

Magdalena Abakanowicz

Location: St. Elisabeth Church, Invalidenstr. 3, 10115 Berlin
Exhibition: April 30 – 4 May, 2015, 11 to 7 pm, Friday, May 1, 2015 11 to 9 pm
Private viewing: May 2, 2015, 12:30 pm

As part of Gallery Weekend Berlin 2015, ŻAK | BRANICKA gallery is proud to present a major exhibition by world-renowned artist Magdalena Abakanowicz (b. 1930) at St. Elisabeth Church.

Since the 60's Magdalena Abakanowicz created the monumental, three-dimensional and hand-woven forms named *Abakans*, who helped the artist achieve international fame. These works triggered a revolution concerning the view on sculptural art and were awarded the Grand Prix at the São Paulo Biennale in 1965. In the second half of the 70's, the artist started molding heads, figures and animals from cast resin, sisal, burlap and adhesive, which then became her trademark. These were later followed by sculptures made out of bronze, stone, wood and steel. A popular example is the group *Agora* (2006): a permanent monument at Chicago's Grant Park, comprising of 106 cast-iron figures.

Abakanowicz's works have already been exhibited at renowned venues all over the world. The solo-exhibition at St. Elisabeth Church marks the artist's Berlin debut, as there has never before been a show of this magnitude in the German capital. The centrepiece of the exhibition is a monumental installation titled *Bambini*, consisting of 83 life-sized sculptures, which was shown in venues such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (1998), the Jardins du Palais Royal in Paris (1999), or the Reina Sofía in Madrid (2008). *Bambini* is a unique crowd of concrete-humans of whom none equals the other. *"I have introduced the concept of the crowd into the sculpture"*, says the artist. *"They constitute a sign of lasting anxiety, a warning. I do not make editions. Every figure is individuality. There is also another aspect of quantity: the law of nature, which concerns us also. A crowd of people or birds, insects or leaves, is a mysterious assemblage of variants of a certain prototype. A riddle of nature's abhorrence of exact repetition or inability to produce it. Just as the human hand cannot repeat its own gesture. I invoke this disturbing law, switching my own immobile herds into that rhythm."* Besides the group *Bambini*, there will be other sculptures from the series *Backs*, *Bella I* and *Bella II*, on display.

Abakanowicz is often put together with artists of Arte Povera, with Joseph Beuys and Eva Hesse. During the same period, they were working with the same poor, organic materials and were concerning themselves with the relation between the human and the mass, shedding light on the human condition. For the audience, its own disappearance in a mass of biomorphic shapes, headless figures, animals, or abstract forms becomes an experience of existential depth.

The exhibition at St. Elisabeth Church in Berlin will only be on view from April 30 – May 4, 2015. A special guided tour followed by Q&A, as well as a reception will take place on Saturday, May 2, 2015 12:30 pm.

Magdalena Abakanowicz, born in 1930, lives and works in Warsaw. From 1965 to 1990 she taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznan, Poland, and was a visiting professor at U.C.L.A., USA in 1984. Her works have been exhibited in venues such as the MoMA in New York (1969), the Whitechapel Gallery in London (1975), the Venice Biennale (1980), or the PS1 Contemporary Art Centre in New York (1993). Among others, her artworks belong to the collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Museum in Stockholm and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Besides the Grand Prix at the Biennale in São Paulo (1965), she was also awarded the Gottfried von Herder Prize in Vienna (1979), the Officier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in Paris (1999), the Lifetime Achievement Award of the International Sculpture Centre in New York (2005) and the Knight Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (2010).