feel in some way I had missed the Asian experience that my government had provided for my generation. In 1982, I began to travel in Asia on my own; first in Thailand and Burma and then Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, places I might have been sent in 1968 if I hadn't failed my draft physical. Being off balance and being constantly reminded that things aren't what they appear kept me alert. My original motivation, to confront my own fears of war and physical vulnerability, has evolved into a curiosity about the region and an appreciation for the resiliency and resourcefulness of its peoples."

(Over please)

The exhibition features an extensive selection of images from his most recent monograph, *Autrefois, Maison Privée*. Meaning "once a private house," these new photographs find Burke reading the history of Vietnam and Cambodia through its architecture, from the precolonial era through the French occupation, the Vietnam War and the tragedy of the Pol Pot regime, exploring the succession of uses and occupants that have appropriated these schools, offices, factories and homes. These images are characterized by a tranquility and quiet formal presence that has grown steadily in Burke's images.

Burke's Southeast Asian photographs are accompanied by a selection of his earliest work, made as part of the Kentucky Bicentennial Documentary Project, where he was one of several photographers assigned to picture 40 counties throughout the state. Burke continued this work later as a Guggenheim Fellow. Here, one finds the origins of Burke's direct and formal style in his portraits of the rural landscape of coal and steel producing towns well on their way to being left behind, and their residents who meet Burke's lens with a mixture of curiosity, pathos and suspicion.

**Bill Burke** was born in Connecticut in 1943; he received a B.A. in art history from Middlebury College and a B.F.A. and M.F.A. in photography from the Rhode Island School of Design. His photographs are represented in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art; International Center of Photography; the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson; George Eastman House, Rochester; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; J. Paul Getty Museum; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. His publications include *Autrefois, Maison Privée* (2004); *Mine Fields* (1995); *I Want to Take Picture* (1987); and *Bill Burke: Portraits* (1987). Burke is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship and five grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has been an instructor of photography at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston since 1971.

For further information, or to request visuals for press, contact Toby Jurovics at 212 334 0010, [toby@howardgreenberg.com](mailto:toby@howardgreenberg.com)  
Starting May 5<sup>th</sup>, the exhibition can be viewed at [www.howardgreenberg.com](http://www.howardgreenberg.com)