

# Marlborough

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## SCULPTURE: TWELVE INDEPENDENT VISIONS MARLBOROUGH CHELSEA / DECEMBER 2, 2010 - JANUARY 22, 2011

Marlborough Gallery is pleased to present a group exhibition entitled *Sculpture: twelve independent visions*, with works by Magdalena Abakanowicz, Fernando Botero, Grisha Bruskin, Clement Meadmore, Tom Otterness, Beverly Pepper, Arnaldo Pomodoro, George Rickey, Kenneth Snelson, Frank Stella, Manolo Valdés and Ursula Von Rydingsvard on view at Marlborough Chelsea from December 2, 2010 to January 22, 2011.

These twelve artists have each produced significant bodies of work renowned internationally for their singular and independent vision. The collective artists' oeuvre spans the breadth of 20th and 21st Century sculpture, breaking new aesthetic ground and defining new categories of sculptural experience and expression. The exhibited works, though diverse in character, exemplify the individual artists shared commitment to physicality and to the object as their preferred sculptural medium.

**MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ**, *Plaster Body 6*, 1987. In this austere work, a headless plaster figure, body impressed with beams and slats, is seated with its legs dangling above the floor. The power of Abakanowicz's art comes from its timeless presence, its ability to invoke deep feeling and the artist's unique use of figurative forms as the embodiment of a visionary philosophy. Robert Hughes, writing for *Time* magazine, described Abakanowicz's work as being a "dark vision of primal myth."

**FERNANDO BOTERO**, *Leda and the Swan*, 2006. Botero has stated that for him "sculptures do not carry any messages; social or otherwise... what matters for me is the form, the voluptuous surfaces which emphasize the sensuality of my work." In this curvilinear sculpture, the swan lies on Leda's chest and stretches its elongated neck in a seemingly Mannerist gesture towards Leda's turned face. The warm brown patina of the sculpture encourages the eye to explore the highlights and the shadows of the bird's pointed wings and Leda's voluptuous form.

**GRISHA BRUSKIN**, *Bride*, 2008-09; *Groom*, 2008-09; *Pioneer in Helmet*, 2008-09. These three works from the artist's *Twilight of The Gods* series appear in disjointed, fossilized form, resembling fragments of sculpture from a lost civilization and remnants of the dissolved Soviet Union. The figures depict archetypes of an idealized people such as a farmer, a teacher and a soldier; personas that were embodied in the countless sculptures commissioned in Russia under the communist regime that represented an alienating ideology and a mythical Soviet world. Bruskin was born in 1945 in Moscow and grew up behind the Iron Curtain. He immigrated to the US in 1989.

**CLEMENT MEADMORE**, *Hobnob*, 1992. A classic example of the artist's oeuvre where a single resolute form expresses both

clarity and rigor, while at the same time conveying the complexity, expressiveness and dynamics of classic modernist sculpture, *Hobnob*, 1992 also exemplifies the artist's pursuit of a gestural or "drawn" character in his work. The combination of Minimalism's ascendancy in the 1960's and its uncompromising reductiveness precipitated a crisis of values for Meadmore, prompting him to move beyond Minimalism by establishing a set of variant aesthetic terms to work with and against. Despite superficial similarities with minimalism such as formal clarity, unitary forms, a basis in geometry and smooth, uninflected surfaces, Meadmore's sculptures express ideas and feelings beyond their factual presence. Unlike the minimalists, Meadmore never began with an idea developed in advance. His compositions were arrived at intuitively.

**TOM OTTERNESS**, *Frog Prince*, 2001. With wry irony, the artist proposes an alternate ending to The Grimm Brother's fairy tale where the Frog turns into a Prince after receiving a kiss by the Princess. In Otterness's world, the Princess and the Frog are in bed, supposedly the night after and despite her best efforts, the frog remains an amphibian. Here, as in much of his work, Otterness presents a contemporary form of social realism that incorporates defrocked fairy tales and subtly illustrates a post-Cold War disenchantment with global commercialism.

**BEVERLY PEPPER**, *Wedge Tree*, 2005. This work continues themes developed in Pepper's *Marker* series, begun in the 1970's. The title derives from the appearance of the wedge which is clasped in a steel block at the top of a short column and held in place by a thick through-pin, flaring out at the top and narrowing at the bottom, where it is clasped by the supporting block giving the impression of a tree. Robert Hobbs remarked on the timeless nature of Pepper's forms, "There is always a wondrously fresh quality to her work, which helps to explain why her casts and carvings age so well... They are wrapped in and project their own special aura." This aura has been equated with "archaic simplification" (Barbara Rose) and with the sacred. Rosalind Krauss remarked that Pepper's *Markers* evoke sacred powers and a sense of ceremony and wrote eloquently about the majestic, physical presence of her works and their inherent "exquisite mastery of proportion and interplay of forms."

**ARNALDO POMODORO**, *Colonna Recisa Transversalmente*, 1970-71. This sliced column is a quintessential example of the artist's characteristic examination of surface, form and structure. Pomodoro has stated: "I have spent over fifty years exploring complex geometrics through my work and now feel more than ever that these geometries include by implication the forms of abstract reason, and even of technological rationality, >>

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whereas the fissures correspond to the forms of the primitive, the unconscious, and the forces within matter itself. As I see it, the value to be found in these two things today lies precisely in their coexisting together side by side.”

