

Marlborough

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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

WILL RYMAN: A NEW BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 10-OCTOBER 10, 2009

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to announce that an exciting new exhibition of sculpture by Will Ryman will open at Marlborough Chelsea, 545 West 25th Street, on September 10 and continue through October 10, 2009. The show will feature thirty-nine sculptures depicting over one hundred large roses in shades of pink and red with garden detritus such as bottle caps, crushed cans and bubble-gum wrappers, with a distortion of scale that, according to the artist, reflects a rodent's view of a New York City rose garden. A number of insects populate the flowers, including ladybugs, aphids and flies. The roses, ranging in height from two to almost seven feet, will be installed throughout the first floor of the gallery where viewers will be invited to stroll through the clusters of blooms to discover each flower. This will be Ryman's second exhibition at Marlborough Chelsea.

Entitled *A New Beginning*, Ryman's exhibition follows a long tradition of the depiction of flowers in the arts, both Eastern and Western, with a flourish of usage in seventeenth-century Europe in the still life and portraiture genres. Flowers became the symbolic embodiment of beauty, purity and fertility, attributes of saints and mythological gods, and bearers of distinct meanings in a complex language all their own: love, friendship, fidelity, jealousy, etc. In Western art the flower is perhaps most poignant when depicted in a still life as a *momenti mori*, a reminder that all beauty and life on this earth will pass. Ryman chose the rose to populate his garden because it is, in his words, "the most recognizable flower and symbolic across the world."

Each sculpture is handmade by Ryman of steel, epoxy resin, aluminum, plaster and paint and organized as a cluster of three blooms on a base. The clusters are composed of a flower in one of three colors: pale, ballet pink, Venetian rose and brick red. Ryman purposefully lets the raw quality of the media show through, with steel thorns and a rough texture to the petals. Some of the roses appear crushed or in the last moment of bloom before losing their petals. Some are more fecund and do not resemble a "rose" so much as an abstract shape that recalls what is seen in nature: cliffs, canyons, valleys and mountain landscapes.

There is a dark element to Ryman's rose garden, as it is populated with aphids and black flies (both epoxy resin, wire and paint, dimensions variable), those famous symbols of decay, and polluted by the leavings of the human race, trash that can kill the same roses that are so beloved. The squashed Coke can (found objects, canvas and paint, 30 x 29 x 31 in.), Budweiser cap (aluminum, epoxy resin and paint, 4 x 18 x 19 in.) and Titleist golf ball (epoxy resin, styrofoam, and paint: 24 x 25 x 25 in.) are oversized and lovingly detailed – the golf ball "dimples" are faithfully reproduced as hundreds of

Ryman's thumbprints – and seem inspired as much by Pop art as by Ryman's own sense of humor and the reality of public spaces in New York City. Cigarette butts (plaster, PVC and paint, 4 x 9 x 8 ½ in.) and a bag of Wise potato chips (plaster, aluminum and paint, 31 x 75 x 36 in.) spilling on the ground complete the scene.

John Yau writes about *A New Beginning* for the exhibition catalogue, commenting on Ryman's use of materials:

Flowers aren't supposed to be made of industrial materials, we might say to ourselves. Glass or wood is okay, but not wire mesh, house paint, and metal tubing. By transforming the organic to the coldly inorganic, and replacing nature with industrial anonymity, Ryman's work reminds me of those antiseptic gardens you find in industrial parks along vast stretches of highway throughout America. And yet, *A New Beginning* isn't meant as some easily digestible social commentary. After all, the title could refer to the fact that the artist has changed his work. Rather, *A New Beginning* exists on its own and possesses a nomadic quality; its flowers can be uprooted and planted elsewhere, along with the litter and insects. There is a quiet but fierce grimness to this work, and touch of humor, a sense that, despite starting anew, celebrations are not necessarily in order.

A New Beginning follows the popular exhibition *Will Ryman: The Bed* at Saatchi Gallery Project Room, London, this past spring. A monumental, mixed-media construction, *The Bed*, like Ryman's rose garden, challenges the viewer to alter his perspective through distortions of scale, compelling empathy and also pointing to the hazards of humanity, as the natural world succumbs to our ever larger foot print.

Ryman's work is featured in the recent publications: *The Martin Z. Margulies Collection: Painting and Sculpture*, published by the Margulies Foundation in 2008 and *Shape of Things to Come: New Sculpture*, published by Rizzoli in collaboration with Saatchi Gallery in February 2009.

From 1990 to 2001 Ryman studied fiction and dramatic writing and wrote numerous plays. Frustrated with the limits of writing and the theater, he began to make figures as a way to express the ideas in his plays. Ultimately choosing sculpture over the written word, Ryman has devoted himself exclusively to sculpture since 2002. Will Ryman lives and works in New York City.

An illustrated catalogue with an essay by John Yau will be available at the time of the exhibition.

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