

# JOHN BERGGRUEN GALLERY

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Nathan Oliveira: A Memorial Exhibition**

**September 8 – October 22, 2011**

**John Berggruen Gallery** is pleased to present *Nathan Oliveira: A Memorial Exhibition*, an exhibition of his last paintings, most completed in 2010, as well as historical drawings, sculpture, and monotypes. The exhibition will occupy both floors of gallery space. The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with an introduction by art historian and Director of the Palm Springs Art Museum and former Associate Director and Chief Curator of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Dr. Steven A. Nash. There will be an opening reception on Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-7:30pm to coordinate with the San Francisco Art Dealer's Association's First Thursdays.

In the months before his death on November 13, 2010, Nathan Oliveira (b.1928) experienced a powerful explosion of creativity. His thirteen final paintings that are included in this exhibition represent a profound and moving chapter to Oliveira's distinguished career as a painter. The paintings consist of magnificent figures standing in, or gliding through, luminous landscape-like swaths of paint. They are majestic and mysterious, and seem to have their roots in Oliveira's early work, yet they speak of a fresh vision as well. This exhibition serves as a condensed survey that also includes early and historical works on paper, sculpture, and monotypes.

Oliveira's various artistic forms that define his oeuvre all take the human figure as their subject matter and showcase Oliveira's celebrated predilection for depicting bodies in various states of movement. Unconstrained by medium, Oliveira has continuously created solitary forms which

captivate us with their rich earth colors, deeply textured yet balanced compositions, and vibrant spirituality. “Nathan Oliveira’s passion is for continuing an inner-directed artistic tradition attached to the human subject... The evocation of mystery that the viewer experiences in Oliveira’s work derives from a depth of feeling refracted through artistic tradition and transmitted to the spectator by the artist’s hand,” wrote Peter Selz in a catalog essay for Oliveira’s 2002 painting and printmaking retrospective at the San Jose Museum of Art, California.

Nathan Oliveira was born in Oakland, California, and received his bachelor's degree in fine arts in 1951 and his master's in fine arts in 1952 at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland (later the California College of the Arts.) In 1959, Oliveira was the youngest painter included in the important exhibition “New Images of Man” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. A survey of five years of his paintings and works on paper was shown at the Art Gallery of the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1963. He began teaching at Stanford University in 1964 and proceeded to build the printmaking department until his retirement in 1995. A fifteen-year survey of his paintings was organized by the Oakland Museum of California in 1973. A retrospective of his graphic works was mounted in 1980 at California State University, Long Beach, and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco organized a survey of his work in monotype in 1997. Oliveira was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1994 and has received many other awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, two honorary doctorates, and, in 2000, received the degree of Commander of the Order of Henry the Navigator from the President of Portugal - considered the highest decoration among modern Portuguese honorific orders. In 2002, the San Jose Museum of Art organized a traveling painting and printmaking retrospective of his work. His work is in the collections of many museums, among them the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh as well the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.