

**VIK MUNIZ CREATES *REBUS*, AN INVENTIVE NARRATIVE OF WORKS
FROM MoMA'S COLLECTION, FOR *ARTIST'S CHOICE* SERIES**

Artist's Choice: Vik Muniz, Rebus

Special Exhibitions Gallery, third floor
December 11, 2008 – February 23, 2009

Press Preview: December 9, 2008, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

NEW YORK, December 9, 2008—Vik Muniz (Brazilian, b. 1961) is the ninth participant in *Artist's Choice*, a series of exhibitions in which an artist serves as curator, selecting works from MoMA's collection to create an exhibition. To organize his *Artist's Choice* exhibition, Muniz uses a rebus—a puzzle that combines unrelated visual and linguistic elements to create a larger deductive meaning—as the exhibition's organizing principle. ***Artist's Choice: Vik Muniz, Rebus*** features approximately 80 works of sculpture, photography, painting, prints, drawings, video, and design objects, selected and installed by Muniz. Among the artists and designers whose work will be on view are Eugène Atget, John Baldessari, Marcel Duchamp, Nan Goldin, Gordon Matta-Clark, Pablo Picasso, Dieter Rams, and Rachel Whiteread. The exhibition is organized by Vik Muniz, with Eva Respini, Assistant Curator, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition will be on view from December 11, 2008, through February 23, 2009, in the Special Exhibitions Gallery on the third floor.

In organizing the exhibition, Muniz borrows from the linear, reduced structure of a rebus, taking works out of their normal museological classification and context, and inviting the viewer to forge intuitive connections between the objects, based on form, color, scale, quantity, function, and pattern. The resulting narrative sequence creates surprising juxtapositions, forming a unique presentation of the Museum's collection.

Muniz states: "*Rebus* encourages viewers to think about the connection between one object and the next and is an exercise in the awareness of the power and function of serial visual analogy. This exhibition is a cognitive visual ride that I hope will affect how viewers experience the art here and throughout the Museum."

Eva Respini adds: "In his work and life, Vik Muniz always questions the perception and order of things. MoMA invited him to organize this exhibition because of his creativity and voracious curiosity about the visual and material world. Like the artist himself, *Rebus* is intelligent and humorous, and provokes visitors to look at MoMA's collection in new ways."

Outside the entrance to the exhibition, Peter Fischli (Swiss, b. 1952) and David Weiss's (Swiss, b. 1946) video *The Way Things Go* (1987) plays on a continuous loop. Shot in a warehouse, the video is an absurdist feat of cause and effect relationships, featuring automobile

tires, garbage bags, and plastic water jugs, rolling, twisting, and exploding in an unbroken sequence of events, injecting a burst of humor at *Rebus's* start.

Within the gallery, the “rebus” sequence begins, absent of wall labels (although an accompanying map guides visitors through the exhibition). Just as mortar joins the bricks of a building, the space and time between works placed in a gallery is as important to the exhibition as the art itself. As a viewer moves through a sequential arrangement of the exhibition, the residual ideas and forms of each artwork linger and have a cumulative effect.

In one part of the sequence from *Rebus*, Gordon Matta-Clark’s (American, 1945-1978) *Bronx Floors* (1972-73), a 42 x 43 3/8 x 11 3/8” remnant of wood and linoleum torn from a house in the Bronx, is displayed next to Joel Sternfeld’s (American, b. 1944) photograph *Buckingham, Pennsylvania* (August, 1978). The works are thematically connected through the series of newly built suburban homes in the background of Sternfeld’s image and the toy trucks on a mound of dirt in the foreground of the picture. The sequence continues with three related sets of toys from MoMA’s Department of Architecture and Design: Ladislav Sutnar’s (American, b. Czech Republic, 1897-1976) prototypes *Build the Town Building Blocks* (1940-43), LEGO building bricks (1954-58), and a Rubik’s cube (1974). Subsequently, Alberto Giacometti’s (Swiss, 1901-1966) *Hands Holding the Void (Invisible Object)* (1934, cast c. 1954-55) bookends the sequence, with the sculpture’s hands formed into a cube-like shape, referencing the Rubik’s cube that precedes it.

Moving further into *Rebus*, Muniz presents Massimo Vignelli’s (Italian, b. 1931) New York Subway Map (1970), displayed next to Philip-Lorca diCorcia’s (American, b. 1953) *Igor* (1987), a photograph of a man riding the New York City subway, with the iconic map in the image’s background. The orange subway seats in diCorcia’s photograph connect to the next work in the sequence, *Yellow* (1951) by Ellsworth Kelly (American, b. 1923). Finally, Kiki Smith’s (American, b. Germany, b. 1954) glass sculpture of an egg, *Yolk* (1999), follows and references Kelly’s *Yellow* in a similar way, beginning a new set of possibilities for *Rebus*.

