

**For Immediate Release:**

**NO EXIT**

**February 11 – April 15, 2017**

CARL ANDRE	AGNES MARTIN
HELMUT FEDERLE	BLINKY PALERMO
ALBERTO GIACOMETTI	JACKSON POLLOCK
VILHELM HAMMERSHØI	MARK ROTHKO
YVES KLEIN	JAN SCHOONHOVEN
YAYOI KUSAMA	SONJA SEKULA

**Peter Blum** is pleased to announce NO EXIT, on view at 20 West 57th Street, New York. There will be a special early preview on February 11, from 2 to 5 p.m. The exhibition runs through April 15.

What we seldom talk about in art is the desperation informing much of it, not because the artists are good at disguising it, but because we seem to not want to see what is in front of our eyes. Even in the works that might initially strike the viewer as beautifully ordered, one need only look a little longer to see how hard the artist has worked to present his or her anxiety as a moment of sublime calm.

The purpose of this exhibition is to raise questions about the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, time and timelessness. Did the rise of Minimalism and Pop supersede the subjectivity we associate with the Abstract Expressionists? Two works are key to the exhibition. The first is the exhibition's title, which comes from Jean-Paul Sartre's one act play "No Exit," which he published in 1943 while living in German-occupied Paris. The conditions under which Sartre's play "No Exit" was written (the threat of war, a military curfew, censorship) bring to the forefront the very real and tangible parameters for the making of a work. What does it mean to work with constraints, to make extreme limits on what you can do? The second work to anchor this exhibition is the painting *Room* (1893) by Vilhelm Hammershøi. In this quietly haunting painting, we see a young woman in a long black dress, almost as if she is in mourning. She is halted before the door, frozen.

Where is the young woman in Alberto Giacometti's *Figurine* (1949) going? Can she leave behind her past? She is on a low platform, cut off from the earth. What does it mean to make one line after another, stacking them up on the paper, which Agnes Martin and Jan Schoonhoven do in their drawings? Are they not marking time, as well as trying to shape its passing into something coherent? What does it mean to type incessantly with one finger, as Carl Andre does? What are Helmut Federle and Mark Rothko after in their use of moody colors? What does it mean to depict a toppled cross or use colors which seem to have been extinguished? Why does Sonja Sekula divide her compositions the way she does?

The artists in NO EXIT, predominantly active in the decades after the Second World War, turn art into what Harold Rosenberg called "an event." You can feel eternity grinding away in the slow deliberate lines made by Martin and Schoonhoven. Why did Yves Klein embrace eternity rather than his personal history? What about Yayoi Kusama, who seems determined to reach eternity one dot or line at a time?

There was a moment when paint supposedly just became paint, and space and meaning were squeezed out. However, that view seems too narrow and does not account for the deep feelings of the artists included in this exhibition. When he painted another layer over his painting, was Blinky Palermo trying to make it perfect? Or was something else on his mind? What about the tormented figures in Jackson Pollock's drawings? Did he

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feel beset by his admiration for Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró, or was it something more than a young artist looking at the work of his masters? Perhaps the torment that we see in his drawings had to do with something far larger and more widespread. Perhaps these artists were not trying to be purely objective. In fact, as this exhibition demonstrates, they had to find a way to acknowledge as well as distance themselves from their feelings. Otherwise, they might have been overwhelmed.

Might we not see the artists in this exhibition as related to the young woman in Hammershøi's *Room*? Instead of denying they are trapped in time, and are being pulled towards chaos and eternity, they embrace it. They find ways to face time and look at eternity without averting their eyes. They learn how to not be afraid.

A publication for NO EXIT will accompany the exhibition with a text by John Yau.

For additional information and photographic material please contact **David Blum** or **Renée Albada Jelgersma** at [art@peterblumgallery.com](mailto:art@peterblumgallery.com), Gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10am-6pm; Saturday, 11am-6pm.