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FIRST U.S. EXHIBITION IN HALF A CENTURY FOR CÉSAR TO GO ON VIEW IN NEW YORK CITY

César
Luxembourg & Dayan
64 East 77th Street
New York City
November 1, 2013 - January 18, 2014
Opening Reception: Friday, November 1, 6-8PM

New York, NY...Beginning November 1, 2013, Luxembourg & Dayan will present **César**, an historical survey devoted to César Baldaccini (1921 – 1998), the celebrated French artist and founding member in 1960 of the Nouveaux Réalistes group that paralleled the emergence of American Pop Art and included Yves Klein, Jean Tinguely, Christo, Martial Raysse, and Arman, among others. The exhibition comprises two-dozen works spanning the career of the artist known everywhere simply as 'César,' and suggests his fundamental contribution to the evolution of modern sculpture through a radical rethinking of classicism and bold experiments with new materials. Featuring rare objects from the artist's estate, major museums, and important private collections, **César** coincides with the 60th anniversary of the artist's first one-man exhibition, which took place at the Galerie Lucien Durand in Paris.



Filling all of Luxembourg & Dayan's townhouse at 64 East 77th Street, **César** also is the first U.S. solo exhibition devoted to the artist in half a century. In a fitting coincidence, the show takes place on the very same street as the Sainenberg Gallery, where César's breakthrough American exhibition *Sculpture: 1953-1961* was presented in 1961. In tribute to this history, the artist's 8 foot tall bronze sculpture *Pouce* (1993) will stand in front of the gallery's building, a literal and figurative fingerprint on the streetscape of New York City.

César will remain on view through January 18, 2014.

César at Luxembourg & Dayan has been organized with the support of Fondation César and its

director Stéphanie Busuttill-Janssen. The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalog featuring a new short story by renowned Israeli author Etgar Keret, inspired by the work of César. The book will be published in English and French.

Paris Presentation

In conjunction with César in New York City and the 40th edition of the FIAC art fair in Paris, Lanvin creative director Alber Elbaz will pay tribute to César's significant position in modern French culture by curating a public presentation of three of the artist's monumental sculptures. These masterworks, on loan from Fondation César, will be on view in large vitrines that front the Lanvin flagship on the rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, for a month beginning mid-October 2013. This special presentation honors César's long engagement with the world of fashion. Over the course of his career, the artist collaborated on projects with Hermès, Nina Ricci, and Louis Vuitton, among others.

Performative, Poetic, Powerful

Examining the various aesthetic and conceptual turns that typify César's practice, the show at Luxembourg & Dayan will present historically significant examples from his *Compression*, *Human Imprint*, and *Expansion* series, as well as such early figurative works as the Venus-like welded iron sculpture *Torso* (1954), on loan from the permanent collection of The Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition focuses in particular upon César's radical work of the 1960s and 70s. In these decades the artist avidly explored the aesthetic and intellectual territory between classical and conceptual sculpture. Works on view reveal how César challenged traditional notions of form and space, and proposed a fresh and highly personal sculptural language via his pioneering experiments with postwar industrial materials.

Moving through the different levels of Luxembourg & Dayan's building, visitors will take in the



evolution of a career punctuated by seemingly sudden and contradictory departures in style and materials. Pink and white iridescent polyurethane *Expansion murales* give way to *Compression murales* – dense wall pieces made up of jute sacks, wool blankets, and scraps of corduroy and velour – and extraordinary wall-mounted sculptures made from parts of automobiles and motorcycles. Through these disparate bodies of work, however, **César** ultimately reveals an unmistakable consistency of vision and traces a central preoccupation across decades: César ceaselessly explored the ways in which an artist's hand can guide, craft, and indelibly imprint the world's many common industrial materials without hampering their inherent propensities. From glass fiber to polyester resin, from found car parts inviting compaction to molten bronze begging to be cast, the materials of César's sculptures are masterfully guided into performative, poetic, powerful objects that seem just completed moments ago. In his pursuit of a new language, the artist helped to move sculptural practice from the 'modern' to the 'contemporary.'

Born in 1921 to Italian immigrants in the Belle de Mai quarter of Marseille, César began his art education in the early 1940s at the city's École des Beaux-Arts. The curriculum was constructed around drawing and classical sculpture, and César was inundated with course work that stressed the importance of craft and material mastery, an ethic that would act as an underlying philosophy within his practice for the entirety of his career. By the time César completed his course work at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris in 1948, World War II had drastically altered the technologies available within the practice of metal work. The progression of welding technologies became particularly noticeable within post war sculpture, and César pushed these technologies to their limits in his search for a mode of art production that confronted post-war modernity in ways that were both vibrant and industrial. He began experimenting with welding, shaping refuse materials into humanoid figures -- a critical first step for the artist and the first expression of his interest in the collision between progressive technologies and life.

