

# HEADS

MARCH 3 - APRIL 30, 2011

CURATED BY PETER SELZ

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

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**HEADS** THE HUMAN HEAD HAS BEEN THE INSPIRATION FOR ARTISTS SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL. AND WITH ITS MULTIFARIOUS RANGE OF EXPRESSIONS REMAINS AN INEXHAUSTIBLE OBJECT FOR THE PAINTER AND SCULPTOR, OPEN TO UNLIMITED FORMAL INVESTIGATION AND INFINITE EXPRESSIVE INTERPRETATION

AN INCREASING SEARCH FOR VERACITY LED, IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY TO THE INVENTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY, CREATING DOUBT ABOUT THE VERY SURVIVAL OF REPRESENTATIONAL PAINTING. PERHAPS SUSAN SONTAG WAS RIGHT WHEN ASSERTING THAT “A PHOTOGRAPH IS A POWERFUL INSTRUMENT FOR DEPERSONALIZING THE WORLD”<sup>1</sup> AND PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS PERSISTED IN ANALYZING AND REVEALING THE HUMAN FACE. THE CUBISTS SHATTERED AND DISMEMBERED THE FACE OF THE SITTER AND RE-ASSEMBLED IT IN A NEW RATIONAL ORDER ON A FLAT TWO-DIMENSIONAL SURFACE. THE SURREALISTS, OPEN TO THE IRRATIONAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN THOUGHT AND FEELING, FOUND WAYS TO CONVEY THE DREAM AND EROTIC ASSOCIATIONS IN THEIR WORK. MOST STRIKING IS RENÉ MAGRITTE’S TRANSFORMATION OF A WOMAN’S FACE INTO A MAP WHERE HER EYES ARE REPLACED BY BREASTS, THE NOSE BY THE NAVEL, AND THE MOUTH BY THE VULVA IN HIS PAINTING, **RAPE** (1934). SOME THIRTY YEARS LATER, ANDY WARHOL ELIMINATED ANY PERSONAL TOUCH AND REPLICATED THE MASS-PRODUCED IMAGE OF THE POST-INDUSTRIAL ERA. NOW, IN SPITE OF THE TEMPTATIONS OF PHOTOSHOP AND DIGITAL AND VIRTUAL PROCEDURES, AN INCREASING NUMBER OF PAINTERS, BRUSH IN HAND, BUILD ON THE TRADITION OF PAINTING TO CREATE INNOVATIVE WORKS OF INDIVIDUAL AUTHENTICITY. FOR THIS EXHIBITION WE HAVE CHOSEN RENDITIONS OF THE HUMAN HEAD BY ARTISTS WORKING IN LONDON, PARIS, BRUSSELS, DUBLIN, PHILADELPHIA, SEATTLE, STANFORD, BERKELEY, AND THE LOS ANGELES AREA.

FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS, IRVING PETLIN, BORN IN CHICAGO AND WORKING IN PARIS, HAS PRODUCED DRAMATIC PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS WHICH DEAL WITH THE FULL MEASURE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE. FOLLOWING HIS TEMPERAMENT, HE OFTEN WORKS IN SERIES SUCH AS HIS CHARCOAL PORTRAITS OF MEN WHOSE WORK AND LIFE HAVE FOUND HIS ADMIRATION. THE FIRST OF THESE, OF THE GREAT HISTORIAN OF MEDIEVAL AND MODERN ART, MEYER SCHAPIRO, SHOWS PETLIN’S LOVE AND RESPECT FOR THE WISE THINKER. THERE IS THE PORTRAIT OF JEAN CLAIR, THE POLITICALLY ENGAGED WRITER AND FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE PICASSO MUSEUM IN PARIS, AND OF JOHN ASHBERY, ONE OF AMERICA’S MOST CELEBRATED MODERN POETS AND ART CRITIC, WHOSE VERSE AT TIMES REFLECTS ON THE VISUAL ARTS.

