

First U.S. Solo Exhibition for Pioneering Brazilian Artist Paulo Bruscky— Political Art Figure Known for Work in Mail Art, Fluxus, and Performance

Works from Five Decades of Artist's Career Reveal his Pivotal Contributions to Brazil's Role in International Arts Dialogue

Bronx, NY, August 15, 2013—*Paulo Bruscky—Art is Our Last Hope*, the first solo exhibition of work by Brazilian artist Paulo Bruscky, will open on September 19 at The Bronx Museum of the Arts. Bruscky has played a critical role in bringing major artistic movements—including Fluxus, mail art, and performance art—to Brazil from the time he began working in Recife in the aftermath of the military coup of 1964. He has also served as one of the most active and engaged voices representing Brazil in the global dialogue surrounding these movements. *Art is Our Last Hope* will feature 140 works made between 1971 and 2011 in a range of forms, including sculpture, performance documentation, mail art, and photography. The exhibition will be on view through February 9, 2014.

Paulo Bruscky was born in Recife, in northeastern Brazil, in 1949. Throughout his career, he has produced artworks inspired by everyday experiences that challenge audiences to think about how the world unfolds around them. Early in his career, Bruscky's work reflected his resistance to Brazil's military regime. In stark contrast with the clean aesthetics of the Concrete Art movement of the 1950s and 60s, Bruscky sought to create a form of art that could represent the atmosphere in Brazil under military rule. He did this by turning his eyes to the street and to the daily reality of common people, using his work to address the anonymity and impoverishment of the individual in the urban landscape and countering that experience with humor and linguistic wit. Despite being one of Brazil's most important contemporary conceptual artists, Bruscky has earned his living working for a local hospital for the entirety of his career.

"Paulo Bruscky makes work that engages everyone, particularly those left out of the global arts dialogue," said Sergio Bessa, Director of Curatorial and Education Programs at The Bronx Museum. "We have two important works by him in our permanent collection. Interestingly, in 1982, while living in New York on a Guggenheim Fellowship, Bruscky sent one of his Xerox books to our curators, who added it to our collection. I believe he sent us the piece because he saw the connections between our mission and his work, and three decades later, we're excited to introduce him to our audiences."

Highlights of the exhibition include:

- Bruscky's performance works were often inspired by Recife itself, where the artist would wander through the streets following an amorphous path defined by his experience of the urban environment. Indicative of this process was his 1973 work *Stop Art*, for which the artist staged a ribbon-cutting ceremony on a public bridge. Bruscky documented cars coming to a stop in a growing line that remained stagnant for 15 minutes (until the ribbon was finally broken by an impatient pedestrian), toying with urban dwellers' expectations of city rituals and willingness to

remain docile during events that were perceived to be “official.” A video of this event will be featured in the exhibition.

- Bruscky’s exploration of street life could also be seen as an extension of the Situationist movement that flourished in Paris in the late 1960s. Bruscky’s work translated that movement into the context of the political and social conditions of Brazil, where the artist infused a sense of urgency into the tropes developed by the European artists, positioning his work within a global movement and as distinctly Brazilian. For example, in his piece *What is Art? What is it for?* Bruscky wandered around downtown Recife wearing a sandwich board with those questions printed on it. This work will be documented with several images in the exhibition.
- *For our missing ones*, a collaged postcard from 1986 that features the faces of three people who went missing under the military regime in Recife, exemplifies Bruscky’s pioneering role in the mail art movement. By mailing cards like these across the globe, Bruscky turned his artworks into political tools that allowed him to develop an international network of people who were aware of the persecution and infringements of civil liberty that the artist and his contemporaries were experiencing in Recife.
- Several pieces in the exhibition illustrate Bruscky’s ongoing interest in using his own body as fodder for his art work, an area of exploration related to his longtime employment in a Recife hospital. *Bio-graphy*, from 2010, is a box containing all of the artist’s medical records dating back to his birth, and *It is a drug* is an assemblage of medical boxes collected between 1971 and 2004 that displays the medicines the artist took in that period.

Art is Our Last Hope will be accompanied by a new monograph on the artist by Adolfo Montejo Navas which will be released in a tri-lingual edition (Portuguese, Spanish, and English) by Distributed Art Publishers.

ABOUT THE BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS

The Bronx Museum of the Arts is an internationally recognized cultural destination that presents innovative contemporary art exhibitions and education programs, and is committed to promoting cross-cultural dialogues for diverse audiences. Since its founding in 1971, the Museum has played a vital role in the Bronx by helping to make art accessible to the entire community and connecting with local schools, artists, teens, and families through its robust education initiatives. In celebration of its 40th anniversary, the Museum implemented a universal free admission policy, supporting its mission to make arts experiences available to all audiences.

The Bronx Museum was selected by the U.S. Department of State to serve as their partner for *smARTpower*, a major initiative to send visual artists abroad. The unprecedented partnership facilitated visual artists traveling around the globe to collaborate with local artists and youth to create socially engaged art projects. The Museum is the commissioning institution for the U.S. Pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale where it is presenting new work by Sarah Sze.

The Museum’s collection comprises over 1,000 modern and contemporary artworks in all media and highlights work by artists of African, Asian, and Latin American ancestry, as well as artists for whom the

Bronx has been critical to their development. Located on the Grand Concourse, the Museum's home is a distinctive contemporary landmark designed by the internationally renowned firm Arquitectonica.

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