

URBAN LANDSCAPES

February to April, 2008

Galerie Samuel Lallouz is pleased to invite you to its latest group exhibition, *Urban Landscape*, with works by artists Magdalena Abakanowicz, Abbas Akhavan, Joseph Beuys, James Brown, Oscar Cahén, John Heward, Gershon Iskowitz, Kcho, Vik Muniz, David and Royden Rabinowitch, Carolee Schneemann, Michael Snow, Françoise Sullivan, Robert Therrien, Heidi Thompson, Claude Tousignant, David Urban, Franz Erhard Walther and Monika Weiss.

Magdalena Abakanowicz was born on June 20, 1930 in Falenty, Poland. A sculptor, she is known for her use of textile as a sculpture medium and is regarded as one of the most important and influential female artists of the 20th Century. She has been a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań, Poland from 1965 to 1990 and a visiting professor at UCLA in 1984. Magdalena Abakanowicz currently lives and works in Warsaw.

Abbas Akhavan was born in Tehran, Iran, and has been living in Canada for the past 13 years. His Art History/Visual Arts bachelor degree has taken him through four universities of Huron, Western Ontario, Victoria, and Concordia (Montreal), where he graduated with honours. Akhavan completed his Masters of Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. His artistic practice covers a variety of mediums including painting, installation, video/performance and site-specific ephemeral work. He lives in Vancouver, and teaches at Emily Carr Institute of Fine Art and Design.

Joseph Heinrich Beuys (1921–1986) was born in Krefeld, Germany. Beuys regarded teaching as an essential element of his work as an artist. He was a charismatic and inspirational professor at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, where he taught a generation of German artists. He was also associated with Fluxus. He expounded his theories of sculpture, democracy and green politics at conferences and art galleries around the world. Beuys believed that performance art could evoke a spiritual response in the audience, ultimately providing a healing process. He sometimes compared his role to that of a shaman. His performances, or *Actions*, were ritualistic, incorporating powerful symbols of birth, death and transformation. The objects that he used were often exhibited later as works in their own right.

James Brown was born in Los Angeles in 1951. During the 1970s he attended the École supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris, as well as the Instituto Michelangelo in Florence. Brown

exhibited in Europe before returning to the United States and settling in New York in 1979. He was associated with the Leo Castelli Gallery from 1986 to 1995, and continued to exhibit widely across the United States and in Europe. He was given a retrospective at the Galleria Civica di Arte Contemporanea in Trento in Italy in 1995. Brown moved to Oaxaca in Mexico where he lives and works.

Oscar Cahén (1916–1956) was born in Copenhagen, Denmark. He studied drawing and painting as well as design and illustration in Germany, Italy, France, Sweden and Czechoslovakia. Because of anti-Nazi activities in pre-war Germany, Cahén fled to Montreal in 1940, and in 1943 he established himself in Toronto, where his outstanding drawings and illustrations, as well as his paintings, commanded immediate attention. In 1953, a group of Canadian painters, including Oscar Cahén, adopted the name “Painters Eleven” and launched Toronto’s answer to the New York school of abstract expressionism. In recognition of Cahén’s profound influence in the arts, the Toronto Art Directors Club created the Oscar Cahén Memorial Award.

Gershon Iskowitz (1921–1988), a Polish-born Canadian artist, is one of Canada’s most important expressionist painters, and one of the founders and key players in international modernism. He began his painting career in Canada in 1949 after surviving four years internment at the Auschwitz and Buchenwald death camps during World War II. While he achieved widespread fame with his large paintings, he often worked in the medium of watercolour. Galerie Samuel Lallouz recently exhibited approximately fifty of the artist’s majestic watercolours

Kcho was born Alexis Leyva Machado in 1970 on the *Isla de la Juventud*, Cuba. His works often have to do with *balsas* (rafts) and the notion that Cuba is isolated, geographically as well as politically. He has left Cuba to attend some of his international shows. In the 1990s, he was refused entry into the United States under the pretext of being a friend of Fidel Castro. Since then, he has not travelled outside of Cuba.

Carolee Schneemann was an innovator in performance and installation art. As a participant in the feminist movement in the 1960s, she achieved fame through performance pieces such as *Meat Joy* (1964) and *Interior Scroll* (1975). She was one of the first artists to use her body as a tool to re-examine notions of the feminine, the sacred and sexuality. She is still active in the artistic community. The piece in this exposition is from a performance in 1983, *Fresh Blood – a Dream Morphology*. The inspiration for this performance came to her in a dream, during her menstrual cycle, in which the following question arose: “What do a red umbrella and a floral arrangement of dried leaves have in common?”