LUCIAN FREUD, SIGMUND’S GRANDSON, WAS BORN IN BERLIN, MOVED TO LONDON WHEN A CHILD AND HAS BEEN PAINTING THERE FOR OVER 70 YEARS. LIKE PETLIN, HE INVOKES A DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF THE MASTERS BEFORE HIM AND HE ALSO DEVELOPED A SPECIAL BOND WITH THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WOULD SPEND LONG PERIODS OF TIME, SITTING FOR THE PAINTER, AS HE ANALYZED THE FEATURES OF THEIR FACE AND DEPICTED IT WITH SCULPTURAL ACUITY. HIS HEADS AS SEEN IN TWO MASTER ETCHINGS, **THE PAINTER’S DOCTOR** (2005-06) AND **DONEGAL MAN** (2007), COMMUNICATE A SENSE OF LIVING, OF PHYSICAL PRESENCE, SELDOM SEEN IN THE HISTORY OF PORTRAITURE. THERE WAS EVERY REASON FOR THE CRITIC ROBERT HUGHES, TO ASSERT IN HIS ESSAY IN THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS THAT, “LUCIAN FREUD HAS BECOME THE GREATEST LIVING REALIST PAINTER.”<sup>2</sup>

WITH CONCEPTUAL ART, PERFORMANCE ART, LAND AND EARTH ART, VIDEO ART, NOT TO MENTION POSTMODERN THEORY, GAINING THE ATTENTION OF THE ART WORLD, CRITICS --SOME WITH GLEE, OTHERS WITH DISMAY-- HAVE FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW, ANNOUNCED THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PAINTING. IT TOOK A FIGURE OF GREAT ESTEEM LIKE FREUD TO “GIVE PERMISSION” TO ARTISTS TO SCRUTINIZE THE HUMAN FIGURE AND TO PUT THEIR BRUSHES TO CANVAS, CARRYING FORWARD THE TRADITION OF VISUALIZING THE FACES OF WOMEN AND MEN.

AS IN GIACOMETTI’S PAINTING, THE EYES IN ANN GALE’S PAINTINGS ARE THE LOCUS OF VISUAL GRAVITY. THE SITTER’S PENETRATING GLANCE CALLS FOR RESPONSE FROM THE VIEWER’S GAZE. LIKE GIACOMETTI AND FREUD, GALE PRODUCES PICTURES, OF PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHT. BUT UNLIKE FREUD’S DAZZLING PORTRAITS, ANN GALE’S ARE SOMBER IN PALETTE, REFLECTING THE CLOUDY ATMOSPHERE OF SEATTLE. THESE SENSITIVELY GRADED GRAYS ARE HIGHLIGHTED BY SKILLFULLY APPLIED SPOTS OF COLOR, CREATING PORTRAITS OF SILENT ENERGY.

BELONGING TO THE SAME GENERATION, THE FRENCH-BORN BELGIAN PAINTER EDWIGE FOUVRY PICTURES DARK AND MYSTERIOUS HUMAN HEADS, WHICH EMANATE EMOTIONAL ENERGY. IN **ENDORMI** (FALLING ASLEEP) (2010) WE ARE PRESENTED WITH THE HEAD OF A MAN, MODULATED IN A GREAT VARIETY OF DAUBS OF COLOR, WHICH PRESENT A STRONG CONTRAST TO THE VERY WHITE SHEET ON WHICH HE SEEMS TO BE RESTING. BUT THE BLACK SHADOW OF HIS HEAD, THE DARK BLACK BRUSHSTROKES ON HIS SHOULDER AND THAT WATCHFUL EYE TURNED TO THE VIEWER, EXPRESS A SENSE OF INSCRUTABLE ALARM.

ALEX KANEVSKY'S **J.F.H.** (2010) IS LESS THREATENING. HE HAS PAINTED THE HEAD OF A GIRL WHO LOOKS AT THE VIEWER IN A THOUGHTFUL AND CONTEMPLATIVE MOOD. KANEVSKY WHO WAS BORN IN RUSSIA, WENT TO SCHOOL IN LITHUANIA AND WORKS IN PHILADELPHIA, IS KNOWN FOR HIS FIGURES AND LANDSCAPES OF LUMINOUS COLOR AND VIBRATING LIGHT. IN THIS CANVAS HE HAS CONSTRUCTED THE FACE OF THE GIRL BY THE USE OF MANY LAYERS OF PIGMENT, AND BY PLACING HALF OF HER FACE IN A DEEP SHADOW, AND BY TILTING HER HEAD SLIGHTLY, HE HAS CREATED AN IMAGE OF NOSTALGIC MEMORY.

