

**FIRST U.S. SURVEY OF CHILEAN ARTIST JUAN DOWNEY TO OPEN AT  
BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS**

*Video and Photographic Installations, Paintings, and Drawings shed light on Downey's Career*

**Bronx, NY, October 25, 2011** – Beginning February 9, 2012 The Bronx Museum of the Arts will present *Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect*, the first U.S. survey of the pioneering video artist Juan Downey. On view through May 20, 2012, the exhibition brings together more than 100 works from Downey's expansive career, from his early experimental work with art and technology to his groundbreaking video art from the 1970s through the 1990s, the exhibition will include drawings, paintings, video and photographic installations, and the artist's notebooks, which have never before been on view.

“Downey revolutionized the field of video art and pioneered an art form that has had continued relevance for contemporary artists working today,” said Bronx Museum of the Arts Director Holly Block. “As a Chilean, Downey maintained a connection with Latin American culture throughout the many decades he lived and worked in New York. These dual influences give his work a special resonance with the Bronx Museum and with our community. In addition, Downey has exhibited at the Bronx Museum before, making this exhibition a homecoming of sorts.”

Formally trained as an architect, Downey began experimenting with different art forms when he moved from Paris to Washington DC in 1965. He developed a strong interest in the concept of invisible energy and shifted from object-based artistic practice to an experiential approach, seeking to combine interactive performance with sculpture and video, a transition the exhibition explores. Downey quickly established himself as an avant-garde pioneer of video and technology art and for the next two decades began to explore invisible forms of energy and communication, describing himself as a ‘cultural communicant’ and an ‘activating anthropologist.’

*Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect* will feature two of Downey's best known series: *Video Trans Americas (VTA)*, begun in the late 1960s; and *The Thinking Eye*, begun in the 1970s. *VTA* features footage of indigenous people he met on his journey through North and South America. *The Thinking Eye* is a two-part work that includes *Las Meninas (1975)* a meditation on Diego Velazquez's masterwork of the same title, and *The Looking Glass (1981)*, which explores the idea of reflection in western art, including in Holbein's *Ambassadors* and Velazquez's *Las Meninas*. Both *Video Trans Americas* and *The Thinking Eye* series highlight Downey's preoccupation with political discourse, the self, the history of art, western civilization, and Latin American identity. Both works evidence his fascination with identity –his own as well as that of the various indigenous cultures he encountered – and his attempt to understand his identity within the context of western culture.

Organized by the Bronx Museum of the Arts and the MIT List Visual Arts Center, *Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect* is curated by Valerie Smith, Curator and Head of the Visual Arts, Film, and

Media at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. The exhibition was on view May 6 – July 11, 2011 at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA and opened at Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ on September 24, 2011. Downey's *Map of Chile*, which contains a live anaconda, will be on view at the ASU Museum. The exhibition on view at the Bronx Museum of the Arts will include two etchings from the Museum's permanent collection, as well as *About Cages*, an important political video installation that will incorporate live birds.

## JUAN DOWNEY

Juan Downey was born in Santiago, Chile in 1940. He studied architecture at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Following his studies, he lived in Paris for four years where he studied printmaking at Stanley William Hayter's *Atelier 17*. In 1965 Downey moved to the United States, and settled permanently in New York City in 1969, where he lived until his death in 1993. He was an associate professor in both the School of Architecture and the media department at the Pratt Institute.

Solo exhibitions featuring Juan Downey's work include *Juan Downey: Audio-Kinetic Electronic Sculptures*, The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington DC; *With Energy Beyond These Walls*, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, NY, (1970); *Video Trans Americas*, Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, TX, (1976); *Juan Downey: Video Trans Americas*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, (1976); *Video Trans Americas*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY (1977); *Juan Downey: New American Filmmaker Series*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (1978); *Juan Downey*, Matrix/Berkeley 16, University Art Museum, Berkeley, CA (1978); *Une Forêt 'Videoformes': Retrospective Juan Downey*, Festival de la Création Vidéo, Clermont-Ferrand, France (1993); *Juan Downey: Instalaciones, Dibujos y Videos*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago (1995), Chile; *Juan Downey: Con energía más allá de estos muros*, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Centre del Carme, Valencia, Spain (1997-98); *Retrospectiva de Video Arte de Juan Downey*, Museo de Arte Moderno de Chiloé, Castro, Chiloé, Chile (2000); *Plateau of Humankind*, Honorable Mention: "Excellence in Art Science and Technology," 49th Venice Biennale Chilean Pavilion, Venice, Italy (2001); and *Juan Downey: El ojo pensante*, Sala de Arte Fundación Telefónica, Santiago, Chile (2010).

Downey's work was included in numerous group exhibitions including *Involving Technical Materials and Processes*, organized by Experiments in Art and Technology, in collaboration with the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (1968); *New Learning Spaces & Places*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (1974); *Whitney Biennial Exhibition*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (1975, 1977, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991); *Documenta 6*, Kassel, Germany, (1977); *Venice Biennale, US Pavilion*, Venice, Italy, (1980); *Sydney Biennale*, Sydney, Australia, (1982); *II Bienal de La Habana*, Havana, Cuba, (1986); *The Thinking Eye*, International Center for Photography, New York, NY, (1987); *Passages de l'image*, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, (1990); *Video Art: The First 25 Years*, The Museum of Modern Art, and The American Federation of Arts, New York, NY, (1995); *Info Art '95*, Kwangju Biennial, Gwangju, Korea, (1995); *Electronic Highways*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, (1997); and *Rational/Irrational*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany, (2008-2009).

## CATALOG

The exhibition will be accompanied by a 240 page fully illustrated catalog titled, *Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect* produced by MIT List Visual Arts Center and Bronx Museum of the Arts and edited by Valerie Smith. The catalogue is distributed by D.A.P., New York.

### **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

The Bronx Museum of the Arts will celebrate the opening of the exhibition with a community open house on Sunday, February 12 from 2:00pm – 5:00 pm. Curator-led tours that are open to the public will take place at 1:00pm.

### **SPONSORSHIP**

*Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect* has been generously supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal Agency; Martin E. Zimmerman; the Dedalus Foundation; the Milton & Sally Avery Arts Foundation; and Fundación Cisneros/Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros.

Additional support has been provided for the Cambridge presentation by the Council for the Arts at MIT and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

### **THE BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS**

Founded in 1971, the Bronx Museum of the Arts is a contemporary art museum that connects diverse audiences to the urban experience through its permanent collection, special exhibitions, and education programs. Reflecting the borough's dynamic communities, the Museum is the crossroad where artists, local residents, and national and international visitors meet. The Museum's home on the Grand Concourse is a distinctive contemporary landmark designed by the internationally-renowned firm Arquitectonica.

To get to the Museum, visitors can take the B or D train to the 167 Street/Grand Concourse Station stop and walk south along the Grand Concourse two blocks. Please note: D trains do not stop during rush hour peak times (from 6:15 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. on Manhattan-bound trains, and from 4:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. on Bronx-bound trains). Visitors can also reach the Museum via the 4 train to 161 Street/Yankee Stadium. At the exit, walk east three blocks to Grand Concourse and north four blocks along Grand Concourse. For more information please visit [www.bronxmuseum.org](http://www.bronxmuseum.org).

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