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SUNDARAM TAGORE BEVERLY HILLS PRESENTS
NEW DIMENSIONAL PORTRAITS BY LEE WAISLER

Exhibition dates: November 7 – December 8, 2009
Opening cocktail reception: Saturday, November 7, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

At the Window, 2009, acrylic and wood on canvas, 72 x 60 inches
Leonard Cohen, 2009, acrylic and wood on canvas, 60 x 36 inches
Louis Armstrong, 2009, acrylic and wood on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

Los Angeles, Calif., October 8, 2009—Lee Waisler is a Los Angeles-based artist who paints seductively beautiful images using a rich variety of materials, each replete with cross-cultural symbols and references. Having practiced abstraction for decades, he returned to figuration full force about four years ago by launching a series of moving portraits of historical and contemporary figures. A deep empathy for the human spirit lies at the core of Lee Waisler's portraiture. "I cannot but paint humanity," writes Waisler. "While several of my portraits are of people who are no longer alive, they have all cast luminous shadows much like starkly placed lights on a deeply darkened road." In this new series of portraits, the artist presents a global group of iconic figures spanning different disciplines. Each of these portraits is a reminder of how a single individual can change society.

Exhibition curator Sundaram Tagore says, "These are portraits of people who have expanded our understanding of the world. They are historic and cultural figures such as Albert Einstein, Louis Armstrong and Toni Morrison." This new series of works being unveiled in Beverly Hills features a series of contemporary subjects including the Pritzker Architecture Prize-winning architect I.M. Pei; Grammy Award-winning composer and recording artist Yusef Lateef and Leonard Cohen, the renowned musician and poet. Often reaching six feet in height, these portraits possess a monumental and haunting quality.

Waisler's earliest works, which date to the 1960s, were socially and politically charged. He tackled historical events such as the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and the civil rights movement. Gradually, he became fascinated with Eastern philosophy, and his paintings became increasingly abstract. A journey to India, at the invitation of then Prime Minister I. K. Gujral in the mid-nineties, was a turning point. Waisler became acutely aware of the struggle for survival in a deprived country. He discovered the power of humanity. "The people were seared in my heart and mind," he says. After this experience, he felt compelled to move away from pure abstraction and incorporate figuration.

Never quite abandoning abstraction, however, he began creating tactile works that he calls "dimensional portraits." His œuvre shifted into a new key. Layering his canvases with thick pigments, he incorporates organic materials for their innate associative values: sand for time, wood for life, and glass for light. With strips of wood and blocks of color, he creates finely nuanced faces and figures.

Waisler's work is in some of the most influential museum collections in the world, including those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; The Tel Aviv Museum of Art; the Brooklyn Museum of Art; The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.; The Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; the National Gallery of Art, New Delhi; and The Indian Museum, Calcutta.

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