

Marlborough

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For press inquiries please contact Janis Gardner Cecil at Marlborough Gallery at 212.541.4900 or 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

mny@marlboroughgallery.com

R.B.KITAJ: LITTLE PICTURES

Marlborough Gallery

April 10-May 3, 2008

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery announce the opening of a major exhibition of work by R.B. Kitaj on April 10 that will continue through May 3, 2008 at 40 West 57th Street, New York. Entitled *Little Pictures*, this show will feature eighty-five paintings that the artist completed between 1965 and 2007, the majority dating from 2006 and 2007. Planned before the artist's death on October 21, 2007, this exhibition will be an important opportunity to experience the work of an artist celebrated for his intellectual and emotional passion: "a Zarathustra of contemporary art...with characteristics of a prophet and jester" (*The New York Sun*) who was recognized as "a brilliant American draughtsman" (*The Guardian*) and a "ceaselessly inventive artist whose work provoked great admiration..." (*The Independent*).

The new paintings in this exhibition, all oil on canvas, are for the most part representative of Kitaj's late style, or what he referred to as his "old-age style." Kitaj's interest in Cézanne, whom he had called "my most beloved painter," dated back many years, and a number of works reveal a particular debt to him, such as *Jewish Bathers*, 2007 (12 x 12 in., 30.5 x 30.5 cm). There is even an homage to the great Frenchman with *Hammer Cézanne*, 2006 (18 x 12 in., 45.7 x 30.5 cm), which refers to Cézanne's *Boy Resting*, ca. 1887, at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

One can see the influence of Bonnard and Picasso in a series of piercing self-portraits, in particular *Self-Portrait*, 2007 (12 x 12 in., 30.5 x 30.5 cm), *Fasting – Artist*, 2007 (18 x 12 in., 45.7 x 30.5 cm), and *Wrapping-Paper Self-Portrait*, 2007 (12 x 18 in., 30.5 x 45.7 cm). There are also a number of pictures devoted to Kitaj's beloved late wife, Sandra. Infused with love, loss, and memory, paintings such as *SMF*, 2007 (12 x 12 in., 30.5 x 30.5 cm), *Shekhina (Sandra)*, 2006 (14 x 11 in., 35.6 x 27.9 cm) and *Painting Sandra*, 2007 (12 x 12 in., 30.5 x 30.5 cm), are an abiding visual testament to their marriage.

Critic and curator Richard Morphet comments on this group of canvases in his text accompanying the catalogue: "Kitaj's urgency – of feeling, of idea, of touch – invests all his pictures with extraordinary vitality. Each is a spur to exploration, whether of lives, of issues or of the visions of other artists and other arts. His late art offered, increasingly, an infectious example of the rich potential of simplest means. The very elements of painting and of drawing are rawly exposed, testifying how expressive mark, gesture and colour can be, each in its own right but all the more so in combination." Sir Nicholas Serota, in his remarks, noted that "...in recent years an approach to painting combining his love of drawing with a new freedom in the application of dry paint to canvas has given his work crackling energy. Apparently dashed off, but in truth the product of much deliberation, this series of small canvases with heads, nudes, quotations from earlier paintings and from the masters whom he so revered can properly be regarded as a 'late style'."

Art historian and curator Marco Livingstone observes that Kitaj, "...as a septuagenarian...finally set aside his lifetime's habit of working slowly on complex pictures and instead quickly and impulsively produced many dozens of small paintings with the rash vigor and excitement that an artist might more usually expend on drawings. Having insisted in his middle years on the virtues of being 'the least spontaneous' of men, in thus giving in to spontaneity, speeding up his production as he contemplated the certainty of his own imminent death, he discovered the late style that had been eluding him: an art at once wholly original and entirely in character with his life's work."

Fundamental to Kitaj's artistic concerns and to his complex personality was his need to express the experience of being a Jew and the significance to him of how that related to making art, and consequently, how Jewish art related, qualitatively, to art in general. Kitaj stated that "The Jewish question, in its infinity, is the central drama and romance of my life and art. It's what excites me most and of course it attracts enemies, both Gentile and Jewish." He understood himself to be a true Diasporist and wrote two manifestos relating to that subject, one being *The First Diasporist Manifesto* published by Thames and Hudson in 1989. Kitaj's *The Second Diasporist Manifesto* was published by Yale University Press in 2007.

David Hockney, in his dedication to Kitaj, writes: "R.B. Kitaj was a friend and colleague for almost fifty years. A unique marvelous artist who thought content more important than form, yet knew they were one. Perverse, argumentative and thoughtful in his art and his life. I loved him."

Kitaj was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1932. In 1950-51 he studied at Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York and at the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna. In 1957-59 he attended the Ruskin School of Drawing at Oxford University and in 1959-61 at the Royal College of Art in London. During his lifetime, Kitaj's work was exhibited extensively throughout Europe, The United Kingdom and The United States, with traveling solo exhibitions at museums in Germany and The Netherlands in 1970, The United States and Germany in 1981 (The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Cleveland Museum of Art and Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf) and a major retrospective in 1994 at Tate Gallery, London, which traveled to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. In 1998 a large solo exhibition toured Europe with stops at Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid and Museum der Stadt Wien, Vienna, among others. In 2001-2002, the National Gallery, London, held the exhibition *Kitaj In the Aura of Cézanne and Other Masters*. Since 2004, Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Spain; the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles and the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies, Los Angeles have all held solo exhibitions of Kitaj's work. In 2009, an exhibition of Kitaj's work will be held at La Pedrera in Barcelona.

Kitaj received many distinctions as an artist, including five Honorary Doctorates. In 1992 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and in 1985, to the Royal Academy. In 1995 he was awarded the Golden Lion for Painting at the Venice Biennale. In 1996 he was made Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the Republic of France and in 1997 he won the Wollaston Award from London's Royal Academy for best painting in the Summer Exhibition. His work is in the permanent collections of fifty-five museums throughout the world.

Marlborough Chelsea / International Public Art Ltd., 545 West 25th St, New York, NY 10001 t. 212.463.8634 f. 212.463.9658 chelsea@marlboroughgallery.com

Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd., 6 Albemarle Street, London W1S 4BY t. 44.20.7629.5161 f. 44.20.7629.6338 mfa@marlboroughfineart.com

Marlborough Monaco, 4 Quai Antoine 1er, MC 98000 Monaco t. 377.97702550 f. 377.97702559 art@marlborough-monaco.com

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 info@galeriamarlborough.com