

Welcome to Gulu

curated by Ross Bleckner

15 May - 13 June 2009
South Gallery
540 West 26th Street

Opening Reception
Friday, 15 May 2009, 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Lehmann Maupin
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New York, NY – "Welcome to Gulu", an exhibition curated by acclaimed American artist Ross Bleckner on behalf of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims will open at the Lehmann Maupin Gallery on Friday 15 May. The exhibition is comprised of over 100 paintings created by former child soldiers and abducted girls from Gulu, Uganda. Proceeds raised by the sale of the children's paintings, as well as portraits taken by Bleckner, will benefit former child soldiers and abducted girls.

Bleckner was recently appointed a UNODC Goodwill Ambassador to Combat Human Trafficking. The appointment marks the first time that this honor has been bestowed upon an artist.

In recent years, Gulu and other areas of Northern Uganda, have been plagued by rebel groups abducting, recruiting and conscripting thousands of children, forcing boys to be killers and girls to be sexual slaves. In January 2009, Bleckner joined the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Criminal Court Trust Fund for Victims on an official mission to Gulu, assisting in the rehabilitation of former child soldiers and abducted girls through art therapy. Bleckner conducted a workshop for these children, many of them orphans, encouraging them to come to terms with their past through artistic expression. For more, visit:
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/costas-corner/descent-into-the-heart-of-darkness.html>

Ross Bleckner first came to international prominence in the 1980's with his abstract paintings. His work has been exhibited in esteemed collections throughout the world, including: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. For the past 20 years, he has taught Studio Art at leading institutions, including Columbia University, The School of Visual Arts, and Harvard University and is currently a Professor at New York University's Steinhardt School. An early supporter of AIDS research, Bleckner has been a board member of AIDS Community Research Initiative of America (ACRIA) since its founding, and has spent more than a decade as its President. As a UNODC Goodwill Ambassador, Bleckner's duties will include advocacy on behalf of victims of human trafficking and other crimes.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is the lead UN agency fighting all forms of human trafficking including: child soldiers, sex slaves, forced labor, illegal adoption, and illegal organ transfers. UNODC works with governments, NGOs, the private sector, foundations, the arts and media community, academia and think-tanks to combat human trafficking by raising public awareness, engaging in preventative efforts and enhancing the capacity and skills of criminal justice professionals and policymakers.

United Nations Under-Secretary General, Antonio Maria Costa, the Executive-Director of the UNODC reflects: "Art is one of the most powerful advocacy tools to raise awareness and move people to take action. A painting says a thousand words. Appointing Ross Bleckner as a United

Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Goodwill Ambassador, and opening this exhibition at the UN, provides a unique opportunity to implore others to join us in our fight against conscription of children, and other forms of human trafficking and modern day slavery. We know that Ross' extraordinary commitment to the plight of trafficking victims will move people to take action against modern day slavery."

The exhibition will remain on view at the gallery through June 13th. For further information please contact Stephanie Smith at 212 255 2923 or Stephanie@LehmannMaupin.com or visit our website at LehmannMaupin.com. Please also visit the gallery on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).