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ACHIM FREYER *LIGHT SHADOWS AND RING PROCESSIONS* IN CONJUNCTION WITH LA OPERA'S *RING FESTIVAL LA*

EXHIBITION EXTENDED THROUGH OCTOBER 16, 2010

Achim Freyer is considered one of the most visionary stage directors, designers and visual artists of today. *The New York Times* describes him as "the most brilliant director-designer currently active in opera." Freyer is Artistic Director for LA Opera's monumental new production of composer Richard Wagner's epic cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. This four-part opera is being premiered in Los Angeles over the spring and summer of 2010.

An accomplished painter, Freyer presents an exhibition of new paintings and textile sculptures created while residing in Los Angeles, with the production of *The Ring* as a departure point. Titling the exhibition *Light Shadows*, he has also conceived an action combining theater and painting, with specially designed masked costumes created for the exhibition opening at Ace Gallery, titled *Ring Processions*, literally activating particular paintings. Freyer affirms that his imaginative life is a constant. Despite the demands of *The Ring* with countless hours of rehearsals in Los Angeles, he has continued his painting. "It is completely separate, but it is the same person," as he says of his dual persona as an artist and theater director: "I am a painter, and this is a profession with the whole man, and when I do theater I divide myself. This is very interesting, and schizophrenic, and it's very different from performing."

Before his international career as a director of theater and opera, Freyer trained as a painter and about five years ago he had reached a point in his career when he'd decided to give up stage work to "paint, paint, paint, all the time," says Freyer. It was at this time that the late Edgar Baitzel, LA Opera's former chief operating officer, approached Freyer about directing a new *Ring Cycle*, and they soon began discussing *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the blending of disciplines. "I thought, I can make a painting with the story," Freyer says. "I thought I could do the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. I tried to find a way of absolute painting with theater and music."

Freyer's paintings have garnered acclaim in major international exhibitions such as two Documenta's (1977 and 1987) in Kassel, Germany and *Deutsche Kunst Heute* at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville in Paris. His artworks, shown parallel to his stage creations internationally, envisage a multilayered visionary spectrum reflected in such titles as *Order and breakdown*, *Day Visions-Night Spooks*, *The Prolonged View*, *Horizontal*, *Chaos and Silence* and *Individual*. In his most recent work, Freyer conceives the "basic idea of the human head as the mirror of the

spectator, with the eyes at once providing the horizontal view onto the world and the flow of time, and the vertical connecting forehead and mouth, the mental with the animalistic, sky and hell."

The central theme of the exhibition *Light Shadows* is not only the presence of ineffable or absent entities "through the glow of their shadows as a live element, but also the memory represented in the image per se. The action *Ring Processions* is the verbal tracing of the private myth in Richard Wagner's *Ring*."

In conjunction with LA Opera's 2010 presentation of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, more than 100 arts and

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educational institutions in Southern California are collaborating to stage exhibitions, performances, symposia and special events inspired by Wagner from April 15 through June 30. "Ring Festival LA will be a defining moment in the cultural history of Los Angeles," says Plácido Domingo, LA Opera's Eli and Edythe Broad General Director. More than a century ago, Wagner conceived his epic four-opera cycle as a festival event that completely engaged the city of Bayreuth, Germany, and its new presentation revitalizes the mythological classic in a renewed, contemporary, reclaimed vision for the City of Los Angeles.

Freyer has staged productions with numerous important theater companies including the Berliner Ensemble, and the Burgtheater in Vienna, while simultaneously continuing with his art making. In 1982, he directed a production of *Die Zauberflöte* in Hamburg, the first of his six stage directions of the work, making theater history and is to this day still celebrated by consistently sold out performances. World premieres make up a large part of his body of work, including works by Helmut Lachenmann, Dieter Schnebel, Mauricio Kagel, Philip Glass, Erhard Grosskopf and Alvin Curran, the world premiere of Sciarrino's *Macbeth*, and most recently, the world premiere of Luca Francesconi's *Ballata* (Brussels), *Salome* (Deutsche Oper Berlin), *Die Zauberflöte* (Salzburger Festspiele and various others), *Médée* and *La Traviata* (Mannheim), and in 2007, the world premiere of Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland* (Munich) and *Eugene Onegin* (Berlin) in 2008. In 1992, he founded the Freyer Ensemble, an integral part of his large-scale productions, with whom he has created more than 20 pieces for the theater. Achim Freyer is a pupil of Berthold Brecht. He received the Bundesverdienstkreuz 1.Klasse in 1990 and the International Theater Prize of the ITI in 1998. Since 1989, he has been a member of the Academy of Arts in Berlin, the Academy of Arts in Leipzig since 1992, and the Academy of Arts, Munich since 1999. He was awarded the gold medal for a retrospective of his work at the Quadriennale Prague in 1999. Freyer was Professor at the University of Arts, Berlin from 1975 until 1999.

An active collector of art, the Achim Freyer Foundation was established in 2010, holding more than 2000 artworks, exhibiting Art Brut, Art Naïve and East and West German art, including Johann Hauser, Friedrich Schröder-Sonnenstern, Nikifor, Max Raffler; Modernists Max Beckmann, Werner Gilles, Werner Held, Fernand Léger; German Expressionism; Gerhard Altenbourg, Joseph Beuys, Carl Friedrich Claus, Hermann Glöckner, Blinky Palermo, A.R. Penck, Neo Rauch, Dieter Roth, Strawalde, Andy Warhol, as well as a collection of unknown artists, and the life work of Ilona and Achim Freyer. Achim Freyer's work can be seen in the State Museum's in Berlin, the State Art Collections Dresden, Kupferstichkabinett, Museum of Sepulchral Arts Kassel, Germany, and in private collections. Achim Freyer was born in 1934 in Berlin, Germany. He now lives and works in Los Angeles, Berlin and Northern Italy. For further information on the *LA Ring Cycle*, please visit: www.laopera.com.

Reference: Diane Haithman, "'Ring' Master, It's A Circus Act: Achim Freyer Tries To Tame L.A.Opera's Wagner," *LA Times*, February 15, 2009. Additional quotes from studio visit with Achim Freyer, March 15, 2010 and correspondence (2009 – 2010)

For further information or visual materials please contact
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Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM