

MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV

DANCE THISWAY

December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013 – April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014



“For two decades I used a conventional 35mm camera, and practiced traditional landscapes, portraits and travel shots in primarily black and white. I made a point of rejecting obvious opportunities to photograph dance, thinking the results were boring and unnecessary. Then, going through some old books of dance photography—notably Alexey Brodovitch’s *Ballet*, and Paul Himmel’s 1954 *Ballet in Action*—I discovered that abandoning the crystalline image in favor of blurred edges and amorphous figures approximates the excitement of dance in performances. Ilse Bing’s mesmerizing images of CanCan dancers at the Moulin Rouge, as well as her photos of Balanchine’s *Errante*, and perhaps most importantly, the recent images of Alexandra Beller in *Dancer* by Irving Penn were further evidence that the thrill of movement can be captured without being destroyed. Edwin Denby describes this process eloquently in the text accompanying Brodovitch’s photographs.

‘...The blurred outline of the dancer, assimilated to the general dim effect, registers as a metaphor of motion. Sometimes the misty shape that joins successive points through which the dancer’s body has passed astonishes you by the clarity of its graphic design, and it illustrates the plastic continuity of dancing. Here and there the contrast on a picture between blurred and clear outlines draws your eye to

the position of a still figure that on stage might have passed unnoticed in the hubbub, but that in the photograph reveals its momentary pathos.'

So it was possible.

I first visited Italy in the 1970's and immediately fell in love with the country. It is a mainstay of the artistic world and I am both humbled and honored by the opportunity to share my own work at the Contini Gallery."

*Mikhail Baryshnikov*

**MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV**, a native of Riga, Latvia, was born in 1948 and began studying ballet at the age of nine. As a teenager he moved to Leningrad where he entered the Vaganova Choreographic School, graduating from student to principal dancer of the Kirov Ballet in 1969. In 1974 he left the Soviet Union to dance with major ballet companies around the world, including the New York City Ballet where he worked with George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins. In 1980 he began a 10-year tenure as Artistic Director of American Ballet Theatre, nurturing a new generation of dancers and choreographers.

From 1990 to 2002, Mr. Baryshnikov was director and dancer with the White Oak Dance Project, which he co-founded with choreographer Mark Morris. White Oak was born of Baryshnikov's desire "to be a driving force in the production of art," and indeed, it expanded the repertoire and visibility of American modern dance.

In 2005 he opened the Baryshnikov Arts Center (BAC), a creative home for local and international artists to develop and present work. Located in Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen neighborhood, BAC houses four studios, a 150-seat studio theater, and a 238-seat Jerome Robbins Theater. Through its residency program, BAC gives space and time to young and established artists to dream and create in the Center's studios without any commercial pressure. BAC also presents contemporary, innovative work by artists from the worlds of dance, theater, music, and film at low or no cost to the public. Under his leadership as Artistic Director, BAC programs serve approximately 500 artists, and more than 20,000 audience members each year.

Among Mr. Baryshnikov's many awards are the Kennedy Center Honors, the National Medal of Honor, the Commonwealth Award, the Chubb Fellowship, the Jerome Robbins Award, and the 2012 Vilcek Award. In 2010 he was given the rank of Officer of the French Legion of Honor.

The exhibition will be open from the December 20<sup>th</sup> 2013 – April 21<sup>th</sup> 2014 . Official opening January 3<sup>rd</sup> with the presence of the artist.