In his own work, Muniz inventively questions the function and traditions of visual representation by using unlikely materials to render the subjects in his photographs. The Museum of Modern Art owns several of Muniz’s works, including *Still, After Cindy Sherman* (2000), from Muniz’s series *Picture of Ink*, *Mass* (1997), from his series *Pictures of Chocolate*, and *Narcissus, after Caravaggio* (2005), from his series *Pictures of Junk*. The recently acquired work *Still, After Cindy Sherman*, calls attention to the materiality of the printed medium. The artist rendered a blown-up image of one of Cindy Sherman’s most iconic works, *Untitled Film Still #48* (1979) (which is also in MoMA’s collection), in black ink and photographed it while still wet. The result is a tension between the recognizable image and the photographed ink.

Vik Muniz was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1961. He currently lives and works in New York City and Brazil. Muniz has exhibited internationally, including one-person exhibitions at the Miami Art Museum, which traveled to P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City; Moscow House of Photography; Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Irish Museum of Contemporary Art,

Dublin; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Menil Collection, Houston. His work is in the collection of numerous museums including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; The Art Institute of Chicago; The Centre George Pompidou, Paris; and the Centro Cultural Reina Sofia, Madrid. Muniz is also the author of *Reflex: A Vik Muniz Primer*, published by Aperture in 2005.

Eva Respini is Assistant Curator in the Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art. For MoMA, she has organized two forthcoming exhibitions, *Into the Sunset: Photography's Images of the American West* (2009) and *Projects 89: Klara Liden* (2009), and past exhibitions *New Photography 2007: Tanyth Berkeley, Scott McFarland, Berni Searle* (2007), *Out of Time: A Contemporary View* (2006), as co-curator, *New Photography 2005: Carlos Garaicoa, Bertien van Manen, Phillip Pisciotta, Robin Rhode* (2005), *Projects 81: Jean Shin* (2004), and *Fashioning Fiction in Photography since 1990* (2004), as co-curator. Ms. Respini helped organize the collaborative exhibition *Life of the City* (2002), for which she was the recipient of the Museum's Lee Tenenbaum Award. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Modern Art and Critical Theory and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History, both from Columbia University, and joined the Museum in 1999 as Curatorial Assistant.

About the *Artist's Choice* Exhibition Series:

MoMA's *Artist's Choice* series began in 1989 under curator Kirk Varnedoe, with Scott Burton's exhibition *Burton on Brancusi*. Subsequent *Artist's Choice* participants included the architects Herzog & de Meuron (2006), composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim (2005), and artists Mona Hatoum (2003), Elizabeth Murray (1995), John Baldessari (1994), Chuck Close (1991), and Ellsworth Kelly (1990).

SPONSORSHIP:

The exhibition is made possible by Anne and Kenneth Griffin.

The *Artist's Choice* exhibition series is made possible through The Agnes Gund Artist's Choice Fund endowed by Iara Lee and George Gund III, Lulie and Gordon Gund, Ann and Graham Gund, and Sarah and Geoffrey Gund.

PUBLIC PROGRAM:

Vik Muniz on *Artist's Choice*, *Rebus*

Wednesday, February 11, 6:30 p.m.

Theater 3 (The Celeste Bartos Theater), 4 West 54 Street

Taking on the role of curator in the Museum's galleries, artist **Vik Muniz** speaks about the exhibition and presents his own work as it relates to objectivity.

Tickets (\$10; members \$8; students, seniors, and staff of other museums \$5) can be purchased at the lobby information desk, the film desk, or online at www.moma.org/thinkmodern

MoMA AUDIO:

A MoMA Audio program features commentary by artist Vik Muniz. It is available free of charge, courtesy of Bloomberg; on MoMA WiFi at www.moma.org/wifi; and as a podcast on www.moma.org/audio and iTunes. The audio program is available in English only. MoMA Audio is a collaboration between The Museum of Modern Art and Acoustiguide, Inc.

FORD FAMILY ACTIVITY GUIDE:

In conjunction with the exhibition, Vik Muniz developed a Ford Family Activity Guide for children ages six and up to explore the differences between art and design objects. The guide encourages kids to discover the connections among objects as they are arranged in the exhibition, and using small reproductions, arrange them to tell a story of their own.

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Press Contact: Paul Jackson, 212/708-9593 or paul_jackson@moma.org

For high resolution images, please register on our press office Web site: www.moma.org/press.

Holiday Hours:

- December 24: 10:30 to 3:00 (Christmas Eve)
- December 25: Museum closed (Christmas Day)
- December 26: 9:30 to 8:00 (Target Free Friday Night 4-8 p.m.)
- December 27-January 1: 9:30 to 6:30
- January 2: 9:30 to 8:00 (Target Free Friday Night 4-8 p.m.)
- January 3-5: 9:30 to 6:30

MoMA Monday Nights:

MoMA will remain open until 8:45 p.m. on selected Mondays, giving visitors extended hours to view special exhibitions and the Museum's collection. The evenings will include entertainment and a cash bar. Regular admission applies.

The Museum will stay open from 10:30 to 8:45 on the following Mondays:

- December 8
- January 12
- February 9
- March 9
- April 6
- May 4
- June 8

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019

Hours: Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
Closed Tuesday

Museum Admission: \$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free for children 16 and under. Free for members.
Admission includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs.
Free admission during Target Free Friday Nights 4:00-8:00 p.m.

The public may call 212/708-9400 for detailed Museum information. Visit us on the Web at www.moma.org.