

SMoCA's SPECIAL 10TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION:
"Seriously Funny"

February 14, 2009 – July 5, 2009

I've always thought that a big laugh is a really loud noise from the soul saying,
"Ain't that the truth."

—Quincy Jones

(Scottsdale, AZ) The Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMoCA) celebrates its 10 year anniversary season, with *Seriously Funny*, a special exhibition on the topic of humor. Co-curated by SMoCA's **senior curator Claire Schneider** and **associate curator Cassandra Coblentz**, the exhibition has been cultivated around the belief that some of the sharpest seers have been those whose job it is to make us laugh. *Seriously Funny* explores the ways artists use humor today as a deft tool for social commentary and to manifest unspoken truths in our everyday lives. Organized in honor of SMoCA's 10th Anniversary, *Seriously Funny* speaks to the fundamental concepts of contemporary art that SMoCA has endeavored to present to its audiences over the past decade.

Seriously Funny showcases the depth and range of the museum's programming. **Ten artists** (in honor of SMoCA's 10 years of existence) were chosen for the exhibition, ranging from those emerging in the field to well-established individuals in the contemporary art world. They work in all media including **painting, wall drawing, ceramics, video, photography, and installation** and hail from diverse places, such as Rome, Phoenix, Bucharest and New York. The artists featured are: **Kjellgren Alkire** (Arizona), **Tamy Ben-Tor** (Israel, now works in New York), **Maurizio Cattelan** (Italy, now works in New York), **Alejandro Diaz** (Texas, now works in New York), **Christian Jankowski** (Berlin, Germany), **Nina Katchadourian** (New York), **Martin Kersels** (Los Angeles), **Dan Perjovschi** (Bucharest, Romania), **Arlene Shechet** (New York) and **Amy Sillman** (New York).

Four artists—Kjellgren Alkire, Alejandro Diaz, Nina Katchadourian and Dan Perjovschi—have **created new works especially for the exhibition**. Among the highlights are a **large scale wall drawing** made on site at SMoCA by **Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi**, who pens in a sly, swift hand those moments that make us want to yell out: "How did the world turn out this way? If we are being watched every minute, why can't this surveillance system at least be helpful and remember our PIN number?" Another highlight is **Alejandro Diaz's *Naked Artist Inside***, a large portable sign with a flashing red arrow that would be more likely found at a swap meet than outside an art museum at the entrance to SMoCA. In this scenario, Diaz is able to use his sign with the message "Naked Artist Inside" as a vehicle to **poke fun at the traditionally perceived stuffiness of museums**. The phrase is also a jab at our society's hunger for sensation, but the joke is indeed on us, as this "naked" artist is nowhere to be found! SMoCA has also worked closely with artist **Nina Katchadourian** to produce ***Monument to the Unelected***. **Located at three sites around the Valley**, the piece consists of **56 temporary signs** advertising the **presidential campaigns of all those who ran and lost** presidential elections throughout American History. (See additional press release for more information.)

Also featured are significant works by Tamy Ben-Tor, Maurizio Cattelan, Christian Jankowski, Martin Kersels, Arlene Shechet and Amy Sillman. SMoCA is thrilled to be able to show the work of internationally acclaimed **Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan, the contemporary art world's court jester** known for mocking the art system and even himself with his subversive, prankish displays. His *Frankie and Jamie* sculpture from 2001, presents another potent symbol filled with uncertainty. Created in commemoration of September 11th, this monument inverts two New York policemen. It pays serious homage to tragic events while also suggesting that utopian ideals about control are in jeopardy, by literally turning everything upside down on its head. Also included are large **lush, richly colored calligraphic paintings, by artist Amy Sillman** that give

us both intimacy and psychological release. Sillman captures that moment where anxiety becomes absurdity, when the **goofy and gawkish gain gravity** and the buffoonish becomes sensuous and loving. **Israeli artist Tamy Ben-Tor** mines idiocy through a hilarious cast of **personalities in video installations**, as a means of exorcizing the worst cases of intolerance, ignorance and narcissism.

