

For immediate release

PALERMO

Works 1973–1976

February 26 – April 11, 2015

Press preview: Thursday, February 26, 10 AM



Palermo at Heiner Friedrich, New York, 1975.

Photo by Helen Winkler Fosdick, Houston

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David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of works by German artist Palermo (1943-1977) at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location. The exhibition, organized in collaboration with the Palermo Archive, will feature a selection of rarely shown paintings, objects, and large-scale drawings made by the artist between 1973 and 1976.

Although often associated with particular twentieth century art historical practices and discourses—including abstraction, Minimalism, and Conceptual Art—Palermo's diverse body of work defies easy classification. Throughout his brief and influential career, Palermo executed paintings, "objects," installations, wall drawings, and works on paper that addressed the contextual and semantic issues at stake in the construction, exhibition, and reception of works of art. His handling of form, color, and composition comprises a complex and experimental investigation of aesthetic concepts and of the semiotic possibilities of visual language.

The exhibition will include significant examples of the artist's objects, a self-coined category of work comprised of three-dimensional forms that hang or lean on a wall and seem to simultaneously occupy the realms of both painting and sculpture.

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Among these works is *Objekt mit Wasserwaage (Object with Spirit Level)*, 1969-1973, a shaped canvas that incorporates a leveling tool, thereby physically referring to the construction and installation of the artist's work, while also pointing to the surrounding architectural and exhibition context. Also on view will be a selection of Palermo's "*Metallbilder*," or "Metal Pictures," begun by the artist in late 1973. Executed in acrylic on thin sheets of aluminum or steel, these paintings explore the tensions and contrasts between material and color; surface and depth; and signification and abstraction; thus exemplifying his ongoing experimentation with the symbolic and formal possibilities of composition and color. The exhibition will also present an installation of large-scale works on paper from 1974. These subtly rendered drawings explore systematically related arrangements of parallelograms and will be presented together for the first time since they were originally installed at Heiner Friedrich, New York in 1974.

(Blinky) Palermo was born Peter Schwarze in Leipzig, Germany in 1943 and was adopted and raised under the name Peter Heisterkamp. He changed his name to Palermo, taking the pseudonym from the American boxing promoter Blinky Palermo ("Blinky" later became his nickname; Palermo was his chosen artist name). In the 1960s, he studied under Joseph Beuys at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Palermo died in 1977 at the age of 34 while traveling in the Maldives.

Since his first solo exhibition in 1966 at Galerie Friedrich & Dahlem, Munich, Palermo's work has been included in numerous important exhibitions in Europe and the United States at such institutions as the Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal (1968); Hamburger Kunstverein (1973); Städtisches Kunstmuseum, Bonn (1975); São Paulo Biennial (1975); Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (1986); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1986); Dia Center for the Arts, New York (1987); Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (1988); The Menil Collection, Houston (1989); Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig (1993); Kunstmuseum Bonn (1994); MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; and the Serpentine Gallery, London (both 2002-03).

More recently, his work was shown in a traveling retrospective exhibition organized by the Dia Art Foundation, New York and the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College (CCS Bard), Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. The exhibition itinerary included the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2010-11); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (2011); and Dia:Beacon/CCS Bard (2011). The Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Münster, Germany and the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland recently co-organized a traveling exhibition devoted to the artist's work titled *Palermo: who knows the beginning and who knows the end?* (2011). In 2013, David Zwirner mounted an exhibition of the artist's late drawings in New York; the accompanying catalogue included new scholarship by Christine Mehring (University of Chicago) and Christoph Schreier (Kunstmuseum Bonn).

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