

University Gallery

FINE ARTS CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

151 PRESIDENTS DRIVE

AMHERST, MA 01003-9331

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WWW.UMASS.EDU/FAC/UNIVERSITYGALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 1/9/09

PLEASE POST UNTIL END DATE

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MIROSLAW BALKA: GRAVITY

**Opening: Thursday, February 5, 5:00–7:30pm
Through March 29, 2009**

The University Gallery is pleased to premiere recent video works by the internationally acclaimed Polish artist, MIROSLAW BALKA. This is the artist's first museum exhibition in the U.S. to focus on his new video installations.

Miroslaw Balka uses simple means to film everyday scenes and moments, most of them observations of details which go on to assume mysterious and poetic dimensions. His work is intimate and self-reflective, exploring personal memory within the context of historical memory, using deliberately limited means. Minute events produce images of great intensity, which touch upon fundamental human experiences, fears and hopes. A number of the video works have small sculptural additions or are projected onto a bed of salt that give them a concrete place in the exhibition space and a physical reality. Salt, a material the artist repeatedly uses in his video installations, has connotations of purification, preservation, sweat and tears.

His poetic works, recalling the tragedies of Western European history such as the Holocaust, although never in an overtly literal way, memorialize events through symbolic abstraction rather than distinct monument. His video works of the residue of memory, of presence and absence, and notions of displacement and journeys, meditate on what history leaves behind — the psychic repercussions alluded to in abstracted object — and ties it to the body and the memory of those living in the present.

Exhibition Preview

Thursday, February 5

5:00PM

In Conversation

Thursday, February 5

5:30–6:30PM

Artist **Miroslaw Balka** and **Barbara London**, curator of media, Museum of Modern Art, NY; moderated by **Barton Byg** (UMass Professor of German and Scandinavian Studies and founding director of DEFA Film Library)

Reception

Thursday, February 5

6:30–7:30PM

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MIROSLAW BALKA: GRAVITY (Cont.)

RELATED EVENT:

In Conversation

Wednesday, March 11
5:00PM

Join **Catherine Portuges**, (Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of the Interdepartmental Program in Film Studies); Jenny Perlin, (Five College Visiting Artist in Film Studies); and James E. Young, (Chair of the Department of Judaic and New Eastern Studies, Professor of English and Judaic Studies) for a discussion on the work of Miroslaw Balka at the forefront of interdisciplinary contemporary art and thought.

Miroslaw Balka was born in 1958 in Warsaw, Poland. He has exhibited internationally in group exhibitions including Venice Biennale (2005), Site Santa Fe (2006), and Sydney Biennale (2006). Recent solo shows include K21 Dusseldorf (2006), Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2007), Museum of Contemporary Art, Rijeka, Croatia (2007), National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh (2008), and WRO Art Center, Wroclaw, Poland (2008).

A Brochure will be published with an essay by Barbara London, curator of media, Museum of Modern Art, and an interview between Miroslaw Balka and guest curator Gregory Salzman.

The University Gallery gratefully acknowledges support from the Polish Cultural Institute, New York; the Fine Arts Center Friend's Artist Residency Fund; the Walter Raleigh Amesbury, Jr., and Cecile Dudley Amesbury Professorship for Teaching and Research in Polish Language, Literature and Culture; and assistance from the Gladstone Gallery, New York, and White Cube, London.