THE CALIFORNIA ARTIST, SHERIÉ FRANSSSEN, WORKS IN THE VEIN OF THE ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS. SHE APPLIES HER PIGMENT FROM EDGE TO EDGE WITH A FREE GESTURAL BRUSHSTROKE. IN MANY OF HER PAINTINGS FRANSSSEN USES HIGH-TONED FLESH-LIKE COLORS IN WORKS OF HIGH SPIRIT AND PICTORIAL ENERGY. IT WAS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE CRITIC KENNETH BAKER NOMINATED ONE OF HER PAINTINGS AS "BEST NEW WORK OF ART" IN 2008.<sup>3</sup> OFTEN, AS IN DE KOONING'S DRAMATIC PAINTINGS OF "WOMEN" OF THE EARLY 1950S, FRANSSSEN'S IMAGE OF A HUMAN SKULL TOOK SHAPE DURING THE PAINTING PROCESS. SHE NAMED THIS PAINTING **ONE WAY OF PUTTING THE SAME THING** (2008).

A TOTALLY DIFFERENT, A TRULY FRIGHTENING AND FOREBODING SKULL APPEARS IN JIM MORPHEUS'S FOR **MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO II** (1985), PRODUCED WHEN THE ARTIST WAS READING WORKS BY THE SPANISH WRITER, PHILOSOPHER AND POLITICAL ACTIVIST. HE FELT AN AFFINITY TO THE WRITER, WHO ASSERTED THAT "FAITH AND REASON, HEART AND HEAD, COULD NOT BE HEALED BY REASON AND THAT MODERN MAN MUST REMAIN IN PAINFUL TENSION BETWEEN FAITH AND DOUBT".<sup>4</sup> MORPHEUS, NOW RESIDING IN LOS ANGELES, GREW UP IN A GREEK- AMERICAN FAMILY AND HIS WORK HAS MAINTAINED A CONNECTION WITH BYZANTINE IKONS. AT THE SAME TIME HIS VIGOROUS AND INTENSE MANIPULATION OF THE BRUSH IS INDEBTED TO ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM. WE ARE REMINDED ALSO OF THE COMMENTS BY THE THEOLOGIAN PAUL TILlich, WRITING ABOUT WORKS OF THIS NATURE: "THE COURAGE AND THE HONESTY WHICH UNDERLIE SUCH WORKS, AND THE CREATIVE POWER WHICH IS ABLE TO GRASP THE NEGATIVITY OF THE CONTENT AND THE POSITIVITY OF FORM, IS A TRIUMPH OF HUMANITY".<sup>5</sup>

ALTHOUGH THE WORK OF PATRICK GRAHAM IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM MORPHEUS', THEIR VISION AND THEIR SEARCH OF MEANING IS RELATED. THUS, GRAHAM, SPEAKING TO THE CRITIC MARLENA DONAHUE SAID "SUFFERING TO KNOW THINGS, DYING TO FEEL THINGS, FEARING OUR END, LOVING IN

