



Virgil Grotfeldt: *Memories and Transformations*

February 20 – March 20, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 5, 2010 - Holly Johnson Gallery in Dallas, Texas is pleased to announce the opening of *Memories and Transformations*, an exhibition of paintings and works on paper by Virgil Grotfeldt. A reception will be held on Saturday, February 20 from 5-8 p.m.

Memories and Transformations commemorates the prolific career of the late Virgil Grotfeldt and focuses on his exploration of the mysterious bond that connects all elements. In 1997, the artist wrote: "Consideration and study of elements that converged to compose planet earth is of infinite interest to me, especially within the context of the evolution of life, culture, and belief systems. The anthropological, sociological, and geological composition of our world is my source of truth." With imagery often slightly beyond ones' grasp and constantly on the verge of physical transformation, Grotfeldt's work developed intuitively, rather than as a consequence of planning or strategy. He produced works of art with mystical and anthropological imagery and was influenced by the artist Joseph Beuys yet was also deeply expressionistic with affinities to Odilon Redon and the paintings of Victor Hugo.

His work of the past twenty years is executed with experimental materials such as coal dust on found ledger pages, nautical maps, architectural plans, and pages of Braille text. Suspended in an aqueous-based medium, the coal dust is drawn, brushed, and combined with watercolor and oil paint to conceive extraordinary forms giving his work a unique three-dimensional aspect. Grotfeldt's abstraction is deeply rooted in nature. His compositions often seem to transition between the microscopic and macroscopic. They can appear as dreamscapes, populated by underwater plant forms, or as elaborate cell structures. His imagery, rich in mystical and anthropological overtones, often seems just slightly beyond our grasp, like mist, constantly on the verge of physical transformation. According to the late Walter Hopps, "Not since the early Pollock or the late Arshile Gorky have I seen the dimensionally modeled forms as in the biomorphic abstraction of Virgil Grotfeldt. Nature and abstract form define Grotfeldt's art as well as sustain its value as a personal meditation upon essential life forces."

In 2003, a major publication of his work, *Virgil Grotfeldt: Including the Series with Waldo Bien* was published by FIUWAC. The text was written by Patrick Healy, Professor of Interdisciplinary Research at Free International University in Amsterdam and Architecture Theorist at Delft University of Technology with an introduction written Walter Hopps. In the book, Healy writes, "Grotfeldt emphasizes what is inchoate, even confused, within the creative process, which is intensified and also clarified through the actions of painting, themselves ritualistic: the gestural and motoric caught up in sundering tensions."

Born in 1948 in Illinois, Virgil Grotfeldt had a prolific and internationally recognized career. He received degrees from Eastern Illinois University and the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia and held a number of teaching positions at schools in Illinois and Texas – most recently at Houston Baptist University. He was the recipient of many prestigious awards such as Texas Artist of the Year 2003 by the Art League Houston, a grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation in 1999 and The Engelhard Award in 1991. His work resides in many private and public collections, including The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; NOG Insurance Company, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Free International University World Art Collection, Zeist, The Netherlands; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; Dallas Museum of Art, El Paso Museum of Art, Tyler Museum of Art, Tyler, Texas; and Upriver Gallery Collection, Chengdu, China. Virgil Grotfeldt passed away in February of 2009.

Holly Johnson Gallery is located at 1411 Dragon Street in Dallas. Gallery hours are 11-5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. For info call 214-369-0169, or visit www.hollyjohnsongallery.com.