

# Marlborough

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For press inquiries please contact Janis Gardner Cecil at Marlborough Gallery at 212.541.4900 or [jcecil@marlboroughgallery.com](mailto: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](http://www.marlboroughgallery.com)

[mny@marlboroughgallery.com](mailto:mny@marlboroughgallery.com)

## BRUCE ROBBINS: WALLS, PAINTINGS, AND SCULPTURES MARLBOROUGH CHELSEA January 15 - February 14, 2009

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to announce an exhibition of recent works by New York based artist Bruce Robbins. The exhibition will be held at Marlborough Chelsea, 545 West 25th Street, New York, from January 15 through February 14, 2009.

This monographic exhibition, Robbins' second with Marlborough Gallery, will include nearly forty works in a wide range of media, including paint, wood, jute, and clay. Experiencing the variety and totality of Robbins work is akin to being in the landscape, experiencing your surroundings—walking through a city, following the embedded footprint of a ruin, tracing your finger along the mortar of an antique building, noticing the glistening rows of nail enamels and lipsticks in shop windows, or watching city lights stream into long red, green, and white lines slicing through the night sky as you are transported at high speed—the visceral and the conceptual merge and Bruce Robbins' work takes on rationality and gravitas without losing one iota of vitality.

Bruce Robbins was born in Philadelphia and graduated from the Cooper Union School of Art and Architecture in New York City. In the mid-seventies he gained attention as a New Image Sculptor with a series of painted and constructed ladder and seesaw works. He later began exploring his long standing interest in architectural form by producing a series of pilaster and door sculptures, which were a hybrid of painting and sculpture. Over the last two decades he has continued explorations in sculpture and painting utilizing architecture as a common theme.

Robbins has long explored his fascination with structure by photographing sections of ancient stone walls and colorful wooden shanties during his course of travels though Europe and the Caribbean. These photographic studies continue to serve as a touchstone for his trademark *Walls*. This exhibition will feature new wall constructions from this series, including *Wall Reconstruction (Change and Permanence)*, 2008 (mixed media, 72 x 96 x 7 1/2 in./182.9 x 243.9 x 19.1cm); *Wall Reconstruction (Day)*, 2007 (acrylic, wood, resin and jute, 98 x 72 x 7 1/2 in./248.9 x 182.9 x 19.1 cm) and *Wall Reconstruction (Night)*,

2007 (acrylic, wood, resin and jute, 98 x 72 x 7 1/2 in./248.9 x 182.9 x 19.1 cm). Handmade wooden blocks of varying sizes—some painted or stained, others natural—are stacked to create imposing, albeit lyrical, structures. Upon viewing these *Walls*, the blocks may initially appear to be randomly placed; however, these works gradually reveal themselves to be carefully built and considered constructions. The *Walls* deal with building structure as a source of symbolism as well as a meditation on painting and sculpture.

During the 1980s Robbins developed his quasi-architectural vernacular, and in the mid-1990s he initiated a major public project comprised of dozens of paintings and drawings. Entitled *Berlin Windows*, the series was permanently installed in newly constructed sites in Berlin and expanded the visceral and conceptual scope of Robbins' oeuvre. His use of repetition and drawn, painted and incised line—enacted with apparent speed—to create overlapping bands, layers, and veins of bold color against gritty black and white grids is an apt reflection of the anxiety and dynamic of a contemporary city in the process of reinvention.

Recently Robbins began a new body of work that mines history and muses on the subject of new monuments, public spaces, "Main Street," and evolution. This exhibition will include a range of startling and mysterious large and small-scale sculptures from this series. They are made of paint, plastic, wood, and clay and combine references to ancient, modern, and contemporary architecture—re-calling ruins, cathedrals, International Style, shack culture, and city plans. At first glance, these forms are highly implausible—armatures and walls that cannot function. Though the walls are reconstructed elements, which are a fundamental part of architecture, they embody nonchalance—appearing as if they have occurred partly by chance. Conversely, they also reflect a dead-serious work ethic and evidence the love of making things by hand. *Monument (Campanile)*, 2008 (fired clay, gesso, wood, 48 3/4 x 10 5/8 x 10 5/8 in./123.8 x 27 x 27 cm), *Monument (Colonnade)*, 2008 (fired clay, gesso, wood, 51 3/4 x 16 x 16 in./131.5 x 40.6 x 40.6 cm), and *Monument (Dome)*, 2008 (fired clay, gesso, wood,

59 x 8 x 8 1/2 in./149.9 x 20.3 x 21.6 cm) are all examples of work in this series.

Another series in the exhibition will be comprised of five works under the title *Painting Construct*. Ranging in size from the one-foot square *Painting Construct (Horizon)*, 2008 (acrylic on jute on panel, 12 x 12 in./30.5 x 30.5 cm) to the large *Painting Construct (Adobe)*, 2006 (acrylic and jute on wood panel, 84 x 90 in./213.4 x 228.6 cm), they are expressively simple with ghostly shapes that portend wonder and the passage of time. Existing at the other end of the expressive spectrum are the high-sheen, brightly-colored hybrids, called *Built-Outs*, which are at the same time compellingly visceral and intellectually stimulating. Works such as *Built-Out (Blue Flower)*, 2007 (resin and enamel over jute and wood, 16 x 16 x 4 1/2 in./40.6 x 40.6 x 11.4 cm), *Built-Out (Cruciform Flower)*, 2008 (resin and enamel over jute and wood, 16 x 16 x 4 1/2 in./40.6 x 40.6 x 11.4 cm) and *Built-Out (Four Corner Flower)*, 2008 (resin and enamel over jute and wood, 16 x 16 x 4 1/2 in./40.6 x 40.6 x 11.4 cm) sing with bright colors in grid patterns that revel in uneven, intentionally imperfect lines.

New to Robbins oeuvre are highly refined, deeply reflective acrylic and resin based paintings including *Wall Painting (Night)*, 2008 (acrylic, wood, resin and jute, 84 x 84 in./213.4 x 213.4 cm), *Wall Painting (Late Summer)*, 2008, 72 x 72" and *Wall Painting (Fire Wall)*, 2008, (acrylic, wood, resin and jute, 48 x 48 in./121.9 x 121.9 cm). These offer a spell-binding visual complexity of layered painted lines and deeply reflective sub-surfaces.

Robbins has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and internationally. His work is in numerous public collections, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY; St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

An illustrated catalogue, with an essay by Deborah L. Roldán, Exhibition Coordinator, Fundación Juan March, will be available at the time of the exhibition.

[brucerobbinsstudio.com](http://brucerobbinsstudio.com)

Marlborough Chelsea / International Public Art Ltd., 545 West 25th St, New York, NY 10001	t. 212.463.8634	f. 212.463.9658	<a href="mailto:chelsea@marlboroughgallery.com">chelsea@marlboroughgallery.com</a>
Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd., 6 Albemarle Street, London W1S 4BY	t. 44.20.7629.5161	f. 44.20.7629.6338	<a href="mailto:mfa@marlboroughfineart.com">mfa@marlboroughfineart.com</a>
Marlborough Monaco, 4 Quai Antoine 1er, MC 98000 Monaco	t. 377.97702550	f. 377.97702559	<a href="mailto:art@marlborough-monaco.com">art@marlborough-monaco.com</a>
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	<a href="mailto:info@galeriamarlborough.com">info@galeriamarlborough.com</a>