Royden Rabinowitch was born in Toronto in 1943. One of Canada’s truly original contributors to modern sculpture, he began his career in London, Ontario, during the 1960s and moved to New York in the 1970s. While Rabinowitch’s early work showed characteristics of minimalism, his sculpture is also a critique of it – as it is of most other non-figurative sculpture. The sculptures evince the principal properties of the human body that apply to its orientation in space. Royden Rabinowitch lives in Ghent, Belgium, and has had an exceptional exhibition record in Europe, including solo exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum, Bern (1990), and the Gemeentemuseum, Den Haag (1992).

David Rabinowitch, like his twin brother Royden, first came to national attention as a member of the artistic community in London, Ontario. He has since produced one of the most challenging bodies of work in recent contemporary sculpture. He shares minimalism’s interest in exploring the demands made by sculpture within the space and time of its interaction with the viewer. Rabinowitch moved to New York in 1972 and has taught at Yale University (1974–75) and at Düsseldorf (1984). He has accumulated significant exhibition history, especially in Europe.

Michael Snow, experimental filmmaker, musician, visual artist, composer, writer and sculptor, was born in Toronto in 1929. During the 1960s he was recognized as an important innovator in the fields of Pop and Minimalist art with his “Walking Women” series, and with his film work. His second film, *New York Eye and Ear Control* (1964), is now viewed as being a key to the important contrapuntal complexities of Snow’s oeuvre. Michael Snow is also an accomplished writer on visual art and film, and an important figure on the avant-garde, improvisational music scene.

Vik Muniz was born in 1961 in São Paulo, Brazil and now lives and works in New York City. Known for his photographic work in which he refers to current events, icons of art history, and famous people, Muniz questions the way in which images are produced and perceived in today’s society using everyday materials. The Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal recently presented *Vik Muniz : Reflex*.

Françoise Sullivan was born in Montreal, where she lives. A multi-faceted artist — initially a dancer and choreographer — she became known for her work as a painter, sculptor and photographer. Sullivan was part of the *Automatistes*, the avant-garde movement led by Paul-Émile Borduas, and was a signatory of the group’s 1948 manifesto, *Refus Global*. She has received the Prix Paul-Émile Borduas (1987). Her work has been seen continuously in solo and group exhibitions, namely, as well as during retrospectives at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (1993) and at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (2003).

Robert Therrien was born in Chicago in 1947, and now lives and works in Los Angeles. For Therrien, the act of art making is fundamentally about looking at something from a different perspective, and enticing viewers to do the same. Highlights of his many solo exhibitions include self-titled exhibitions at the Gagosian Gallery, New York (2001); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2000); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (1991); and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1984).

Heidi Thompson was born in Vernon, British Columbia. A painter and photographer, she has studied at the Zürich University of Art and Design. After an apprenticeship with painter Oskar Koller in Germany, where she also met with Klaus Schmidt, a former student of Oskar Kokoschka, Thompson entered the Nurnberg Art Academy, and went on to study at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Art. Back in Canada, she began working as an independent photographer. Her paintings have been exhibited in New York, Vancouver, and Victoria.

Claude Tousignant is an abstract painter and sculptor born in Montreal. Beginning his stylistic explorations in France during the early 1950s, he returned to Montreal where he was influenced by Pop Art, and adhered to *Les Plasticiens*, a group associated with abstraction. Tousignant’s work pushes the boundaries to simplify the expression in the act of painting. *Chromatic Transformers*, *Chromatic Accelerators* and *Gongs* are among his most popular series created during the 1960s. Over the following decade, his work was marked with monotone pieces, the simplest of art forms. A retrospective of his work is currently available on the website of the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal.

David Urban is widely regarded as the leading Canadian painter of his generation. Born in Toronto in 1966, he studied poetry and painting at York University, earning a BFA in 1989. He received a Master’s degree in English literature and creative writing from the University of Windsor in 1991, and a second Master’s degree in painting from the University of Guelph in 1993. His work is represented in many private and public collections including the National Gallery of Canada. In 2002, Urban curated *Painters 15*, an exhibition of established Canadian painters, which was presented at the Shanghai Museum of Art and at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art.

Franz Erhard Walther, born in 1939 in Fulda, Germany, lives and works near Hamburg. At the beginning of the 1960s, when the dominant style was that of *informal* abstraction, Walther questioned and radicalized the notion of *informal* art, interpreting it as “going back to the starting point, where nothing has a form yet, and everything has just begun to be formed.” Choosing various types of paper and a range of transformational agents, he stood back and let their interaction produce his works. Gradually, he replaced the material transformation of paper by the theoretically infinite process of perception. By calling on the viewer to invent his own mental form, Walther modified the traditional conception of material artwork in a fundamental way.

Monika Weiss is a Polish-born artist based in New York City. She creates environments that relate to the body and to the tension that characterizes specific relationship between biology and culture. In her drawings and multimedia installations, mixing performance with sound, Weiss explores the physical properties of the act of drawing, which she combines with references to ancient and medieval symbols and concepts of the world and the human being. Weiss uses her own body directly in her art as both the maker and the inhabitant of the artistic object.