

# vik muniz

## *Pictures of Pigment*

Exhibition June 10, 2006 until July 29, 2006

Opening June 10th

Vik Muniz' photographs appear to be like those of a prestidigitator or of a virtuoso whose actions at first sight are not related to photography. Working with heterogeneous materials such as sewing thread, jam, chocolate, ketchup, dust, toys, etc., which are chosen for their relationship to the image they depict, he reconstructs pictures which refer to art history, to the media and to our visual memory which has assembled them. By photographing these visual creations, Vik Muniz dissolves the original work and confronts us with an illusionary representation which is constructed artificially: Starting with the landscapes in sewing thread which take up well-known 19th century paintings, the fetish pictures of Warhol in chocolate shown for the first time in 1999 during an exhibition at the Xippas gallery, the "Pictures of Dust" made for his exhibition at the Whitney Museum, the "Pictures of Colour" and the "Pictures of Air" of the Venice Biennale up to the pictures of diamonds and caviar from the series "Diamond Divas" and "Caviar Monsters" presented during his previous exhibition at the Xippas gallery in 2004.

For his fourth individual exhibition at the Xippas gallery, Vik Muniz is showing an ensemble of photographs which belong to the "Pictures of Pigment" series, reproducing emblematic paintings by Monet, Klimt, Matisse, Malevitch, Gauguin, Munch, Klein and Rothko. As the title indicates, Vik Muniz has this time used pigment powder. The very quality of the material necessitates a particular handling, first of all owing to the toxicity of certain colours, and secondly because the dispersing powder must be protected from draft. With the help of brushes and little spoons, the artist succeeds in precisely dropping the powder onto the surface. Once in contact with the surface, the powder can no longer be retouched. Finishing each work can take several weeks, and then every drawing, its size about 30 to 40 centimetres, is immediately photographed. The pictures are then enlarged to very big formats enabling us to perceive their voluptuous and tactile colours.

During the process of creation, Vik Muniz playfully and ironically takes up different roles, those of painter, sculptor, photographer and theoretician. Even by reinforcing our feeling of familiarity, Vik Muniz deceives us. While his work at first sight leaves us with an impression of sensuality and ambiguity, it questions the very process of visual perception. He wants us to be doubtful, critical and analytical: "Vision is first of all a form of intelligence, and recognition or identification a sort of comfort." Although his pictures appear familiar, they indeed unsettle the process of identification.

## BIOGRAPHY

Vik Muniz was born in 1961 in Sao Paulo. He left Brazil in 1984 and settled in New York in 1986. His first sculptures *trompe l'oeil* show for example a deflated soccer ball in bronze painted so as to resemble the original object, or a "Clown Skull" in a plastic mould with a round nose which looks as if it had been found in an archaeological dig. In 1988, he lost his copy of the book "The Best of Life" and then started drawing the pictures he liked best, photographing them afterwards. The questions raised here about the essence of vision and the role of photography are at the roots of his approach. He now exclusively focuses on photography and explores the status of visual representation.

Since 1989, he has had many international exhibitions: International Center of Photography in New York (1998), Museu de Arte Moderna in Sao Paulo and the Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio Janeiro (2001), the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (2001), the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona (2002), the Menil Collection in Houston (2002), the Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporánea in Santiago de Compostela in Spain (2003), the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea in Rome (2003), the Fundación Telefonica in Madrid (2004) and the Irish Museum of Contemporary Art in Dublin (2004). In 2001, he represented Brazil at the 49th Biennale in Venice.

The Miami Art Museum is currently showing a retrospective of his work, *Vik Muniz: Reflex*. This exhibition will be shown all over the United States and Canada until 2008, at the University of South Florida (June 30 until October 8, 2006), Seattle Art Museum (November 10, 2006 until January 14, 2007), Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (June 1 until September 9, 2007), Museum of Contemporary Art, Montreal (January through March 2008).