

PHOTO, MEDIA AND DIGITAL ART

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For Immediate Release (January 7, 2013)

A CULTURAL HISTORY UNFOLDS IN NEW EXHIBITION AT PREFIX

(Toronto) – Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is pleased to present *The Museum of Means and Ends*, an exhibition that explores the work of senior Chilean artist **Eugenio Dittborn**, curated by Scott McLeod. For thirty years, the artist has been producing his renowned airmail paintings in order to overcome barriers and communicate with the world. The show considers his contribution to the arts, and reflects upon the cultural, social and political context out of which his art emerged.

An opening reception will be held on **Thursday, February 7 from 7 to 10 PM** at **Prefix**, located at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 124, Toronto. The curator will be present. The gallery is open from Wednesday to Saturday, 12 to 5 PM, and admission is free. The exhibition continues until **March 30, 2013**.

The year 2013 marks the fortieth anniversary of the coup that, in 1973, overthrew Chile's democratically elected government of Salvador Allende and installed the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The violence of this regime has left a legacy that haunts the lives of Chilean residents and ex-patriots to this day. In 1983, ten years after the coup, Eugenio Dittborn created his first airmail painting. Produced as a method to resist the oppressive structure of this autocratic government, the works also served to redress Chile's peripheral position in the international art scene.

The key strategy of the airmail paintings lies in the fact that they travel as letters but are unfolded at their destination as paintings. Their volume is reduced during travel but restored upon arrival, often expanding to a monumental scale. This approach has been compared to that of the Trojan horse, which entered the walled city surreptitiously but, once inside, conquered.

The underlying structure of the paintings is made of a lightweight, flexible fabric called cotton duck. This material becomes the site of a range of artistic techniques that generally involve tacking, stitching, embroidery, printing, drawing, grafting and folding. Photographic images gleaned from a wide range of sources, including children's sketch books, newspapers, crime reports, history books and obsolete advertising, are also stitched onto the surface of the material. Through this process of appropriation, the artist generates an entirely new reading of the images used. Although the works are referred to as paintings, there are no layers of paint on their surface. Rather, the artist uses an array of dyes. Interestingly, Dittborn delegates the intricate construction of the artwork, with the exception of the dyes, which he applies himself. Coupled with each painting is a handmade envelope that displays a written itinerary that documents the cities to which the work has been and places where it has been exhibited.

About the Artist

Eugenio Dittborn is a central figure in the art of Latin America. A painter, printmaker, draughtsman and video artist, he was born in 1943 in Santiago de Chile, where he currently lives and works. His work has appeared in many international exhibitions, including at the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Institute of Contemporary Art (London), the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Instituto de Arte Contemporânea (Lisbon) and the Centre Pompidou (Paris). It

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has also been acquired by the Tate Modern (London), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney), the Fundación/Collección Jumex (Mexico City), the Moderna Museet (Stockholm) and the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto). Dittborn is the recipient of numerous awards, including a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, the Konex Foundation Prize and, most recently, Chile's National Prize for Visual Art, among many others. His work is currently the subject of a major survey exhibition that was organized by the Santander Cultural (Porto Alegre, Brazil.)

About the Curator

Scott McLeod is a writer, curator and arts administrator. His work focuses on contemporary practices, with a specialization in photography, media and digital art. Since 2000, he has been the director and curator of Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, where he also serves as the editor and publisher of *Prefix Photo* magazine.

About Prefix

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is a public art gallery and arts publishing house based in Toronto. A registered charitable organization, Prefix fosters the appreciation and understanding of contemporary photographic, media and digital arts. In 2010, Prefix celebrated ten years of programming excellence.

Acknowledgements

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For more information, print-ready images or to schedule an interview with the artist, please contact:

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