

JACK RUTBERG FINE ARTS

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REUBEN NAKIAN **SCULPTURE & WORKS ON PAPER** **Extended through May 1, 2010**

Los Angeles, CA – Among America’s most pioneering yet enigmatic sculptors of the 20th century is Reuben Nakian, whose works are the subject of an exhibition at Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, located at 357 N. La Brea Avenue in Los Angeles. The exhibition is currently on view and extended through May 1, 2010.

“Reuben Nakian – Sculpture and Works on Paper,” features nearly 50 works – some on loan from museum and private collections – including 30 sculptures plus select original prints and drawings. The exhibition spans work ranging from his provocative 1943 portrait of Marcel Duchamp - when Nakian took a decidedly independent stylistic shift - to Nakian’s iconic sculptures and drawings inspired by Greek mythology.

Reuben Nakian was born in 1897 in College Point, New York, the fifth child of Armenian immigrants. From 1916 to 1919, he apprenticed to the noted sculptor, Paul Manship in New York, along with Gaston Lachaise. Nakian and Lachaise established their own studio from 1920 to 1922. In 1922, with a stipend from Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, Nakian established his own studio. Nakian’s early works of the 1920s and 30s were mainly of exotic animals sculpted in a sensually smooth manner typical of the era.

In the 1920s and 30s, Nakian received considerable recognition with numerous exhibitions in New York, including the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Downtown Gallery and Wildenstein Gallery, as well as the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Corcoran in Washington D.C. In 1926 he met Brancusi and assisted him in installing his first one-man exhibition in the U.S.

In the mid 1930s, Nakian met the painter Arshile Gorky (and through him Willem de Kooning), who encouraged him to seek greater expression through abstraction. Nakian - already inspired by Picasso, and some of the European avant gardes, as was Gorky - sought to further his own expressive possibilities and pursued a course of modeling the figure with unprecedented freedom, atypical in American sculpture. Indeed, Nakian’s unique style in sculpture anticipated artists such as Willem de Kooning’s work by more than two decades. Nakian’s immersion in Greek mythology captured his interest and served as the primary inspiration of his subject matter for the duration of his career, through the mid 1980s.

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In mythology, Nakian found a universe of reflection and metaphor. Epic themes of struggle and sensuality are depicted in monumental form. Nakian's modeling, whether in large or intimate scale, expresses power and yet retains a tenderness and even good-natured joy; a balance nearly unfathomable for sculpture so raw and abstract in style. In this current exhibition, works such as "Salome" and "Europa and the Bull," dating from the mid 1940s, belie their small scale of less than 9 inches in height, and evoke a monumental presence with remarkable nuance.

Exhibitions of Reuben Nakian have been presented by major museums internationally. Among them are the exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., and the Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian in Lisbon. In 1966, he was afforded a solo exhibition organized by Frank O'Hara at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Nakian represented America in the 1968 Venice Biennale.

Reuben Nakian's works are included in the permanent collections of major museums throughout the world including the Albright Knox, Buffalo, N.Y.; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Australian National Gallery, Canberra; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Detroit Institute of Arts; the Hammer Museum, UCLA Sculpture Garden; the Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon; the High Museum, Atlanta; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y.; the Milwaukee Art Museum; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Modern Art, N.Y.; the National Museum of American Art, National Portrait Gallery and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, NE; the Stamford Museum, CT; the Walker Art Center/Minneapolis Sculpture Garden; the Solomon Guggenheim Museum, N.Y., and the Whitney Museum of Art, N.Y.

The Smithsonian Institution produced a documentary on the life and work of Reuben Nakian in 1985 entitled "Reuben Nakian: Apprentice to the Gods".

"Reuben Nakian: Sculpture & Works on Paper" is extended through May 1, 2010 at Jack Rutberg Fine Arts located at 357 North La Brea Avenue in Los Angeles. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For further information phone: 323 938-5222 or email jrutberg@jackrutbergfinearts.com

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