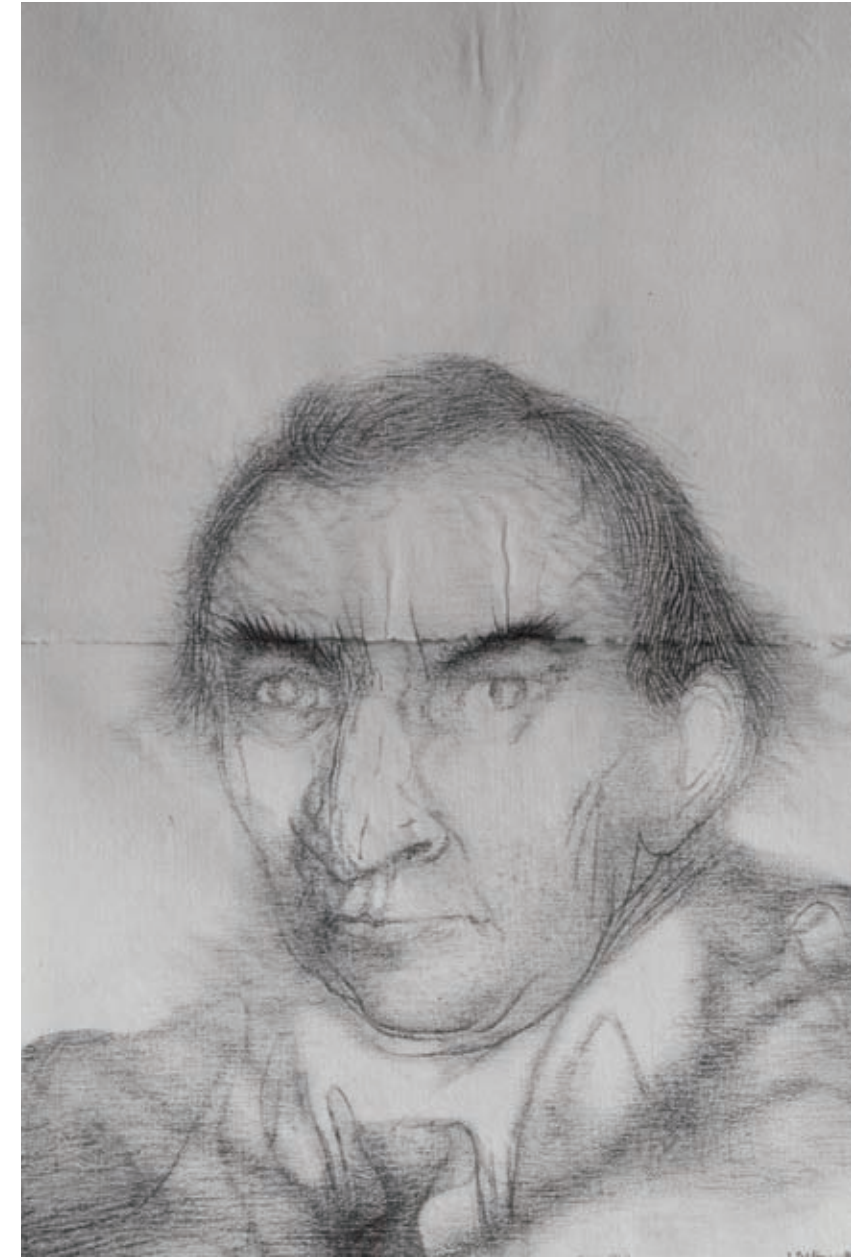
SPITE OF IT ALL, THAT'S PRETTY MUCH THE WHOLE OF IT".<sup>6</sup> GRAHAM, IRELAND'S FOREMOST PAINTER, IS KNOWN FOR HIS LARGE MYSTERIOUS AND TURBULENT PAINTINGS AS WELL AS FOR HIS AMAZING COLLAGE DRAWINGS SUCH AS **A SONG FOR T. AND R.** (1988). T IS HIS WIFE THELMA, R HIS SON ROBIN. GRAHAM, ALMOST LIKE A LATTER-DAY KURT SCHWITTERS, USES FRAGMENTS OF PAPER, WHICH HE TEARS, MOUNTS ON CARDBOARD, AND FINALLY DRAWS ON THE PAPER AND TOUCHES IT BY HAND WITH DABS OF PAINT. THE RESULT IS SUMMED UP BY DONALD KUSPIT, "GRAHAM'S PAINTINGS PERSUADE ME THAT IT IS STILL POSSIBLE TO MAKE CONVINCINGLY GRAND PAINTINGS, ABUT MODERNITY NO LESS".<sup>7</sup>

GOTTFRIED HELNWEIN ALSO WORKS IN IRELAND --IN HIS CASTLE-- WHEN HE IS NOT IN HIS LOS ANGELES STUDIO. AN ARTIST OF ASTOUNDING VERSATILITY, HE IS A PAINTER, GRAPHIC ARTIST, PHOTOGRAPHER, VIDEO AND INSTALLATION ARTIST AND STAGE DESIGNER. HIS EARLY PAINTINGS, OFTEN DEPICTING TORTURED INDIVIDUALS, WERE SHOCKING AND PROVOCATIVE, AND POINTED INDIRECTLY TO NAZI ATROCITIES (HELNWEIN WAS BORN IN VIENNA). EARLY IN THIS DECADE HE PRODUCED A SERIES OF DARKENED HEADS-- MANY OF THEM OF CHILDREN. SET IN A SEA OF DARK BLUE AND BLACK SILENCE, THE IMAGE OF THE HEAD IS BARELY PERCEPTIBLE IN THESE MONOCHROMES. IT IS ALMOST TOTALLY OBLITERATED, BUT THE CONTEMPLATIVE SPECTATOR WILL BE REWARDED BY SURPRISED RECOGNITION: "LOOK, AND YOU WILL SEE".

