

# HARRY ABEND: The Supreme Achievement of the Essential

Opening Reception: Friday, October 10, 6-9 pm

Exhibition runs through Saturday, November 15, 2014

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11-6 pm

Henrique Faria Fine Art is pleased to present an exhibition of Venezuelan artist Harry Abend. This is the artist's first exhibition in the gallery and in New York City. Abend, a sculptor and architect, worked to develop a unique voice and visual repertoire in response to international artistic movements that were influential in Venezuela in the 60s and 70s, namely modernism and minimalism.

Abend's *The Supreme Achievement of the Essential* brings together thirteen sculptures from the series *Basic Forms* (1967), preparatory drawings and vintage photographs taken by Barbara Brandli and Mireya Benatar. The sculptures were selected to be part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Sao Paulo Biennial in 1967 and were to be featured alongside works from other Venezuelan artists Carlos Cruz-Diez and Mario Abreu. The crates containing the works disappeared, only to be found months later in Japan after the Biennial had concluded. The recuperated works were honored nonetheless with a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro in 1968. Abend's exhibition in New York will be a historic restaging of this seminal exposition, 46 years in the making.

Abend's sculptures embody the relationship between spatial forms and the sculptural materials that engender them. Abend builds his formal language using elemental geometric shapes, such as the sphere, cube, and cylinder, and casts them in sleek metals like bronze and aluminum to create structures that, as Victor Guédez explains in the catalogue essay, "reach their maximum potential due to their own simplicity". The interaction of form, line and space is evident in works such as *Tunken* and *Lagna*, where soft curves defy singular perspectives. The refinement and reduction of these formal effects is found in works *Doble Yo II* and *Doble Yo III*, where stark, horizontal elements prevail. Bestowed within each composition is a balance between tension and stillness, line and curve, proximity and depth.

It is Abend's sensitive treatment of the material that gives life to his sculptural forms. While his works affirm the absoluteness of the artistic medium, whether it is the metals utilized in *Basic Forms* or the wood and stone used in other series, his innovative and sensorial approach to extracting and defining three-dimensional forms eases the divide between positive and negative space and elevates the inherent qualities of the medium. For as in the spirit of minimalism, where the presence of a given work is not just contained within its boundaries, but extends outwards to interact with that of the viewer, so too is it experienced in the works of Harry Abend.

**Harry Abend** (Jaroslaw, Poland, 1937) immigrated to Venezuela in 1948 and embarked on his sculpture practice in 1958 under the guidance of Miguel Arroyo while also studying architecture at the Universidad Central de Venezuela. In 1963, at the age of 26, Abend received the National Sculpture Prize of Venezuela for his work *Forma 1961*. In 1964, he participated in a three-month workshop led by British sculptor Kenneth Armitage. In 1976 Abend moved to London where he continued developing his work and exhibited in galleries such as the Roundhouse Gallery and the Hayward Gallery. Around this time Abend began to receive commissions to stage interventions in urban and architectural environments, such as the cement mural on the façade of the Teatro Teresa Carreño, and the interior design of the Sala Plenaria in the east tower of Parque Central, both in Caracas. A selection of his solo shows include *Esculturas*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Río de Janeiro (1968); three exhibitions at Sala Mendoza, Caracas (1973, 1980 and 1995); Electrum Gallery, London (1977); Saint James Piccadilly Festival, London (1981); a retrospective at the Museo de Arte Moderno Jesús Soto, Ciudad Bolívar (2002); Museo de Arte Acarigua Araure, Acarigua (2003); Museo Kern Unión Israelita de Caracas (2012); and Galería GBG ARTS, Caracas (2014). He lives and works in Caracas.

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