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## **Memphis Brooks Museum of Art remembers the life of internationally recognized sculptor Marisol**

**MEMPHIS, Tenn., May 2, 2016** – The sculptor Marisol (Escobar) died on Saturday, April 30, 2016. Known for her work in a range of media—cast metal, terracotta, carved wood and stone, assemblage, painting, drawing, and printmaking—Marisol developed a deeply personal, readily recognizable style that won her critical praise and inclusion in significant exhibitions nationally and internationally.

Marisol is best known for her complex sculptures that often combine carving, drawing, and found objects. They elicit visual pleasure in the wit and intelligence marshaled in their assemblage, although her vision also opened the way for thinking about larger social and political issues. *The Family* (1963, Currier Museum of Art) explores many of the themes addressed in Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963). During the 1960s she frequently rebutted attempts to read satire into her sculptures, such as *LBJ* (1967, Museum of Modern Art) a portrait of the president, stating that she was thinking about formal issues. By the 1970s she forthrightly declared that she was engaged in social commentary. Her later work is less equivocal. In the 1980s and 90s she completed numerous sculptures relating to poverty and Native Americans.

For all that her art changed dramatically over the course of her long career, there are certain factors that remain recognizable and unchanged. An artist who began as a painter,

Marisol never lost her interest in color or in the work of painters. No matter how abstract her work became, the focus remained on the figure. More often than not, that focus was on the human condition. Whether it was the roles open to women in general and herself in particular, the lot of the poor and the disenfranchised, the majesty of artistic genius in old age, or the reconsideration of the work of Renaissance masters, she explored the relationships between people and society. At times her vision is dark, frequently it is both witty and sarcastic. But there is also a generosity she extends to her sitters, a sympathy that comes from having lived in a country where she witnessed the tremendous disparity between the rich and poor, as evidenced in the many works relating to poverty.

Born Maria Sol Escobar on May 22, 1930, in Paris, she was the second child of Venezuelan parents, Gustavo and Josefina Hernández Escobar. At a young age she took the nickname Marisol, which means sea and sun in Spanish. Raised between the United States and Caracas, Marisol primarily lived in New York from 1951 until her death. Beginning in the mid-1950s, she took her nickname as her professional name. From her first exhibitions, she received positive reviews in the art press as well as in national magazines. In 1958, she was one of three artists highlighted in an article in *Life*, "Woodcarvers Comeback," although the author was as taken with her appearance as her work, referring to her as a "Latin beauty." Her looks were a mixed blessing, attracting attention but often resulting in writers not taking her work as seriously as she did.

Marisol was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1978; received honorary doctorates (Rhode Island School of Design, 1986; State University of New York, Buffalo, 1992; Moore College of Art, 1997), and awards (National Arts Club Medal of Honor, 1995; "Gabriela Mistral" Inter-American Prize for Culture awarded by the Organization of American States, 1997; and the Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts from the Women's Caucus for Art, 2006). Her inclusion in 2010 in *Seductive Subversion: Women and Pop Art* (University of the Arts, Philadelphia) and *Power Up: Women Pop Artists* (Kunsthalle, Vienna) brought new attention to her work, as well as to other women artists from the 1960s. Both of these exhibitions took a more holistic view of Pop art, expanding the canon to encompass the work of women artists. The revisioning now taking place is once again bringing Marisol back to

prominence. In the fall of 2014, *Marisol: Sculptures and Works on Paper*, organized by the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art and curated by Chief Curator Marina Pacini.

“Marisol was among the most highly respected artists of the 1960s. As the decades passed, she was inappropriately written out of that history. My aim was to return her to the prominence she so rightly deserves,” said Pacini.

*Marisol: Sculptures and Works on Paper* was also exhibited in New York at El Museo del Barrio to critical acclaim. Her works are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum, and Hirshhorn Museum, among many others.

#### Mission:

Founded in 1916 and located at 1934 Poplar Ave. in historic Overton Park, the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art is home to Tennessee’s oldest and largest major collection of world art. More than 9,000 works make up the Brooks Museum’s permanent collection, including ancient works from Greece, Rome, and the Americas; Renaissance masterpieces from Italy; English portraiture; American painting and decorative arts; contemporary art; and a survey of African art. The Brooks Museum enriches the lives of our diverse community through the museum's expanding collection, varied exhibitions, and dynamic programs that reflect the art of world cultures from antiquity to the present. For more information about the Brooks and all other exhibitions and programs, call 901.544.6200 or visit [brooksmuseum.org](http://brooksmuseum.org).

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