THE LATE NATHAN OLIVEIRA CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE ART WORLD WHEN, IN 1959 HIS EARLY PAINTING WAS SHOWN TOGETHER WITH WORK BY FRANCES BACON, DUBUFFET, DE KOONING AND GIACOMETTI AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART.<sup>8</sup> SINCE THEN HE HAS PRODUCED VIBRANT PAINTINGS, LITHOGRAPHS AND MONOTYPES WITH DEEP INSIGHT INTO THE HUMAN SPIRIT. CELEBRATED AS A PAINTER, OLIVEIRA AT TIME ALSO TURNED TO SCULPTURE, CREATING WORKS, SUCH AS A SERIES OF FEMALE "HEADS" IN 1982 AND "MASKS" IN 2007, BRONZES, WHICH, WHILE EMBRACING TRADITION, EXPRESS A VERY CONTEMPORARY SENSE OF GRIEF.

STEPHEN DE STAEBLER IS ALSO REPRESENTED WITH SEVERAL MASKS IN THIS EXHIBITION, PRIVATE STUDIES WHICH ARE SHOWN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THIS EXHIBITION. THESE PIECES, LIKE HIS LARGER FIGURES, OR HIS FRAGMENTED LEGS, ARE POETIC STATEMENTS BY THIS TRULY VISIONARY ARTIST. THE MALLEABLE NATURE OF CLAY OR TERRA COTTA--"COOKED EARTH"--IS SIGNIFIED IN THESE SCULPTURES, HEADS WHICH ARE ARCHAIC AS WELL AS OF THE HERE- AND- NOW, EXPRESSING BOTH THE VULNERABILITY AND ENDURANCE OF BEING HUMAN.

- Peter Selz | Curator



IRVING PETLIN | JEAN CLAIR, 1992 | 39 X 26 INCHES | CHARCOAL ON PAPER



LUCIAN FREUD | DONEGAL MAN, 2007 EDITION 17/46 | 26.25 X 22.25 INCHES | ETCHING ON SOMERSET WHITE PAPER

COURTESY OF JOHN BERGGRUEN GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO



