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Press Contact:
Anne Edgar, Anne Edgar Associates,
(646) 336-7230 or anne@anneedgar.com
Camille Wanliss, The Bronx Museum of the Arts,
(718) 681-6000, ext.120
or cwanliss@bronxmuseum.org

VITO ACCONCI TRANSFORMS THE BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS

Bronx, NY — Acconci Studio will recast the light-filled lobby of The Bronx Museum of the Arts with a large-scale installation exploring how the body inhabits and activates public space. Visible from the street through the contemporary landmark's origami-like façade of glass and metal, *Acconci Studio Lobby* goes on view for a year beginning Sunday, June 21, 2009.

Designer Vito Acconci, founder and principal of Acconci Studio, is one of the world's most influential artists and a native of the Bronx. This commission is part of the Museum's year-long commemoration of the centennial of the Grand Concourse, *Intersections: The Grand Concourse at 100*.

Acconci takes half-inch thick slabs of white matte Corian® and treats it as a fabric for the installation—a hard fabric, to be slit, folded, stretched and curved into complex geometries. The central feature of the work is a curved, porous wall attached to two large columns in the middle of the lobby, parallel to the street. This multi-tasking thicket of vertical strips branches down, loops around, and pushes up—now a seat, now a table, now a bookshelf, now a gathering nook, then altogether changed again, depending on use. Sensors activate projections, so that the very people who use the structures orchestrate a subtle show of shadows and particles of light. The experience will be equivalent to throwing one's voice.

Acconci Studio Lobby will evolve. By July, low-slung alcoves for the window areas will be installed, including one that will appear to pierce the curtain wall as it snakes out onto the sidewalk. An interior ceiling canopy, potted with holes, will dapple light onto the

altered interior space; an existing ramp will take on the quality of a ceiling; and porous platforms will in some areas appear to uproot the floor.

“New Yorkers passing along the Grand Concourse will stumble upon this space without knowing it’s been designed by anybody in particular,” says Vito Acconci. “I want them to become curious, to have a second chance at being children.”

“Vito Acconci’s early work took art outside of museum walls,” says Holly Block, Executive Director, The Bronx Museum of the Arts. “We have given him free rein to come back in, and consider museum architecture as the experience of power, to be understood, and perhaps liberated, through the activation of specific, bounded zones. In *Acconci Studio Lobby* some spaces will encourage public spectacle and gathering, and others private activities like reading, texting, or music listening on an ipod.”

The Acconci lobby installation is not the artist’s first engagement with The Bronx Museum. In Fall 2009 the Museum honored Acconci as one of four individuals who were born in the Bronx and have gone on to great achievement in the arts.

The nature of private experience and the control implicit in public space are long-time concerns of the designer. In recent works, Acconci visualizes structures that perpetuate instability and the possibility of choice on the part of the user.

“This public commission is in a sense a kind of strange furniture conceived as an act of rebellion,” concludes Acconci.

The First Lobby Project series by Vito Acconci is generously supported by the Starry Night Fund of Tides Foundation and Dolan & Traynor / DuPont Corian®.

Vito Acconci

Vito Acconci’s early work was fiction and poetry; his last poems reduced words to indices of the writer’s and reader’s travel across the page. In the late 60’s and early 70’s, his first artwork used performance, photos, film and video as instruments of analysis and person-to-person relationship. His audio and video installations of the mid-70s turned an exhibition-space into a community meeting-place. His architectural game of the early 80s made performative spaces for viewers, whose activity resulted in the construction and deconstruction of house prototypes. In the mid-80’s the work crossed over into the architecture, landscape and industrial design; in 1988 he started Acconci Studio, a theoretical design and building workshop. Their method is, on the one hand, to make a new space by turning an old one inside-out and upside-down; and, on the other hand, to

insert within a site a capsule that grows out of itself and morphs itself. Their tendency is toward left-over sites and outlands, where hypotheses might be buildable and testable. They treat architecture as an occasion for activity; they make spaces fluid, changeable, portable. They have recently completed an artificial island in Graz and an adjustable gallery in New York, a clothing store in Tokyo, a plaza in Memphis, a façade for an elevated subway-station in Coney Island.

Sponsorship

The Bronx Museum of the Arts receives ongoing general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs with the cooperation of the Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion, Jr. and the Bronx Delegation of the New York City Council; Ford Foundation; Starry Night Fund of Tides Foundation; New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency; Bronx Delegation of the New York State Assembly; New York Times Company Foundation; and private sources.

The Bronx Museum of the Arts

The flagship cultural institution of the Bronx, founded in 1971, The Bronx Museum of the Arts focuses on 20th-century and contemporary art, while serving the culturally diverse populations of the Bronx and the greater New York metropolitan area. The museum's home on the Grand Concourse is a distinctive contemporary landmark designed by the internationally-renowned firm Arquitectonica. The Museum's educational offerings spring from these central programs with outreach to children and families as well as adult audiences. For more information please visit www.bronxmuseum.org

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