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NEWS RELEASE

The MIT List Visual Arts Center in collaboration
with The Bronx Museum of the Arts presents

Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect
May 5—July 12, 2011
Hayden, Reference, Bakalar Galleries

Opening Reception: Wednesday, May 4, 2011, 6-8PM

Reception preceded by a conversation with catalogue essayist
Gustavo Buntinx and Marilys Belt de Downey, moderated by curator Valerie Smith at
5:30 PM in the Bartos Theatre



Juan Downey, *JS Bach*, 1986
Courtesy Marilys Belt de Downey

Cambridge, MA—April 2011. The MIT List Visual Arts Center and The Bronx Museum of Art are pleased to present *Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect*. This exhibition is the first US museum survey of Juan Downey, who was born in Chile, educated in Chile and France, and lived for the major part of his career in New York City. A fellow at MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies in 1973 and 1975, Downey played a significant role in the New York art scene of the 1970s and '80s. The exhibition is organized by curator Valerie Smith, Head of the Department of Visual Art, Film, and Media at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, in Berlin, Germany. The exhibition will travel to the Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ (September 24-December 31, 2011) and the Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York (February 12-May 20, 2012).

Covering several decades of the artist's work, *The Invisible Architect* includes Downey's early experiments with art and technology when he began to shift from an object-based artistic practice to an experiential approach that aimed to combine interactive performance with sculpture and video. Along with this foundational early work, the exhibition also features Downey's video installations of the 1970s and '80s, in which he combined autobiographical and anthropological approaches to the documentary genre, one of his most important contributions to the field. Downey's later works are explorations of both the intellectual and historical myths of European culture and the roots of Latin American identity, realized in complex video works that utilize associative visual metaphors, collage techniques, and non-linear narratives.

In two major series of works, *Video Trans Americas* and *The Thinking Eye*, Downey subjected the canonical and historical narratives of Western art to rich technical and visual analysis. In *Video Trans Americas*, begun in 1971, Downey anticipates much of the current interest in urbanism, post-colonial theory, and locality in contemporary artistic practice by mixing anthropology with autobiography. *The Thinking Eye*, a series made for public television, subjects the foundational concepts of Western culture—including the idea of the self—to linguistic, psychoanalytic, art historical, and semiotic interpretation, all through Downey's mastery of video technology.

An illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition with essays by Gustavo Buntinx, Julieta Gonzalez, Valerie Smith, and Michael Taussig as well as interviews with: Carmen Beuchat (choreographer, dancer); Marilys Belt de Downey; Eugenio Dittborn (artist); Rick Feist, (artist and online editor); Carlos Flores Delpino (filmmaker); Stephen Fried (architect); Ismael Frigerio (artist); Frank Gillette (artist); Eva Hanhardt (Pratt Institute Professor, Center for Sustainable Design Studies); John Hanhardt (Senior Curator for Film and Media Arts, Smithsonian American Art Museum); Jim Harithas (artist, Director of the Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, TX); Kirk von Heflin (filmmaker); Alfredo Jaar (artist); Beryl Korot (artist); Cristóbal Lehyt (artist); Les Levine (artist); Antoni Muntadas (artist); David Ross (curator, writer); and Bill Viola (artist).

About the Artist

Juan Downey was born in Santiago, Chile, in 1940 and died in New York, NY, in 1993. He received a BA in Architecture from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in 1961. He also studied at Stanley Hayter's Atelier 17 in Paris from 1961-1965. From 1969 until his death in 1993 the artist lived and worked in New York, NY. He was an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture and School of Art and Design, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, from 1970-92.

Solo exhibitions featuring Juan Downey's work include *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); *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, 1980, 1981, 1985, 1987, 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).

Downey was the recipient of numerous fellowships, grants, and awards among them The John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, Fellowship, (1971, 1976); CAPS, Creative Artists Program Service, New York State Council of the Arts, Grants (1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1989); National Endowment for the Arts, Grants, (1974, 1975, 1976, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1992); Rockefeller Foundation, Fellowship, (1981, 1985, 1989); and the American Film Institute, Independent Filmmaker Program, Award, (1986).

Downey's work can be found in the collections of The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, NY; The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; Centre Pompidou/ Musée national d'Art moderne, Paris, France; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; IVAM, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Centre, del Carme, Valencia, Spain; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Museu Chileno de Arte Precolombino, Santiago, Chile; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Tate Britain, London, UK; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

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Directions: The MIT List Visual Arts Center is located in the Wiesner Building, 20 Ames St., at the eastern edge of the MIT campus. It is in close proximity to Kendall Square, Memorial Drive, and the Longfellow Bridge.

By T, take the red line to the Kendall/MIT stop, follow Main St. west to Ames St., turn left, and walk one block to the cross walk. The MIT List Visual Arts Center housed in a building identifiable by its white gridded exterior, will be on your left. Signage is on the building.

By car, coming across the Longfellow Bridge or from Memorial Drive, follow signs for Kendall Square. Limited metered parking is available on Ames Street. A parking garage is located at the Cambridge Center complex (entrance on Ames between Main and Broadway) during business hours and on campus after business hours and on weekends.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Wednesday: 12-6PM; Friday-Sunday: 12-6PM; Thursday: 12-8PM; Closed Mondays and Major Holidays. Information: 617.253.4680 or <http://listart.mit.edu>

All exhibitions at the MIT List Visual Arts Center are free and open to the public.