

The video consists of short performances and street works with the vessels mediated by artists and non-artists in Italy, Israel, and the United States.

Michael Kennedy, Elvis impersonator, Las Vegas, NV, November 5, 2003

YOKO ONO, visual artist, film maker, composer, singer, writer, Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, Italy, June 28, 2003

Sukran Moral, visual artist, Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, Italy, June 28, 2003

Algerian Entertainer, dance instructor and singer, Dan Panorama Hotel, Eilat, Israel, December 30, 2003

*Francine Hunter McGivern, visual artist, Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, Italy, June 28, 2003

Achille Bonito Oliva, critic and curator, Rome, Italy, July 8, 2003

Benni Cori, performance artist, Herzliya Artist's Residence, Herzliya, Israel, December 29, 2003

*Eva Coen, singer and costume designer, Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, Italy, June 28, 2003

Camels, Wadi Shlomo, Israel, January 2, 2004

Giordano Pozzi, visual artist and writer, Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, Italy, June 28, 2003

*Lucio Pozzi, visual artist and writer, Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, Italy, June 28, 2003

Enrico Pedrini, critic, curator, editor, collector, Queens, New York, November 15, 2003

*Ian Gunn, singer, Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, Italy, June 28, 2003

Bernardo Scolnik, performance artist, Herzliya Artist's Residence, Herzliya, Israel, December 29, 2003

Alan Jones, poet, Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, Italy, June 28, 2003

*Carla Subrizi, art historian, critic, and writer, Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, Italy, June 28, 2003

***Videography by Verunska Nanni, courtesy of Carla Subrizi and the Baruchello Foundation in Rome. All other videography by Daniel Rothbart. Running time 45:08.**

THE GERSHMAN Y on the Avenue of the Arts
401 South Broad Street Philadelphia PA 19147
(215) 446-3037 Hrs. Mon-Fri 9-5, Sun 12-5

Daniel Rothbart Meditation/Mediation

February 15 - April 15, 2004

**Reception and performance
Sunday February 15, 3-5 PM**

The Laurie W. and Irvin J. Borowsky Gallery

**Commentary by
Cheryl Harper
Curator of Galleries**

**The Galleries of The Gershman Y
THE GERSHMAN Y on the Avenue of the Arts
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Daniel Rothbart: *Meditation/Mediation*

Meditation/Mediation, an installation by international artist Daniel Rothbart, combines quiet reflective works with lively interactive responses by the viewer. Rothbart, currently living in New York City, has traversed the globe looking for serenity while inviting the world at large to perform with some of his sculptural objects. Rothbart makes silver sculptures inspired by botany and "rooted" in semiotics, a theory where words have multiple layers of meaning and consciousness. He also carries around a dozen globe-trotting begging bowls that invite interaction.

This show contains examples of Rothbart's progression through sculptures made over the last nine years. A Fulbright scholarship brought him to Naples where he stayed for several years and became part of the local Italian art scene. During this sojourn, he was much appreciated for his writing, performance, and sculpture; he ventured into the public domain, creating opportunities for passers-by to respond to works that he temporarily installed in niches around Italian cities. His works evolved from nature but also philosophy and metaphysics. According to Rothbart, one cannot be separated from the other, leading him to publish a treatise, *Jewish Metaphysics As Generative Principle in American Art*, on the relationships between Jewish mysticism and post-war Jewish artists such as Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman. Rothbart sees himself as part of this tradition but he is a postmodern artist who brings international philosophical fusion to his spiritually inspired works.

As in previous Rothbart receptions, a range of performers will interact at his Borowsky Gallery opening with an installation of begging bowls, inspired by the vessels carried by Buddhist monks. Artists, poets, critics, and performers present planned interactions and chance passers-by improvise in a self-contained "Gong" show, where each participant performs in the manner of his or her own choosing after striking a metal bowl. The end to his performance is signaled by striking the bowl a second time. Rothbart calls this process of interaction with his bowls mediation. He collects the performances on video, and screens them during installations. Previous participants have included among others: YOKO ONO, international art critics, circus performers, and Elvis impersonators. Parties interested in performing show up at the reception with a short performance of 5 – 10 minutes. They come to perform and stay to meditate on the works that draw the visitor into a very quiet world, set out in perfect balance.

Rothbart shows work in a cumulative manner. The range of dates of work shown in this exhibition is from 1995 to the present. In addition to sculptural works there are thirty photographs taken in March 2002 while Rothbart was a resident at La Napoule Art Foundation near Cannes, in France. The photographs were realized with 12 aluminum vessels that he carried in a duffel bag. The participating subjects in the images are both artists and non-artists. In my mind, Rothbart's work is a linear progression inspired by kabbalistic ideas continuing in the tradition of the artists he profiled in his book. According to Rothbart, "As a Fulbright Scholar in Naples, back in the early '90s, I became very interested in mystical Judaism. I was particularly taken with the Luric creation story of vessels filled with Divine light that shattered, due to the luminosity of their contents. Light intermingled with *kellipot*, or potsherds of the vessels, necessitating a *Tikkun*, or correction of the breakage. The idea of recovering light in the commonplace has long been central to my project, which involved street works with vessels in Rome back in 1992. Since then my work has grown to involve more collaboration and improvisation."

I asked Rothbart if he had studied Zen Buddhism in Japan or if he read Zen scholar poetry. He said that his wife Francine Hunter McGivern, a practicing Buddhist for over 20 years, introduced him to Buddhist philosophy and meditation. "I formally studied Tibetan Buddhism under the Rinpoche Gelek at Jewel Heart in New York City. I have never formally studied Zen Buddhism nor have I ever been to Japan. YOKO ONO introduced me to the haiku of Bāsho, which I find to be very soulful and elegant, evoking thoughts of nature with an economy of means." Rothbart continued, "*Begging Bowls*, the title of my 2002 exhibition, was derived from the practice of Zen Buddhist monks who carry vessels out into the world." L. Brandon Krall describes the use of the bowls in her essay for the 2002 exhibition:

“In Buddhist cultures today, young men and women study the scriptures and live as monks most often in monasteries; the wandering ones live by what they receive in their begging bowls. Whatever they are given is taken for spiritual nourishment.”

The video projection is a selection of economic performances with the bowls. The mediations capture the "light" of the human spirit intersecting with the tools of another inspired soul. The sculptural works complement the performances in a more permanent way but the botanic themes refer to the transient nature of life. In Rothbart's work, photographic media captures light, while sculptural objects reflect light. Taking both types of work together through a philosophical mix, Rothbart endeavors to fill the "void."