

November 14, 2000

Media previews:

Wednesday-Friday, June 6, 7 and 8

Biennale inauguration:

Saturday, June 9 (invitational)

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NEWS

MEDIA CONTACTS

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**ROBERT GOBER TO REPRESENT UNITED STATES
AT THE 2001 VENICE BIENNALE**

New York-based artist Robert Gober will represent the United States in the 2001 Venice Biennale. Italy's renowned international exposition of contemporary art opens to the public on Sunday, June 10, 2001, and continues through November 4.

Gober (b. 1954), a sculptor known for his evocative transformations of domestic objects and the human form, joins a distinctive roster of Americans who have also represented their country with solo exhibitions at this prestigious event, among them Louise Bourgeois, Robert Colescott, Ann Hamilton, Jenny Holzer and Bill Viola in the 1990s, and from earlier years, Richard Diebenkorn (1978), Robert Rauschenberg (1964) and Alexander Calder (1952).

The Venice Biennale, established in 1895, takes place in the multi-acre Castello Giardini (public gardens) and in numerous centuries-old refurbished industrial buildings throughout the city. Nearly 60 countries take part in individual presentations as well as in a broad-reaching multinational group show, which is organized by the Biennale's rotating Visual Arts Director. Harald Szeemann served in this position in 1999 and will do so again in 2001.

Gober's selection to represent the United States was announced in May 2000 by Arts International, a New York-based organization that administers the grant-giving Fund for U.S. Artists at International Festivals and Exhibitions. This public-private partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. Department of State, The Rockefeller Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts supports American participation also at international biennials in Sao Paulo, Johannesburg and Cairo, as well as other venues. A Federal Advisory Committee on International Exhibitions reviews proposals

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**HIRSHHORN MUSEUM and SCULPTURE GARDEN SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
INDEPENDENCE AVENUE at SEVENTH STREET SW WASHINGTON DC 20560-0350
A JOINT PROJECT of the ART INSTITUTE of CHICAGO and the HIRSHHORN MUSEUM**

put before the Fund. Gober's exhibition is a joint project of The Art Institute of Chicago and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C.

Curators James Rondeau of the Art Institute and Olga Viso of the Hirshhorn, both named as U.S. Commissioners for this 49th Biennale, worked with the artist to develop the proposal and are co-organizing the exhibition. Gober's site-specific installation for the 70-year-old U.S. Pavilion is composed of sculptures, prints and photographs within the entrance plaza, rotunda and two wings of this neo-classical structure, which recalls the buildings of Thomas Jefferson. Another component will be 1978-2000 -- a 48-page bound work of black-and-white photographic collage -- to be published as one volume of a two-volume set available only in Venice during the Biennale. The other volume, following traditional catalog format, will feature interpretive essays by Rondeau and Viso.

Gober, who is partly of Italian descent, was born in Wallingford, Connecticut. He studied painting from 1973 to 1974 at the Tyler School of Art in Rome and graduated in 1976 from Middlebury College in Vermont. Settling in New York, Gober soon forged a distinct place in contemporary art for his discomfiting, functionless, pristine re-creations of sinks, urinals and partial figures that some observers saw as metaphors for basic human interactions and impulses. In 1989, the Art Institute of Chicago honored Gober with his first solo museum exhibition.

Since the 1990s, Gober's highly charged objects and installations – with imagery ranging from drains, cribs, chairs, newspaper bundles, wallpaper and upholstery to barred windows, unhinged doors, culvert pipes and streams of flowing water – have been increasingly admired for their ability to unmask the supposedly ideal experiences of childhood, family, home and religion. Surrealist-like juxtapositions, fine craftsmanship, open space and elliptical, multivalent meanings characterize Gober's distinct vision.

James Rondeau, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at The Art Institute of Chicago, has introduced the diverse work of Cady Noland, Shirin Neshat, Olafur Eliasson, and Thomas Hirschhorn, among others, through his museum's focus exhibition series and past MATRIX shows at the Wadsworth Atheneum, where he was a curator from 1994 to 1998. Olga Viso, the Hirshhorn's Curator of Contemporary Art, has organized "Directions" shows there featuring the work of Toba Khedoori, Beverly Semmes, Sam Taylor-Wood and Cathy de Monchaux. She was also co-curator, with former Hirshhorn colleague Neal Benezra, of "Distemper: Dissonant Themes in the Art of the 1990s" and "Regarding Beauty: A View of the Late 20th Century."

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