

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

Cynthia López, 212-989-7425, clopez@pov.orgCathy Lehrfeld, 212-989-7425, clehrfeld@pov.org**GOLUB**

Because Leon Golub's massive canvasses depict scenes most of us would prefer not to see—mercenary killings, torture, death squads—they often raise the eyebrows and blood pressures of surprised viewers. In **GOLUB**, filmmakers Jerry Blumenthal and Gordon Quinn offer not simply a profile of a painter with a political conscience, but an investigation into the power of the artist to reflect our times—and to change the way we think about our world. The film will air on public television stations as part of the second season of *True Lives*, a series by the producers of P.O.V.

“Art has always offended,” says Quinn. “Stravinsky offended; people rioted. **GOLUB** is part of that tradition. It's not that all art has to be offensive, but a society in which art cannot offend is a totalitarian society.”

The one-hour film juxtaposes scenes of physical violence and political repression around the world, statements by American politicians and others, the responses of viewers to Golub's exhibitions, and an extended sequence capturing the artist at work. In his New York studio, he creates a huge canvas that depicts a brutal act of violence—a reminder, he says, of U.S. subsidized activity in El Salvador.

In developing this work and others, Golub turns to a file drawer full of newspaper and magazine clippings and photographs of various body types, violent acts, weapons, etc. Using these photos as models, he draws the giant scene, applies layer upon layer of paint, and subjects the canvas to a time-consuming scraping process.

“We think of art as recording the acts of a civilization,” he notes. “It also tells you a lot about who has power and who is getting the stick. It’s a report on how things are today.” But Golub didn’t always feel this way. His early “existential” art featured vague, isolated figures struggling with the universe. Following his observance of demonstrations in the streets of Paris during the Algerian War in the early 1960’s and his involvement in the anti-war movement here at home, his figures began to battle each other. In 1972, they became soldiers with guns, weapons, and wrinkled uniforms. Golub had discovered, he says, the “possibility of...representing in art something that actually happened.” In recent years, he has come into prominence with shows at major galleries and was featured in a cover story in *ArtForum* magazine.

Golub’s intentions are reflected in viewers’ strong responses to his work. “The image goes into you,” says one man, “and it may have an effect on something I do a week or a year from now.” Asked whether she thinks paintings like these belong in museums, a woman says, “Well, this is life, this is the way it is now.” Another remarks, “They make me feel very ugly.”

One young man at a Golub show remarks, “I’m a bit tired of seeing this kind of thing on TV and in the media in general. I’ve seen this before and I don’t really want to look at it.” But as filmmakers note, “We don’t feel the images of violence we see on TV because

they are not placed directly, unavoidably in front of us. When you see Golub's paintings, it's confrontational. You can't escape."

"I want them to feel the pain and the fear and the terror," Golub says. "When you look at these paintings, you see it, you feel it...raw power. And I hope it makes people uncomfortable."

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About the Filmmakers

JERRY BLUMENTHAL

Producer/ Director/ Sound/ Editor

Jerry Blumenthal is a co-founder of and partner in Kartemquin Films, with which he has co-produced and co-edited a number of award-winning films, including *Taylor Chain II: A story of Collective Bargaining*, which was aired as part of the PBS series *Life and Death and Other Matters*; and *The Last Pullman Car*, a film about the closing down of Pullman's passenger car division. Other films include *Taylor Chain: Story in a Union Local*, about a strike at a chain factory in the early 1970's; *Now We Live on Clifton Street*, about gentrification in Chicago; *Trick Bag*, about racism; and *The Chicago Maternity Center Story*. Jerry also co-produced with Gordon Quinn the nationally syndicated series *Sports Action Profile*. Jerry Blumenthal is a graduate of the University of Chicago. From 1960-1977 he taught Humanities and Film at the University of Illinois, the University of Chicago, and other colleges

GORDON QUINN

Producer/ Writer/ Editor/ Director

Gordon Quinn founded Kartemquin Films in 1966. For the past 22 years, he has served as producer, director and camera on a wide variety of documentary, educational and commercial films. In addition to his work with Jerry Blumenthal on the films listed above, he has served as camera on television programs ranging in scope from ABC's *That's Incredible* to *Bill Moyer's Journal*.

Credits

Producers/Directors

Jerry Blumenthal
Gordon Quinn

Editing and Sound

Jerry Blumenthal

Photography

Gordon Quinn

TRUE LIVES/GOLUB 4

Assistant Camera/ Associate Producer Judy Hoffman

Original Music Tom Sivak

Executive Producers Jack Jaffee
Jenny Rohrer

Production Associates Peter Gilbert
Peter Kuttner
Marcy McCall
Mark Nielsen

Cara Mertes is the Executive Producer of *True Lives*. The series is produced by American Documentary, Inc. Major funding for *True Lives* is provided by the Tides Foundation.

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