**GEORGE RICKEY**, *Four Jointed Lines: Zig-Zag*, 1988. Rickey’s notion of random, open-form drawing in three dimensional space is reflected in this classic work. Whether in columns, clusters, lines or suspended shimmering planes, Rickey’s sculptures capture the expressive moment of the intersection of material form, light and movement in space. As art critic Alexandra Anderson-Spevy in an essay on Rickey’s work stated: “His works mesmerize viewers even when they are still. But these fluid geometric constructions are born to move and they partner best with natural forces. Rickey often declared that he aimed ‘to make things [that are] as contemporary as the weather report,’ And gentle winds and changing weather usually are this sculptures’ greatest friends”. George Rickey is internationally regarded as among the most inventive and influential sculptors of the 20th century. His iconic kinetic works were the outgrowth of experiments with wire and metal that began during his service in World War II. By the late 1950s and 1960s, he reduced sculptural forms to simple, geometric shapes such as rectangles, trapezoids, cubes and lines and largely limited his materials to stainless steel, creating a body of work that is a mesmerizing combination of minimalism and movement.

**KENNETH SNELSON**, *B-Tree II*, 1981-2008. A continuation of the artist’s examination of structure defining space and form, *B-Tree II* exemplifies the fundamental element of Snelson’s work: his idea of form bound and defined by structure. He has said, “Structure to me is involved with forces, the stressing of pieces together, the kind of thing you find in a suspension bridge, for example. It is a definition of what is going on to cause that space to exist.” One cannot help but marvel at the elegance of the work’s design when viewing a Snelson sculpture. It is simultaneously both complex and simple, and the power of this duality lends to his sculpture the intellectual tension of rational thought and the poetic imagination of an art distilled through intuition. In an essay *A Perspective on the Science and Art of Modeling Atoms* the physiologist, Robert Root-Bernstein wrote, “It seems a mistake to me to categorize Snelson’s work as one thing or another—as art or science, truth or imagination. Snelson’s work is a new perspective on structures in nature and the nature of structure. This perspective, in turn, makes new things imaginable and therefore new things possible.”

**FRANK STELLA**, *Bamboo Trophy II*, 2002. *Bamboo Trophy II* further examines the aesthetic dialogue most notably seen in the artist’s von Kleist series and the wonderfully exuberant, boundary-slashing *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg, Ein Schauspiel, 3X* (1998-2001) which is in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. By incorporating fiberglass, carbon fiber and curvilinear aluminum tubing to create looping open-form spirals that leap and spill through space, *Bamboo Trophy II* seemingly bridges the gap between sculpture and architecture. Coming to prominence in the late 1950s and early 1960s as one of America’s great abstract painters, Stella’s early works presented flat geometric designs that evolved into three-dimensional canvases. Since the late 1980s, Stella has increasingly turned his attention to sculpture and art for public places, often working on a massive scale, as exemplified by *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg, Ein Schauspiel, 3X*.

**MANOLO VALDÉS**, *Dama a Caballo VI*, 2008. Inspired by Diego Velázquez’s 17th century equestrian portrait of Queen Isabella of Bourbon, this monumental bronze sculpture personifies Valdés’ use of “como pretexto.” For the artist, the subject is simply the first step in the process and journey of creating a work of art. He focuses not on the subject, but on the way the art is constructed and the use of materials. Valdés, one of the foremost living Spanish

artists, began his career as a founding member of *Equipo Cronica*, the highly influential Pop Art group of 1960’s Spain. Thereafter, he developed a personal style that is often centered on art-historical motifs and distinguished for its refinement and expressiveness. By appropriating figures from well-known works of art, he revitalizes these familiar images by taking them out of their original context and giving them a contemporary presence.

**URSULA VON RYDINGSVARD**, *Twisting Bowl II*, 2010. Composed of cut, sawn, torn and chiseled cedar, *Twisting Bowl II*, 2010 is evocative of the natural world while making no attempt at describing anything particular in nature. The sculpture is marked by physical experience: chiseled cuts and strokes, a bulge here and a concave emptiness there. Upon first inspection, one encounters a complex form of mass movement and weight. However, upon close examination, one is struck by the smell of cedar and the strikes, cuts, marks, gouges and stains of a highly expressive surface. Von Rydingsvard’s sculptures are tactile, quietly emotive and occupy their space with the authority of an imposing natural form. The works often defy formal analysis and are in many ways aesthetically and expressively closer to the paintings of Clifford Still than to the sculptural work of her peers. Eleanor Hartney addressed the primitive authority of Von Rydingsvard’s work in her essay *Massive in Scale Intimate to the Touch*, “...in the end, there is something disconcerting about von Rydingsvard’s sculptures – they are undeniably beautiful, but there is also something fierce and uncompromising in their embrace of an aesthetic of rawness. Given to rough edges and undisguised seams, these sculptures revel in the jagged gouge of the circular saw and the uneven shifts of color as the cedar ages. They have an almost primitive quality, offering a reminder of the wildness that culture and civilization cannot eradicate”.

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A fully illustrated catalogue will be available at the exhibition.