ANN GALE | SELF PORTRAIT, 2008 | 13.5 X 11 INCHES | OIL AND GRAPHITE ON VELLUM



EDWIGE FOUVRY | ENDORMI, 2010 | 39 X 47 INCHES | OIL ON LINEN



ALEX KANEVSKY | J.F.H., 2010 | 48 X 48 INCHES | OIL ON BOARD





SHERIE FRANSSEN | ONE WAY OF PUTTING THE SAME THING, 2008 | 31 X 43 INCHES | OIL ON CANVAS

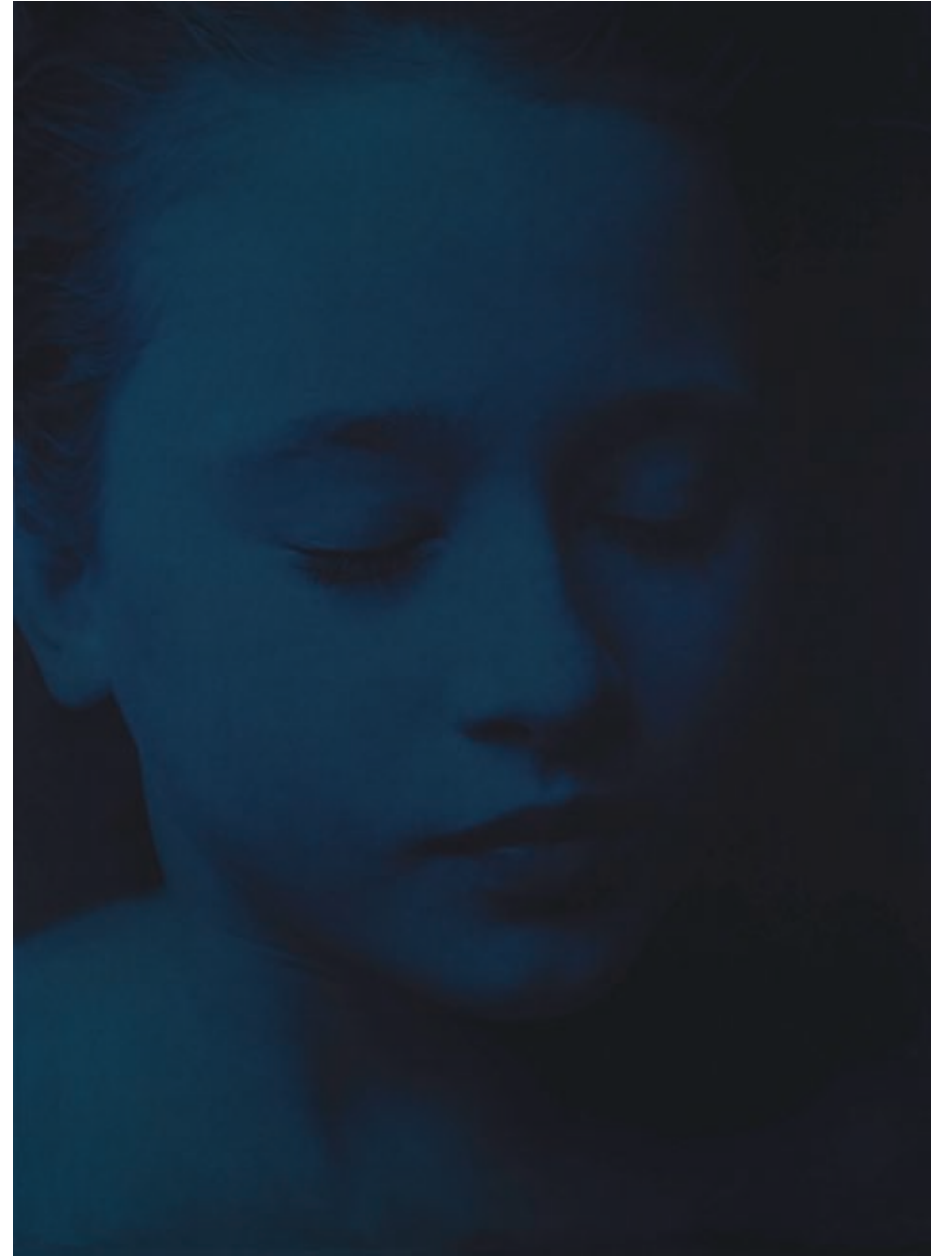


JIM MORPHESES | FOR MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO II, 1985 | 53 X 43 INCHES | OIL, MAGNA, CHARCOAL, PASTEL AND COLLAGE ON PAPER

COURTESY OF SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART



PATRICK GRAHAM | A SONG FOR T. & R., 1988 | 32 X 44 INCHES | MIXED MEDIA ON BOARD  
COURTESY OF JACK RUTBERG FINE ARTS, LOS ANGELES



