



## **RAYMOND SAUNDERS: *Paintings & Works on Paper***

August 7, 2004 – September 26, 2004

The Salt Lake Art Center's exhibition *Raymond Saunders: Paintings & Works on Paper* features the work of an Oakland, California-based artist whose very approach to the act of painting challenges the media's more traditional definition. Saunders' paintings, whether upon canvas or wood panel supports, become surfaces for an array of eclectic images, including the addition of found material that is juxtaposed with his carious approaches to mark-making. All the paintings in this exhibition were created in 2003. They represent, in a sense, a testimony to Saunders' ongoing proficiency and inquisitive nature. The directness of his expressive means is a brilliant balancing act between a sure sense of pictorial design and an act of spontaneity.

Raymond Saunders was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1934 and received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh in 1960 and his Master of Fine Arts degree from California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland in 1961. He is one of America's great masters of depicting the contemporary urban environment. His paintings are a result of his daily encounter with life of the city he lives in and those that he visits. A world traveler, Saunders is seemingly continually at work. Whether he is in Berlin, Paris, Mexico City, Tokyo or his home in Oakland, California, he is producing drawings and watercolors, and salvaging the debris of the street – posted bills, graffiti, bits of Chinese calligraphy, etc. His paintings evolve over a period of time and remain open to revisions as long as they remain in his studio.

Saunders has been amply rewarded in his life as an artist. He has exhibited nationally and internationally since the early 1960s and his work is represented in important public collections, including: Archenbach Foundation, Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Oakland Museum, Oakland, CA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and the Whitney Museum of Art, New York, NY. He has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Prix de Rome. Since the early 1980s, the Stephen Wirtz Gallery of San Francisco has represented Saunders' art.

The beauty and power of these paintings has much to do with Saunders' generous nature. His art is accessible in a very profound way, in that his sense of freedom in his uncensored and open response to those objects that he finds and those images that he draws and paints, is directly stated in the paintings

themselves. Nothing is hidden. He celebrates the act of wandering, the drifting of persons and things. And, from the discards of urban refuge, he adds the intuitive gesture of a beautifully rendered counter drawing and the broad swath of painted or sprayed mark. His art is inclusive because it includes the viewer as well as himself. This is not an art for art's sake. As he has stated, "I don't go into the studio day after day. I go into my existence day after day."

Jim Edwards, Curator of Exhibitions