



Palo Alto  
**ARTCenter**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

(Images available on request. Go to: [www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter) to view exhibition images.)

## **The Palo Alto Art Center Presents...**

### ***"The Miniature Worlds of Bruce Metcalf"***

**September 28 - December 21, 2008**

#### **Special Events on September 28, 2008**

**~ Bruce Metcalf Lecture: "Chapters in a Life of the Imagination" / 2 - 3 PM ~  
~ Public Preview / 3 - 5 PM ~**

**PALO ALTO, CA** – The engaging and spirited work of leading art jeweler, Bruce Metcalf, will debut in the compelling exhibition, *"The Miniature Worlds of Bruce Metcalf,"* at The Palo Alto Art Center (PAAC) from September 28 through December 21, 2008. Curated by Signe Mayfield of PAAC, this first major exhibition of his work examines social, moral and political issues, many of which Metcalf has also raised in his essays. In this exhibition, diminutive size matters. Cast in silver or carved in wood, Metcalf's vulnerable protagonists act out issues on the stage of miniature worlds. Some of his pieces serve dual lives as wearable brooches, where the protagonists venture into the world and engage the unsuspecting viewer with their stories and distinctive visual language.

The exhibition also marks the premier of the United States tour slated for multiple venues through 2011, including the Mint Museum of Craft+Design in Charlotte, North Carolina; Bellevue Arts Museum in Bellevue, Washington; Fresno Art Museum in Fresno, California; Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Massachusetts; Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock, Arkansas; and Racine Art Museum in Racine, Wisconsin. A 120 page full-color catalogue will accompany the exhibition.

The artist will present a slide lecture *"Chapters in a Life of the Imagination"* on September 28, 2008, from 2-3 p.m. in the Art Center's auditorium. It is followed by a public preview of the exhibition from 3-5 p.m. The lecture and preview are free to the public; please call 650-329-2366 to RSVP for the lecture. In addition, docent-led tours, *"Art Dialogues,"* will be offered on Saturdays at 2 p.m. Please visit the PAAC website at: [www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter) or call 650-329-2366 for more information.

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### **About "The Miniature Worlds of Bruce Metcalf"**

"*The Miniature Worlds of Bruce Metcalf*" is the first major exhibition and catalogue focused solely on his truly engaging and spirited work. Born in 1949, Metcalf has long been revered as a leading art jeweler, curator, essayist and critic of contemporary craft. He earned a B.F.A. degree in 1972 at Syracuse University and an M.F.A. at the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in 1977. Metcalf taught at Kent State University in Ohio from 1981 to 1991. His work has been featured in major exhibitions including the American Craft Museum, New York; Akron Art Museum, Ohio; Dayton Art Institute, Ohio; Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; The Galleries at Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia; and the Galeria Universitaria Artistas, Mexico City. Equally adept as a curator and a critic of contemporary craft, his essays have appeared in such publications as "*American Craft*," "*Metalsmith*," "*Studio Potter*," "*Crafts Australia*," and the Korean publication "*Design*." Currently, he is co-authoring "*Makers: 20th Century American Studio Craft*" with Janet Koplos, Senior Editor, *Art in America*, to be published by the University of North Carolina Press in late Spring, 2009.

"*The Miniature Worlds of Bruce Metcalf*" was curated by Signe Mayfield to contextualize the artist's work in relationship to his interests in architecture, comics and the narrative voice. The exhibition examines the social, moral and political issues that Metcalf has also raised in his essays. In his work, issues are acted out by his vulnerable protagonists on the stage of miniature worlds. Some of his pieces serve dual lives as wearable brooches, where the protagonists venture into the world and engage the unsuspecting viewer with their stories and distinctive visual language.

As Metcalf has observed, "the miniature can only be entered through an act of imaginative projection. Looking at small objects, viewers will get very close and the object will fill their field of vision. There's no scale in the imagination, and very small things can become psychologically large."

The exhibition features seventy pieces by Metcalf, dating from the 1970s to 2001, on loan from the collections of the artist, museums and private lenders across the country. Taking center stage are Metcalf's characters with their emotionally-distorted bodies that manifest inflicted pain from human nature's "dark side." Physically big-headed with atrophied limbs, all of Metcalf's figures are born from cartoon traditions. Cast in silver or carved in wood, these characters with big brains are strangely credible as they ponder Metcalf's overarching theme - the human condition, nurturing the juncture of nature and culture, and issues of dissent. Included is "*Offering Sustenance*" 1993, which shows a squinting fellow undergoing an empathic meltdown during the compassionate act of nourishing another. It is one of a series from 1993, which includes "*Band Aid*," "*Brand New Home*," and "*Meaning of a Single Bud*."

Also featured is a train layout for static Märklin HO trains. This miniaturized world is based on an imaginary winter in a train station near Munich, Germany, with *trompe l'oeil* surfaces by the artist. The aim in exhibiting this private activity—a male obsession analogous to dollhouses—is to bring the viewer into a broader understanding of how miniature worlds may act upon us and of how Metcalf's miniature worlds differ from those in the public imagination.

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### ***About the Catalogue and Exhibition Support***

The exhibition catalogue includes a curatorial essay, "*The Miniature Worlds of Bruce Metcalf*" by Signe Mayfield, along with a guest essay, "*In and Out of Context*," by Dr. Vicky A. Clark, an independent curator and cultural historian. Dr. Clark's essay connects Metcalf's work to the comic traditions so prevalent in contemporary art. In addition, Metcalf contributed an essay entitled "*Five Chapters in the Life of Imagination*."

The exhibition and catalogue, "*The Miniature Worlds of Bruce Metcalf*," are created and presented by the Palo Alto Art Center, Division of Arts and Sciences, City of Palo Alto and funded in part by grants from the Palo Alto Art Center Foundation; the Rotasa Foundation; the Windgate Charitable Foundation; the Arts Council Silicon Valley; with additional support from Susan Beech, Forrest L. Merrill, Pew Fellowships in the Arts, Silicon Valley Bank and private contributions.

### ***About the Palo Alto Art Center***

The Palo Alto Art Center (founded 1971) is a nationally acclaimed, regional visual art center whose exhibition program focuses on documenting – and celebrating – the art and artists of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Center's mission is to foster creative process and thought by forging a greater appreciation and understanding of the visual arts through exhibitions, studio experiences and related educational programs. The Palo Alto Art Center, Division of Arts and Culture, City of Palo Alto, is funded in part by support from the Palo Alto Art Center Foundation and the Arts Council Silicon Valley, in partnership with the County of Santa Clara and the California Arts Council. The Center is open to the public without charge from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday; and 7-10 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday. The Center is located at 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303. For further information: Phone: 650-329-2366 / E-mail: [artcenter@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:artcenter@cityofpaloalto.org) / Website: [www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter)

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