GOTTFRIED HELNWEIN | SLEEP (27), 2009 | 60 X 44 INCHES | MIXED MEDIA (OIL & ACRYLIC) ON CANVAS

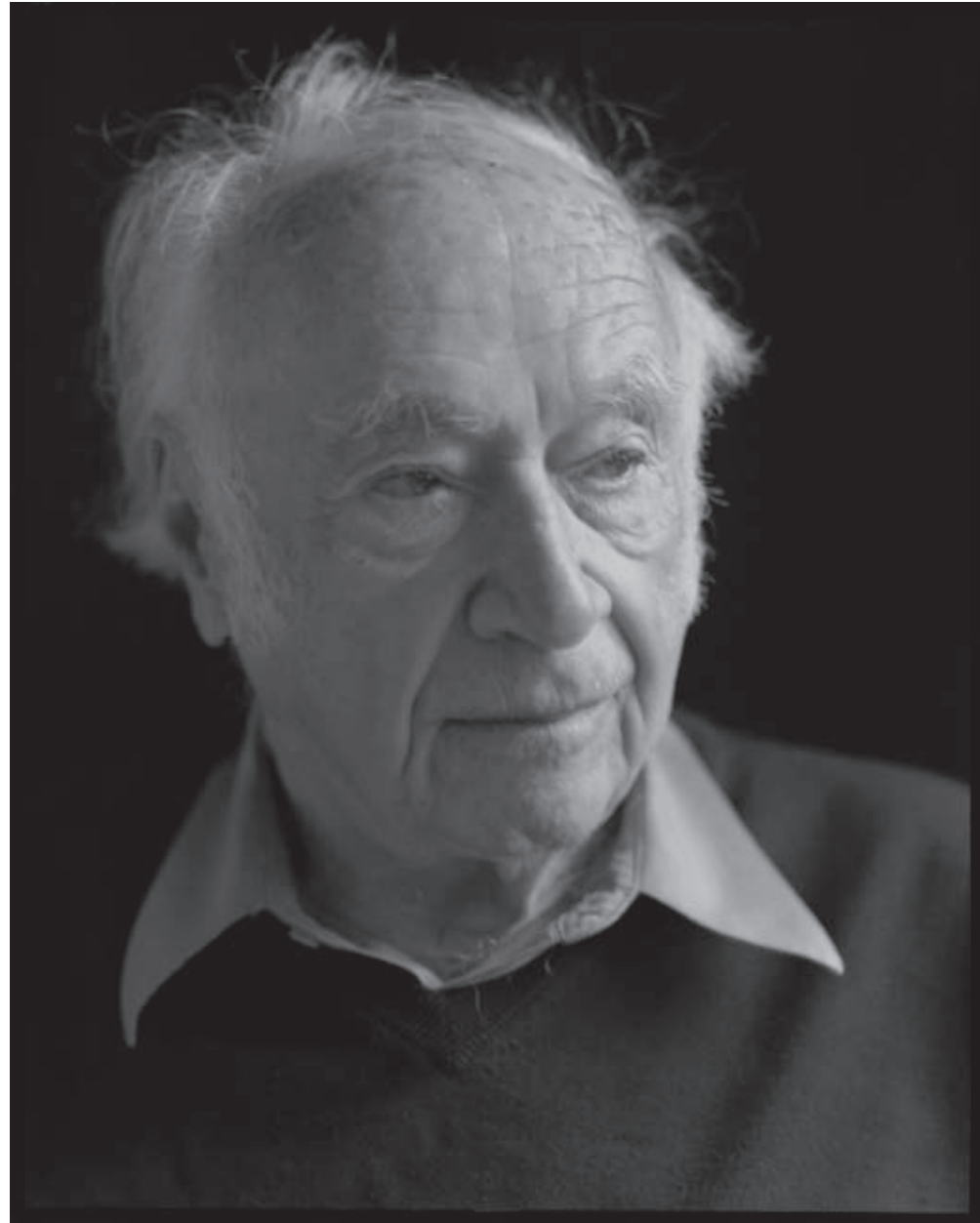
COURTESY OF MODERNISM INC., SAN FRANCISCO



NATHAN OLIVEIRA | MASK V, 2007 EDITION 4/9 | 8 X 12 X 12 INCHES | BRONZE, UNIQUE PATINA  
COURTESY OF THE NATHAN OLIVEIRA ESTATE AND JOHN BERGGRUEN GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO



STEPHEN DE STAEBLER | FEMALE TORSO WITH HEAD, 1981 | 18.5 X 16 X 16.5 INCHES | CLAY



PETER H. SELZ WAS BORN IN MUNICH, GERMANY IN 1919 AND IMMIGRATED TO THE U.S. WITH HIS FAMILY AT THE AGE OF 17. HE ATTENDED COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY FOR THE 1938-1939 ACADEMIC YEAR. THROUGH ALFRED STIEGLITZ, A DISTANT RELATIVE, SELZ ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH NEW YORK AND EUROPEAN EXPATRIATE ARTISTS. FROM 1941 TO 1944 HE SERVED IN THE OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICE IN THE U.S. ARMY AND BECAME A NATURALIZED CITIZEN IN 1942. HE ATTENDED THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO WHERE HE RECEIVED A MASTERS OF ARTS IN 1949 AND A PH.D. IN 1954 AND A FULBRIGHT AWARD FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS AND ÉCOLE DU LOUVRE FOR ONE YEAR.

