

PRESS RELEASE

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FEBRUARY 7 - MARCH 10, 2018

OPENING RECEPTION: FEBRUARY 7, 6-8PM

NEW YORK, NEW YORK: The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to announce *Embodied Forms*, the first exhibition dedicated to the work of Magdalena Abakanowicz since her recent death at the age of 86. Opening on Wednesday, February 7, the exhibition will feature a broad selection of the artist's work ranging from 1971 to 2009, including key works from four of her series: *Abakans*, *Crowds*, *War Games* and *Coexistence*.

Magdalena Abakanowicz is recognized as one of the most unique and potent voices in contemporary art. Her installations and sculptures, at once beautiful and unsettling, are a reminder of the fragile nature of the human condition. As a child, the artist endured the trauma of living in occupied Poland during WWII. This experience prompted a lifelong awareness of existential concerns and a unique sculptural vocabulary. She said of that time, "When I was 12 in 1942, one could only escape from human cruelty inside oneself (into a world of dreams, imaginings)". This kind of mental departure – self-defense against omnipresent propaganda and destruction – informed her artistic output for decades to come.

In the early 1960s, when fiber objects were considered "craft" as opposed to "art," Abakanowicz taught herself how to dye and weave discarded rope to create the immense, suspended, anatomical forms within her small living space in Warsaw. The works defied easy classification and stood against any established definitions. Marlborough is delighted to exhibit a selection of these woven sisal works, known as the *Abakans*. "Monumental, strong, soft and erotic," Abakanowicz writes, "these objects became the image of my reality."

Beginning in the 1980s, Abakanowicz channeled her deeply personal feelings about loss, isolation, displacement and regeneration into sculptures of crowds—figures in burlap and later, bronze, that articulate both the harmony and rupture within multitudes. Shown in the exhibition will be the artist's *Coexistence*, a group of 13 burlap figures from 2002, and concurrently showing at Marlborough Contemporary, at 545 W. 25th Street, 2nd Floor, will be *Crowd IV*, a group of 24 figures realized between 1989 and 1990. Addressing the theme of multitudes, the artist writes:

I feel overawed by quantity where counting no longer makes sense. By unrepeatability within such a quantity. By creatures of nature gathered in herds, droves, species, in which each individual, while subservient to the mass, retains some distinguishing features... A riddle of nature's abhorrence of exact repetition or inability to produce it. Just as the human hand cannot repeat its own gesture. I invoke this disturbing law, switching my own immobile herds into that rhythm.



Abakan Rouge III, 1971
sisal weaving
127 x 78 3/4 in., 322.6 x 200 cm

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In addition, the exhibition will include three major works from the artist's *War Games* series: *Marrow Bone*, *Errant* and *Kos*. This series was first presented in the United States in 1993 in a solo exhibition curated by Michael Brenson at MoMA PS1. Both broken and indestructible, each work articulates a different personality imbued with its own tragedy and capacity for violence.

During her lifetime, Abakanowicz had over 150 solo exhibitions in Europe, North and South America, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. In 1999, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, held an exhibition entitled *Abakanowicz on the Roof*, a solo presentation of the artist on the museum's rooftop.

That same year, the Jardins du Palais Royal in Paris held an exhibition for the artist. Among numerous prizes and distinctions, Abakanowicz received seven honorary doctorates from universities in Europe and the United States as well as the Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from France and Cavaliere dell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana.

She was also awarded the prestigious International Sculpture Center's Lifetime Achievement award in 2005 as well as the Grand Cross of Merit (Großes Verdienstkreuz mit Stern) from the Federal Republic of Germany in 2010.

In the past thirty years Abakanowicz developed a number of site-specific sculpture installations that incorporate multiple figures or elements of increased scale. Among these are *Negev* at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 1987; *Space of Dragon*, Olympic Park, Seoul, South Korea, 1985; *Becalmed Beings*, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, Japan, 1993; *Space of Unknown Growth*, Europos Parkas, Vilnius, Lithuania, 1997-98; *Unrecognized*, Citadel Park, Poznan, Poland, 2002; *Space of Stone*, Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey, 2003; and her last major public work, *Agora*, a sculptural group comprised of 106 unique cast-iron figures measuring over nine-feet tall permanently installed in Chicago's Grant Park in 2006.

Abakanowicz's work can be found in numerous public collections including the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois; Museum of Modern Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, New York; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. and the Sezon Museum of Modern Art, Karuizawa, Japan, among others.

Magdalena Abakanowicz joined Marlborough Gallery in 1989, where she presented over twenty solo exhibitions. We are grateful to Professor Mary Jane Jacob for her help in the realization of this exhibition. An illustrated catalogue will be available at the time of the exhibition.



Coexistence (13), 2002
burlap, each unique
dimensions variable

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