Seriously Funny epitomizes SMOCA's commitment to connecting with a broad audience and taking on profound and timely topics. The artists in this exhibition address politics, religion, institutions of power, cultural identity, expertise and the human condition with time honored strategies. They harness alter egos, judiciously employ distortion, have a keen eye for unusual connections and hidden anomalies and deploy a sharp ear for language. Humor has long been a vehicle for thinking critically about the world around us. As good comedy often enables needed distance for social commentary, so too does good art. As we celebrate this milestone and look ahead to SMOCA's next ten years, we hope always to encourage our viewers to look deeply and to think about the world in new ways.

"SERIOUSLY FUNNY" RELATED EVENTS

- FEB 13 7:30 pm** **OPENING RECEPTION ART PERFORMANCE "The Campfire" BY ARIZONA ARTIST KJELLGREN ALKIRE** (The Opening is free & open to the public)
- 8 – 9 pm** **FREE ARTIST TALK with Kjellgren Alkire, Alejandro Diaz, Nina Katchadourian, Martin Kersels, Dan Perjovschi and Arlene Shechet.** (Meet inside the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art)
- FEB 15 3:00 pm** **FREE ART PERFORMANCE "The Sing-a-long" BY KJELLGREN ALKIRE** during SMOCA's 10th Anniversary Free Public Birthday Party Bash (12 noon – 6 p.m.) Meet inside the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art for Kjellgren's performance.
- FEB 25 12 Noon** **FREE LECTURE: "Laughing at Ourselves: Daumier, Duchamp & Picasso"**
Join SMOCA's senior curator Claire Schneider and bring a brown bag lunch to enjoy as she examines the humorous art of Daumier, Duchamp and Picasso. (Stage 2 Theater – adjacent to SMOCA).
- MAR 12 9:30 pm** **KJELLGREN ALKIRE PERFORMS "The Nursery"** during *SMoCA Nights: Valley Fever*, the Museum's premier after-hours party. Tickets: \$15 at 480-994-ARTS. Meet in the Museum.
- MAR 25 6:30 pm** **FUNNY FILM NIGHT: "The General" & "Waiting for Guffman"**
Join film critic Colin Boyd for a double feature of funny films "The General" (1927) and "Waiting for Guffman" (1996) in Stage 2 Theater (adjacent to SMOCA in the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts). Free snacks will be provided with the films. \$7 members; \$9 nonmembers. Call 480-994-ARTS.
- APR 9 7:00 pm** **FREE ARTIST TALK : Meet Sculptor Arlene Shechet**
Join artist Arlene Shechet as she discusses her glazed ceramic sculptures. *Organized in conjunction with the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts [NCECA]. Meet in the Museum.
- APR 9 7:45 pm** **FREE ARTIST PERFORMANCE: "The Chuckwagon" by Kjellgren Alkire**
As part of his installation *Camp* in SMOCA's "Seriously Funny" exhibition, Kjellgren Alkire, will perform a piece titled "The Chuckwagon" in the Museum next to his art installation to toast community, traditional forms

and sacrifice. Part preacher and part carnival man, Alkire reaches inside religious clichés and offers his audiences a funny and insightful experience.

APR 23 6:30 pm

FREE PERFORMANCE/ “LECTURE MUSICALE” BY CALIFORNIA ARTIST MARTIN KERSELS

Using projected images along with music, video, dance and the kitchen sink, artist Martin Kersels will present a brief history of his work, followed by an audience Q & A. (Meet in the Museum lobby).

The Scottsdale Cultural Council, a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, is contracted by the City of Scottsdale, Arizona, to administer certain city arts and cultural projects and to manage the City-owned Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, and the Scottsdale Public Art Program. The programs of the Scottsdale Cultural Council are made possible, in part, by the support of members and donors and grants received from the Arizona Commission on the Arts through appropriations from the Arizona State Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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