UPON RETURNING TO THE U.S., SELZ HEADED THE ART EDUCATION PROGRAM AND TAUGHT THE HISTORY OF ART AT THE INSTITUTE OF ART (THE NEW BAUHAUS) CHICAGO WHILE STUDYING AND WRITING HIS DISSERTATION ON GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO. THIS WAS THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE MOVEMENT. IN 1955 HE ACCEPTED A PROFESSORSHIP AT POMONA COLLEGE, CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA WHERE HE CHAIRED THE DEPARTMENT AND WAS DIRECTOR OF THE ART GALLERY FROM 1955 TO 1958. HE THEN MOVED TO NEW YORK TO HEAD THE DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE EXHIBITIONS AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART. HE CURATED EXHIBITIONS SUCH AS **NEW IMAGES OF MAN** (1959) AND JEAN TINGUELY'S HOMAGE TO NEW YORK (1960). HE PRESENTED THE FIRST SURVEY SHOW OF FUTURISM IN THE U.S. AS WELL AS RETROSPECTIVES OF MARK ROTHKO, JEAN DUBUFFET, EMILE NOLDE, AUGUSTE RODIN, MAX BECKMANN AND ALBERTO GIACOMETTI.

IN 1965 SELZ BECAME THE FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF THE BERKELEY ART MUSEUM AND SERVED AS DIRECTOR UNTIL 1973. HE CURATED EXHIBITIONS SUCH AS **DIRECTIONS IN KINETIC SCULPTURE** (1966), **FUNK** (1967), **HUNDERTWASSER** (1968), **RICHARD LINDNER** (1969), **FERDINAND HODLER** (1973) AND **THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY IN POLITICAL CARTOONS** 1776-1976. SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH DIRECTING AND CURATING RESPONSIBILITIES HE TAUGHT AS A PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF ART FROM 1965 TO 1988.

ADDITIONALLY, SELZ TAUGHT AS THE ZAKS PROFESSOR AT THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY, JERUSALEM, 1976, WAS A VISITING PROFESSOR AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK IN 1987, AND AT ART ACADEMIES IN CHINA IN 1988. DISTINCTIONS INCLUDE FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIP IN 1949, THE ORDER OF MERIT FROM THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY FOR HIS BOOK ON GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM, AND EXHIBITIONS OF NOLDE AND BECKMANN. FROM THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION HE WAS AWARDED A RESIDENCY AT THE BELLAGIO STUDY CENTER IN 2007, AND FROM THE COLLEGE ART ASSOCIATION HE WAS PRESENTED WITH CHARLES RUFUS MOREY AWARD FOR HIS BOOK **ART OF ENGAGEMENT** IN 1994.

SELZ WAS APPOINTED A MEMBER OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART IN 1971. FROM 1972 TO 1973 HE WAS A SENIOR FELLOW OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES. SINCE 1993 HE SERVED ON THE ACQUISITIONS COMMITTEE OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, SAN FRANCISCO, AND FROM 2001 HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE NEUE GALERIE, NEW YORK. HE HAS BEEN A CORRESPONDING EDITOR OF **ART IN AMERICA** SINCE 1965 AND IS ALSO A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR FOR SCULPTURE MAGAZINE.

## NOTES

1. SUSAN SONTAG, "ON PHOTOGRAPHY" IN A SUSAN SONTAG READER (NEW YORK, FARRAR, STRAUSS AND GIROUX, 1963) P. 359.
2. ROBERT HUGHES, "ON LUCIEN FREUD." THE NEW YORKER, AUGUST 17 1987, P.54
3. KENNETH BAKER, "TOP 5 ART PICKS" IN SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, JANUARY 3, 2009.
4. JIM MORPHEUS, LETTER TO THE AUTHOR, 16 DECEMBER 2010
5. PAUL TILLICH "A PREFATORY NOTE" IN PETER SELZ, NEW IMAGES OF MAN (NEW YORK, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 1959) P. 10.4.
6. MARLENA DOKTORZYK-DONAHUE, INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK GRAHAM, IN PATRICK GRAHAM  
(LOS ANGELES, JACK RUTBERG FINE ARTS), P.15
7. DONALD KUSPIT "PATRICK GARHAM: PAINTING AS DIRGE" IN THE LARK IN THE MORNING PATRICK GRAHAM  
(DUBLIN, THE DOUGLAS HYDE GALLERY, 1994) P.7
8. FULL DISCLOSURE: I WAS THE CURATOR OF THIS EXHIBITION.