

# JOHN BERGGRUEN GALLERY

228 GRANT AVENUE SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA 94108 TEL 415-781-4629

FAX 415-781-0126 GALLERY@BERGGRUEN.COM WWW.BERGGRUEN.COM

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture**

**MARCH 2008**

**John Berggruen Gallery** is pleased to present *Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture*, an exhibition of new and historical works by a selection of prominent and emerging artists. *Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture* will occupy both floors of gallery space and will include work by artists **Stephan Balkenhol, Jose Bedia, Los Carpinteros, Mark di Suvero, Jim Dine, Tom Friedman, Al Held, Anton Henning, Damien Hirst, Y.Z. Kami, Albert Oehlen, Nathan Oliveira, Martin Puryear, George Rickey, Joel Shapiro, Kiki Smith, Robert Therrien, and Rachel Whiteread**, among others.

Highlights include Jose Bedia's bronze sculpture *Gibaro en fuga (Gibaro in flight)*. Gibaro is a Spanish term denoting the offspring of a Spaniard and an Indian, and hints at both the multicultural background of Bedia's birthplace, Cuba, as well as the artist's affiliation with the Palo Monte religion. Palo Monte places importance on the idea of the "Indian" as an indigenous and mystical symbol and in divination rituals calls for the utilization of shells and disks (similar in shape to that of *Gibaro en fuga*) made of various materials, animal, plant or other. For Bedia, however, this gibaro also fits within his tendencies to depict the "common-man" in various journeys across the boundaries of space and time. José Bedia was born in Havana, Cuba in 1959. He graduated from the Escuela de Arte San Alejandro in Havana, in 1976 and from the Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana, Cuba in 1981. Bedia emigrated to the United States in 1993. He currently lives and works in Miami, Florida.

*Pray* is a prime example of Damien Hirst's iconic utilization of butterflies as an artistic medium. First appearing in his work in 1991's exhibition "In and out of love" at London's Woodstock Street Gallery, butterflies have since made their way into Hirst's oeuvre in various shapes and forms. Most recently, they were the focus of Hirst's intensely popular and critically important 2007 exhibition titled "Superstition," which saw the apex in his use of butterflies in the production of religiously informed compositions – a tendency of Hirst's that is explicit in the title of *Pray*, and implicit in the large-scale formatting of the work (84 x 84 inches), its sparse composition, and the overall placidity of the painting. For Hirst, these butterflies represent the complex and fragile nature of life and death and the inherent beauty within both. Damien Hirst was born in Bristol, England in 1965. While still a student at Goldsmith's College in 1988, he curated the now renowned student exhibition, *Freeze*. In 1992, he was part of the ground breaking Young British Artists exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery, where he first exhibited his famous *Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*. That same year he was nominated for the prestigious Tate Gallery Turner Prize, which he won in 1995.

Albert Oehlen is best known for creating paintings that exist in a domain between figuration and abstraction, neo-expressionism and modernism - regularly displaying elements as well as critiques of each aesthetic on one canvas. This oscillation is clearly evident in the works currently on display at John Berggruen Gallery, and is perhaps most obvious in his large-scale work, *Fibreglass Scroll*, whose ephemeral and passionate quality of painting hints at a latent mysticism that is typical of the Abstract Expressionists, but whose stylized and recognizable biomorphic shape mirrors the figuration of more representational forms of art. Oehlen was born in Krefeld, Germany in 1954. He graduated from the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst, Hamburg, in 1978. Closely associated with the Cologne art scene, he was a member of the Lord Jim Lodge along with Martin Kippenberger, and today has been called the "kingpin of the punk-era Hamburg school." Oehlen has exhibited internationally at such institutions as the Museum

of Modern Art in New York, and the Reina Sofia in Madrid. He will be the focus of an upcoming solo exhibition at John Berggruen Gallery in April, 2008.

Nathan Oliveira's scope as an artist reaches into the disciplines of painting, drawing, printmaking and sculpture. While he has garnered an incredible amount of success and recognition in all of these areas, his work is represented in *Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture* by his paintings and sculpture specifically. Most notable are his sculpture ***Standing Figure II (hair bent back)*** from 2007 and his painting ***Cobalt Racer*** from 2001. Both take the human form as their subject matter and showcase Oliveira's celebrated predilection for depicting bodies in motion. Unconstrained by medium, Oliveira has continued to create solitary figures which captivate us with their rich earth colors, deeply textured yet balanced compositions, and vibrant spirituality. Nathan Oliveira was born in Oakland, California in 1928 and has been closely associated with the Bay Area Figurative Movement since the 1950s.

*Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture* marks the premier exhibition of Kiki Smith's large drawing ***Ejaculating Snake*** (2006) at John Berggruen Gallery. Ripe with innuendo, snakes have been a recurring theme in all areas of Smith's work, including prints, drawings, sculpture and even Steuben produced glassware, and emphasizes Smith's long standing interests in both nature, classic tattoo art, and body art. Kiki Smith was born in Nuremberg, Germany in 1954. She began her artistic career by participating in COLAB (Collaborative Projects), a New York-based cooperative that consisted of over forty artists in the mid-Seventies. Smith's early career included solo exhibitions at the Dallas Museum of Art (1989), the MAK Galerie (Vienna, 1991), and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Humlebaek, Denmark). In 2005, the Walker Art Center organized a traveling retrospective that moved on to the San Francisco Museum Art.

The work of Robert Therrien – his sculpture, in particular – bears the unmistakable mark of an artist acutely preoccupied with issues of size and proportion. As evidenced here by Therrien's monumental eight foot tall stainless steel ***No title (oil can)***, Therrien approaches these interests through the fabrication of large-scale versions of commonplace things. The results are immense, often times beautiful and always recognizable works of art. Therrien was born in 1947 in Chicago and grew up in San Francisco. In 1971 he moved to Los Angeles, where he continues to live today. Highlights of his many solo exhibitions include shows at Gagosian Gallery, New York (2001), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2000), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (1991), and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1984), among others. His work is in the collections of such institutions as the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and the Tate Gallery, London. Significant exhibitions have been held in his honor at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and The Reina Sofia, Madrid.

Rachel Whiteread (British, 1963), a member of the Young British Artists, holds the honor of being the first woman to win the Turner Prize (1993). She is best known for her sculpture, which often take the form of ordinary domestic objects, including two currently on display at John Berggruen Gallery - ***IN OUT - IX*** from 2004 and ***Cabinet VIII*** from 2007. Her work has been included in numerous exhibitions such as *Sensation*. Whiteread has been the focus of much critical attention for her *Nameless Library (Holocaust Monument)* in Vienna, and *Untitled Monument (Plinth)* in London among a multitude of other works.

For further information and photographs, please contact the gallery at 415.781.4629 or [info@berggruen.com](mailto:info@berggruen.com).

**Gallery hours: Monday - Friday: 9:30-5:30, Saturday: 10:30-5:00**