

Marlborough

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For press inquiries please contact Janis Gardner Cecil at Marlborough Gallery at 212.541.4900 or jcecil@marlboroughgallery.com

Marlborough Gallery, Inc.

40 West 57th Street

New York, NY 10019

t. 212.541.4900

f. 212.541.4948

www.marlboroughgallery.com

mny@marlboroughgallery.com

RED GROOMS SCULPTURES: DANCING MARLBOROUGH CHELSEA, OCT 15 – NOV 14, 2009

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to announce that an exhibition of monumental sculptures by Red Grooms, entitled *Dancing*, will open at Marlborough Chelsea, 545 West 25th Street on Thursday, October 15 and continue through November 14, 2009. This will be Grooms' third and one-half decade of exhibiting with Marlborough and his first solo exhibition at Marlborough Chelsea.

Five exuberant polychrome sculptures, each measuring more than nine feet tall, capture the romance, energy and history of dance that have inspired Red Grooms since his childhood. An American original, Grooms grew up in Tennessee with the great musicals of the 1940s and 1950s and upon his move to New York frequented the New York City Ballet with his friends, the poet and dance critic, Edwin Denby, and the photographer Rudy Burckhardt. Grooms' brightly colored sculptures, each with a plethora of Groomsian details, depict couples as they perform the dances *Flamenco*, *Tango*, *Charleston*, *Swan Lake* and *The Lindy Hop*: each an ode to a passion for dance.

The sculptures that comprise *Dancing* were created over a period of four years. The first three of the works depict Grooms' interest in traditional dance forms: *Tango Dancers*, 2005 (enamel on aluminum, 109 x 38 x 96 in.), *Flamenco Dancers*, 2008 (enamel on aluminum, 148 1/2 x 96 1/2 x 36 3/8 in.) and *Swan Lake*, 2009 (enamel on aluminum, 108 1/2 x 93 x 40 in.). *Tango Dancers*, the first in this series, derives from his 1963 work of the same name, and depicts a suavely attired man as he dips his glamorous female partner who wears a patterned green dress, blond hair with a Marcel Wave, and pearls. The dancing pair in *Flamenco Dancers* is dressed in Spanish finery: she with an orange and blue ruffled gown and red flower in her tightly-bunned hair and he with a yellow blousy chemise, striped vest and pencil thin black moustache and slicked black hair pulled into a pony tail. His right arm reaches high into the air as she holds the frills of her skirt and both thrust forward in mid-step. Exaggerated elements reinforce the figures' expressivity: his arm is unnaturally long, the bulbous yellow sleeve larger than his head, and the woman's proud carriage manifested in her elongated neck, reminiscent of Manerist females, and her pointy chin.

Grooms' *Swan Lake* was inspired by an image of Igor Youskevitch and Alexandra Danilova, famous dancers of the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, performing a pas de deux in Tchaikovsky's masterpiece. Her pale blue tutu and point shoes frame her muscular legs in blue tights, while he wears gold tights and a gemstone green jacket with gold embroidery. Both dancers have their eyes closed in focused concentration as he supports her transition *en pointe*.

Two American dances, the *Charleston* and the *Lindy Hop*, are the subjects of Grooms' most recent sculptures in the show. *Charleston*, 2009 (enamel on aluminum, 109 x 97 x 43 1/2 in.), depicts two young American college students as they dance to this popular form named after the city of Charleston, South Carolina in the mid-1920s. Here Grooms' figures broadly gesticulate with their arms and legs in typical Charleston fashion. Dressed in their collegiate best with bucks and sweaters, the base of the sculpture completes the giddy co-eds as a triangular sports pennant painted with letters that spell "RAH."

The Lindy Hop, 2009 (enamel on aluminum, 113 x 78 x 44 1/2 in.), was inspired by the famous African-American dance that was based on the Charleston and named for Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight in 1927. Popularized at the famous Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, this dance was known for its popular "air steps" in which the male partner swings the female and both feet leave the floor. Grooms captures this athletic and dynamic maneuver in his sculpture as the female dancer's legs are thrust into the air directly behind her partner's back and her head and torso continue downward like an arrow. This couple dance on a base that reads "Savoy Ballroom" and their colorful attire – she in a red skirt and he in a grey pinstripe suit – form a spirited celebration of the origins of a dance that became an international sensation.

Red Grooms was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1937. He studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the New School for Social Research in New York City and at the Hans Hoffman School of Fine Arts in Provincetown, MA. Along with developing the painted relief as both a painting and sculpture, Grooms invented the three-dimensional form called "sculpto-pictorama" that allows the viewer to walk through

and interact with an environment created by the artist's vision.

Grooms' art has been the subject of three retrospective shows: the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia in 1985, the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, in 1987 and the National Academy of Design, NY, in 2001, specifically devoted to his graphic work. This last exhibition traveled to eight other venues in the United States through 2004. He has also been honored with several important survey exhibitions, most recently at the Hudson River Museum in 2007, the Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY in 2005, The Frist Center for Visual Arts, Nashville, TN, and the Katonah Museum of Art, NY in 2003.

Grooms has received numerous awards and commissions throughout his career, most recently, the Lifetime Achievement Award given by the National Academy of Design in 2003. Grooms' most recent major commission is a large-scale sculpture entitled *Piragüas de Frambuesa (Raspberry Shaved Ice Cone)* for Coamo, Puerto Rico, completed in 2004. In 1998, Grooms created *Tennessee Fox Trot Carousel*, a working carousel of 34 figures and two chariots depicting Nashville's history. Commissioned by the city of Nashville, this carousel is now a beloved landmark. Grooms also created two permanent outdoor sculptures for Nagoya, Japan in 1996. Grooms' additional artistic activities include happenings, filmmaking and theater design. The artist lives and works in New York City.

Grooms' work can be found in over forty public institutions, among them are The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; The Denver Art Museum, CO; Fort Worth Art Museum, TX; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Nagoya City Art Museum, Japan; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

An illustrated color catalogue will be available at the time of the exhibition and will include an interview of Red Grooms by the journalist Phoebe Hoban.

Marlborough Chelsea / International Public Art Ltd., 545 West 25th St, New York, NY 10001	t. 212.463.8634	f. 212.463.9658	chelsea@marlboroughgallery.com
Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd., 6 Albemarle Street, London W1S 4BY	t. 44.20.7629.5161	f. 44.20.7629.6338	mfa@marlboroughfineart.com
Marlborough Monaco, 4 Quai Antoine 1er, MC 98000 Monaco	t. 377.97702550	f. 377.97702559	art@marlborough-monaco.com
Galería A.M.S. Marlborough, Nueva Costanera 3723, Vitacura, Santiago, Chile	t. 56.2.228.8696	f. 56.2.207.4071	
Galería Marlborough, S.A., Orfila 5, 28010 Madrid	t. 34.91.319.1414	f. 34.91.308.4345	info@galeriamarlborough.com