

## Dan Flavin *Kornblee Gallery 1967*

January 10–April 15, 2023  
34 East 69th Street, New York



Installation view, *Dan Flavin*, Kornblee Gallery, New York, January 7–February 2, 1967. © 2023 Stephen Flavin/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to announce an exhibition of works by Dan Flavin at the gallery's 34 East 69th Street location in New York. Presented in adjacent rooms of the Upper East Side townhouse, the works on view re-create two groundbreaking exhibitions that Flavin mounted in 1967 at New York's Kornblee Gallery, then located at the nearby and architecturally similar 58 East 79th Street. The exhibition will offer viewers a rare opportunity to experience the artist's early installations as he would have presented them.

From 1963, when he conceived *the diagonal of May 25, 1963 (to Constantin Brancusi)*—a single gold fluorescent lamp installed diagonally on a wall—until his death in 1996, Flavin produced a singularly consistent and prodigious body of work that utilized commercially available fluorescent lamps to create installations (or "situations," as he preferred to call them) of light and color. Through these light constructions, Flavin was able to at once establish and redefine space. The artist's work—which ranges in scale from individual wall-mounted and corner constructions to large-scale works, in which he employed whole rooms or corridors—testifies to his recurrent preoccupation with architecture.

Made in 1967, only a few years after Flavin's breakthrough with light, the works in this exhibition use relatively simple arrangements of a single color to activate the space in distinct ways. The first gallery features six vertically oriented works in cool white light that were presented together at Kornblee from January to February of 1967. Each varying slightly from one another, the works in this series are positioned in corners, alongside the door frame, and around the fireplace, as at Kornblee, making a subtle incursion into the existing architecture.

By contrast, in the opposite gallery, a single work composed of six diagonals—three repeating sets of two—dramatically washes the space in green light. Debuted at Kornblee in October–November 1967, the work was described by the artist as "a particular interior spatial situational system of self-mimicking counter-poised diagonally resolved wall-fastened lamp aggregations in green fluorescent light, the six required to be positioned on three of the four walls at successively available edge to edge ..."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tiffany Bell with David Gray, "Dan Flavin: Catalogue of Lights" in Michael Govan and Tiffany Bell, *Dan Flavin: The Complete Lights 1961–1996* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, in association with Yale University Press, 2004), p. 263.

By making the placement of each element contingent on those around it, Flavin sets up an internal logic for the viewer to intuit while experiencing the installation. He additionally observed a phenomenological effect when devising this work that would figure more deliberately in later installations wherein the intensity of the light in the all-green room causes a perceptual shift and any available source of white light begins to appear as pink.

The two installations present a rare glimpse into Flavin's strategy for conceptualizing, activating, and transforming space with light and color early in his career. As Michael Govan notes, the artist "ultimately went beyond the idea of specific objects to implicate the entirety of the architecture that contained his work in a three-dimensional environment. From its inception, Flavin's art was especially sensitive to arrangement and context, and this quickly led to his thinking in terms of whole-room installations—an idea that radically altered the course of art-making in the 1960s."<sup>2</sup>

The exhibition will be supplemented by the artist's preparatory drawings as well as other archival materials documenting these early shows. A concurrent exhibition, *Dan Flavin: colored fluorescent light*, will be on view at the gallery's London location.

Dan Flavin's (1933–1996) first solo exhibitions were held at the Judson Gallery in 1961 and the Green Gallery in 1964, both in New York. His first European exhibition was in 1966 at Galerie Rudolf Zwirner in Cologne, Germany; and in 1969, the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, organized his first major museum retrospective. His work was included in a number of key early exhibitions of Minimal art in the 1960s, among them *Black, White, and Gray* (Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut, 1964); *Primary Structures* (The Jewish Museum, New York, 1966); and *Minimal Art* (Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1968). Flavin's work would continue to be presented internationally over the course of the pursuant decades at venues including the St. Louis Art Museum, Missouri (1973); Kunsthalle Basel (1975); Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam (1975); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1986); and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1992), among others.

A major museum retrospective devoted to Flavin's work was organized, in cooperation with the Estate of Dan Flavin, by the Dia Art Foundation in association with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, where it was first on view in 2004. The exhibition traveled from 2005 through 2007 to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Hayward Gallery, London; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Flavin's work was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts in St. Louis, Missouri, in 2008. In 2012, the Morgan Library and Museum, New York, presented a retrospective of the artist's drawings; from 2012 to 2013, a retrospective of his work traveled from the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, to the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland. From 2013 to 2014, *Artist Rooms: Dan Flavin* traveled from Tate Modern, London, to Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries, Scotland. From 2019 to 2020, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami presented a focused exhibition of the artist's works from the mid-1960s. In 2022, Collection Lambert in Avignon, France, presented the solo exhibition, *Dan Flavin: Epiphany*.

A major permanent installation can be seen in Bridgehampton, New York, where in 1983 Flavin began renovating a former firehouse and church to permanently house several of his works and to serve as an

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Govan, "Irony and Light," in *ibid.*, p. 286.

exhibition space and printmaking facility for local artists. The building was named the Dan Flavin Art Institute and is maintained by the Dia Art Foundation. Other long-term, site-specific installations are located at The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas; Dia:Beacon, New York; Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Nationalgalerie Berlin; Kunstmuseum Basel; Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, New Jersey; The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas; Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Flavin's work can be found in significant international museum collections, including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Ho-Am Art Museum, Seoul; Kunstmuseum Basel; Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, France; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The National Museum of Art, Osaka; Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent; Tate, London; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

David Zwirner has represented the Estate of Dan Flavin since 2009. Exhibitions with the gallery include *Dan Flavin: The 1964 Green Gallery Exhibition*, a critically lauded recreation of an early, seminal show of Flavin's light works, in 2008, and *Dan Flavin: Series and Progressions*, which spanned the gallery's West 19th Street spaces in New York, in 2009. At its West 20th Street gallery, David Zwirner presented a series of works from 1966 to 1971 in 2013; followed by *Dan Flavin: Corners, Barriers and Corridors*, featuring significant works from the late 1960s and early 1970s, in 2015; and *Dan Flavin: in daylight or cool white*, examining Flavin's use of different variations of fluorescent white light, in 2018. A solo exhibition of the artist's work was on view at the gallery's Paris location in 2019–2020. Spanning three decades of his career, this was the first major presentation of Flavin's work in the French capital since his 2006 retrospective at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

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