In 1960, a scrap metal factory located just outside of Paris installed a new American steel press that was large enough to compress full automobiles. César was fascinated by the metamorphic qualities of the process, and he immediately came to believe that compression would yield the ultimate monuments of the mechanical age. The artist began using the press in his sculptures, carefully selecting full or partial cars and directing the ways in which the materials were crushed. The resultant works were initially viewed as a deliberate and wholly anti-aesthetic insult to traditional metal sculpture, but César's *Compressions* (as the works would come to be known) are not simply the end result of a mechanical operation; they are representations of the possibilities that present themselves at the intersection between material, physics, authorship, and context.





César will include examples from the full complement of the artist's *Compressions*. These range from the directed works in which César selected various pieces of scrap and compacted them into one object, to full *Compressions* forged from whole automobiles or motorcycles. Also on view will be wall *Compressions*, pressed metal and plexiglass wall hangings that offer themselves in direct antagonism to traditional painting.

Also on view will be examples from the artist's iconic *Pouce* series -- sculptural depictions of the artist's thumb executed in a range of mediums and in sizes from tiny to monumental. César's first *Pouce* in 1965 resulted in a small pink statue made with a pantogram (a device typically used to translate the dimensions of small plaster models into monumental statuary) and cast in newly available plastic resin, a material that would come to drastically alter the artist's practice. The use of plastic in this first *Pouce* facilitated César's experiments with scale, specifically with works that represented small objects rendered in gigantic proportions. Among a group of monumental works by César that will be exhibited in a private home across the street from Luxembourg & Dayan and on view by appointment, will be an example from the *Sein* series -- large depictions of human breasts that come to us as both familiar and alien, abstract and figurative.

The availability of new materials and modes of production in the 1960s led César deeper into an examination of how scientific materials behave within real space in both mediated and unmediated contexts. This concept is perhaps most apparent in the artist's *Expansion* works, which are similarly concerned with ideas of technology, space, and material. The *Expansions* were first produced in the late 60s. Semi-organized sculptural spills -- in the exhibition, examples include *Expansion moteur* (1971) and *Expansion N 35/15* (1972) -- were realized via new liquid polyurethane foam, a mixture that was tinted to the color of the artist's choice and then expanded and set, resulting in soft forms several times larger than their original liquid volumes. Noting that instead of conforming to the matrix of a mold, the material spread and expanded, César was moved by his material's freedom and energy. The artist was eager to share his experience with the material, and many of the original *Expansions* were created as part of happenings in which an audience could observe the transformation from liquid to solid. The resulting objects were then cut up, signed, and distributed to the spectators like "slices of cake" in a process by which César, ever transfixed by the moment of creation, would place that moment into the hands of the public.

LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN



About Luxembourg & Dayan

Launched in 2009, Luxembourg & Dayan is a secondary market gallery founded to present museum-level curated exhibitions of modern masters and contemporary art. The gallery is located in a townhouse at 64 East 77th Street, between Madison Avenue and Park Avenue in New York City. Recent exhibitions have included historical surveys of important works by Domenico Gnoli, Marcel Duchamp and Alberto Burri, and the exhibitions *A New Novel* by Bjarne Melgaard, *Unpainted Paintings*, and *Grisaille*, among others.

In October 2011, Luxembourg & Dayan opened a second exhibition space at 2 Savile Row in London, inaugurated with the trans-Atlantic survey exhibition *Grisaille*.

Located at 64 East 77th Street, Luxembourg & Dayan is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10AM to 5PM.

For additional information or to request images for publication, please contact: info@andreaschwan.com

Pavillon, 1986

Car element, sheet metal, gray paint / Element de voiture compressé, tôle, peinture noire
62 x 52 1/2 in.
Photo: Adam Reich

Compression Plexi rose et blanche (Plexiglas Compression Pink and White), 1972

Plexiglas / Plexiglas
47 x 39 3/8 x 6 3/4 in.
Photo: Adam Reich

Compression murale couverture de laine (Mural Compression Wool Blanket), 1976

Wool blankets / Couverture de laine
48 x 39 3/8 x 16 1/3 in.
Photo: Adam Reich

Pouce (Thumb), 1993

Cast iron / Fonte de fer
98 1/2 x 56 1/4 x 40 1/4 in.
Photo: Patrick Gries © Patrick Gries

Sein, 1966

Orange polyester resin / Résine de polyester orange
32 1/3 x 76 x 104 3/4 in.
Photo: Patrick Gries © Patrick Gries

Expansion N 35/15, 1972

Polyester reinforced with fiberglass, mauve lacquer / Polyester armé de fibre de verre et laque mauve
15 3/4 x 49 3/4 x 53 1/4 in.
Photo: Adam Reich

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