

Marlborough

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FRANCISCO LEIRO

Recent Sculpture

September 29-October 23, 2004

New York, July 2004 – The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to announce that an exhibition of recent work by the great Spanish artist Francisco Leiro will open on September 29 and continue through October 23, 2004. Comprised of more than thirty sculptures and drawings, the show will elucidate Leiro's artistic universe, in which tragic sentiment is masked by comic ingenuity, pulsing drama is infused with energy, and gravity cohabits with levity.

This exhibition is a summation of Leiro's artistic production over the last few years and reflects his intimate understanding of materials – bronze, wood and iron – and his profound knowledge of the traditions of his native Galicia, located in northwestern Spain. Leiro's adoration of polychromy and his particular ironic sense of humor are also evident in the sculptures on view. Since the 1980s, Leiro's work has been considered the most representative of Spanish sculpture: the powerful images of seemingly royal, religious or plebian characters find their sources in the high Middle Ages and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which serve as both references and inspiration for the innovative imagination of this artist whose proximity to contemporary currents such as surrealism and neo-expressionism has been explored in numerous solo and group exhibitions.

Leiro familiarized himself with sculpture at an early age: both in the bakery of his maternal grandparents, where he modeled figures with bread dough, and in the carpenter's shop of his paternal grandfather, a dedicated wood carver who created work for churches in the Cambados region in Galicia. Leiro's unmistakable *oeuvre*, founded on traditional Galician sculpture and archaic shapes, is derived through the juxtaposition of figurative and abstract forms. The provocative results are sculptures with allegorical connotations whose narrative references are situated beyond history and beyond memory, evoking an ironic and timeless fiction: a veritable gallery of the human condition wrought in wood and metal whose altered shapes and exaggerated movements are further developed in the ingenious use of polychromy which unites form and color.

Born in the small town of Cambados, Galicia in 1957, Leiro later moved to Santiago de Compostela to study stone work at the Escuela de Artes y Oficios. His studies continued in Madrid at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, where his focus was on both sculpture and drawing. Leiro's first solo exhibition occurred in 1975 at the Sociedad Cultural de Cambados, parallel to his inclusion in the Foga Group when the surrealist influence became more accentuated in his work and his inclusion in group shows increased. In the early 1980s he participated in the Atlántica group exhibitions, in which the emerging generation renewed visual arts in Galicia. 1990 was an important year for Leiro: in addition to shows in France and Italy, he had his first exhibition with Marlborough Gallery, New York and since has exhibited consistently here and at Galería Marlborough, Madrid. Recent museum shows include a 2003-2004 traveling solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Foreign Art, Sofia, Bulgaria and Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile; as well as an extensive show at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía – Palacio de Cristal, Madrid.

Leiro's work can be found in numerous museum collections, including the Akron Art Museum, Akron, Ohio; Asociación de Amigos del Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Centro Cultural São Lourenço, Almancil; Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Compostela; Colección-Fundación Caja de Madrid; Colección Fundación Coca-Cola, Madrid; Colección Fundación La Caixa, Barcelona; Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey; Instituto del Crédito Oficial, Madrid; Marugame Hirai Museum, Kagawe, Japan; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Barcelona; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid; Museo de Bellas Artes de Álava, Vitoria; Museo de Castrelo, Vigo; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

Leiro has completed numerous public projects, including the following, *Mis Sofás* (Pontevedra, Spain, 1988), *Sireno* (Vigo, Spain, 1991), *Homenaje a Castelao* (Alameda, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1995), *Miarritz* (Biarritz, France, 1997), *Marzo del 73* (Fene, A Coruña, Spain, 1997), *Astronauta* (Valdemoro, Spain, 2001) and *Vértigo* (Autovía M50, Madrid, Spain, 2004).

A complete color catalogue, with an essay by Kevin Power, Subdirector of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain, will be available at the time of the exhibition.

The exhibition, *Daniel Quintero: Tumbling Landscape*, will be presented concurrently in the small gallery.

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