



ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

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Media Contact:
Danny Flanders, 404-591-1550
dflanders@atlantabotanicalgarden.org

*Independent Visions:
Sculpture in the Garden*

Summer exhibition features contemporary
sculptures by nine renowned artists

ATLANTA – The Atlanta Botanical Garden and Marlborough Gallery are pleased to present a group exhibition entitled *Independent Visions: Sculpture in the Garden*, featuring works by the artists **Magdalena Abakanowicz, Chakaia Booker, Red Grooms, Clement Meadmore, Michele Oka Doner, Beverly Pepper, George Rickey, Kenneth Snelson, and Manolo Valdés**. The exhibition will be on view from May through October 2012, and will comprise nineteen sculptures.

This exhibition continues the Garden’s tradition of presenting works by internationally renowned artists in an extraordinary natural setting of thirty acres, including twelve thematic gardens. Past exhibitions have included the work of Dale Chihuly, Henry Moore, and Niki de Saint Phalle. **Mary Pat Matheson, the Garden’s executive director** states, “**The Garden has become *the* Atlanta venue to see the best in contemporary art.**”

These nine artists have each produced significant bodies of work and are renowned internationally for their singular and independent vision. The collective artists’ oeuvre spans the breadth of 20th- and 21st-century sculpture. Dale Lanzone, the exhibition’s curator, said the collection breaks new aesthetic ground while defining new categories of sculptural 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 (Polish, b. 1930) 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.” The two cast iron works exhibited, *Kain* and *Abel*, are imposing, headless figures that perfectly demonstrate this timelessness.

Chakaia Booker (American, b. 1953) Hailed as the “Queen of Rubber Soul” by independent curator and art critic Lily Wei, Booker uses strips and sections of recycled tires to create her large intricate works. She participated in the 2000 Whitney Biennial, exhibiting the work *It’s so Hard to Be Green*, which was met with great acclaim. The sculptures *Anonymity* and *Meeting Ends* demonstrate the amazing variety in texture and form she creates with this medium and draw upon African influences such as tribal body paint, scarification, and textiles.

Red Grooms (American, b. 1937) Tennessee-born multi-media artist Red Grooms is well-known for his witty commentaries on modern life and his affectionate yet satirical portrayals of urban culture. One of his best-known examples of this is *Ruckus Manhattan* (1976-77), a dazzling, pithy recreation of New York City. The work is a sprawling sculpto-pictorama, a word coined by the artist to describe a three-dimensional walk-through installation that the viewer could enter to enjoy the scenery and become part of the show. The two sculptures *Charleston* and *Flamenco Dancers* are part of a series in which he explored traditional dance forms. The third work, *Hot Dog Vendor*, embodies what Grooms has called “a sort of comic strip feel for city life” found throughout much of his work. All three sculptures are enamel on aluminum.

Clement Meadmore (Australian, 1929-2005) 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. The sculptures *Outspread* and *Wall for Bojangles* are both classic examples of a single resolute form expressing both clarity and rigor, while at the same time conveying the complexity, expressiveness and dynamics of classic modernist sculpture.

Michele Oka Doner (American, b. 1945) Fueled by a lifelong study and appreciation of the natural world and exploration of the human figure, Oka Doner works primarily in bronze, as well as clay and the lost wax method, creating wax forms that are later cast in bronze or silver. Oka Doner has completed many public art installations, including *A Walk on the Beach* at the Miami International Airport, comprised of 8,000 bronze and mother-of-pearl forms depicting sea life and the cosmos throughout a two and half mile-long long concourse of white and dark terrazzo inlaid with bronze and mother-of-pearl. Other installations include *Radiant Site* at the Herald Square subway station in New York City; *Flight* at the Ronald Reagan International Airport, Arlington, VA; three United States courthouses in Greeneville, TN; Gulfport, MI and Laredo, TX; and the Criminal Justice Center in Philadelphia, PA; among others. Her most recent public work is *Pearl Crystal Canopy* in the shopping center in Doha, Qatar. The canopy cascades over the escalator well, refracting light like a prism and projecting a radiant glow from the one thousand three hundred real baroque pearls encrusting the bottom edge. Oka Doner's childhood relationship with the sea informs both *Primal Self Portrait* and *Figure with Long Arms*; the highly textured surface of the cast bronze simultaneously evokes coral formations and ancient relics.

Beverly Pepper (American, b. 1922) Working from her studio in Italy, Pepper is a pioneer in sculpting monumental abstract works in cast iron, bronze, stainless steel and stone. 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. This immemorial character is clear in *Longo Monolith* and *Horizontal Twist*. She says of her sculptures, "the intrinsic value of my effort in art is to be surprised and renewed by the work as it emerges - hopefully - with one's past and future comingling in the most unexpected and lyrical forms."

George Rickey (American, 1907-2002) 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 these sculptures' greatest friends." The three large stainless steel sculptures *Four Rectangles Oblique II*, *Three Oblique Lines Conical Path*, and *Two Lines Vertical* will be on view.

Kenneth Snelson (American, b. 1927) *Cantilever* and *Key City* exemplify 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."

Manolo Valdés (Spanish, b. 1942) Manolo Valdés is considered to be one of the most original and versatile artists working today. For Valdés the history of art is a major source of inspiration. He looks to old masters,

such as Zurbarán, Goya, Ribera and Velázquez, as well as the modernists, Picasso and Matisse, for inspiration. However he finds more than just inspiration in the works of these artists; he does not simply copy the work of his artistic forebears but uses their work “as a pretext” (“*como pretexto*”) to create an entirely new aesthetic object. *Yvonne II* is part of a series of six monumental bronzes – all over 12 feet in height – depicting female heads, their calm facial composure and structured equilibrium offset rhythmically by dynamic ornamental head-pieces inspired by Matisse and Picasso.

On Thursday evenings, visitors may experience *Independent Visions: Sculpture in the Garden* theatrically lit during *Cocktails in the Garden*. The exhibition is presented with the generous support of the Fulton County Arts Council and the Forward Arts Foundation.

The mission of the Atlanta Botanical Garden is to develop and maintain plant collections for display, education, research, conservation and enjoyment. The Garden is located at 1345 Piedmont Ave. NE and open from April-October from 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday and until 10 p.m. on Thursdays, and from November-March from 9 a.m.-5 p.m... Admission is \$18.95 adults, \$12.95 children 3-12, and free to children under 3 and Garden members. For information, visit atlantabotanicalgarden.org or phone 404-876-5859.

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