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## Historic Exhibition on Renowned Dwan Gallery to Premiere at National Gallery of Art, Washington



Virginia Dwan at the exhibition Virginia Dwan II: Earthworks, Art Minimal, Art Conceptual, Galerie Montaigne, Paris, October 1991 Photo: Loic Malle Courtesy Virginia Dwan Archive

Washington, DC—The first major exhibition to explore the storied history of the groundbreaking mid-20th-century Dwan Gallery will premiere at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from September 30, 2016, through January 29, 2017. Honoring Virginia Dwan's gift from her extraordinary personal collection to the National Gallery of Art, Los Angeles to New York: Dwan Gallery, 1959–1971 will be on view in Concourse galleries of the newly renovated East Building. The exhibition traces Dwan's remarkable career as a gallerist and patron through some 100 works drawn from her collection as well as from museums and private collections.

Her remarkable 2013 donation includes outright and promised gifts of works by Robert Smithson, Ad Reinhardt, Agnes Martin, Dan Flavin, Carl Andre, Fred Sandback, Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt, Yves Klein, Jean Tinguely, Martial Raysse, Niki de Saint Phalle, and numerous others.

"We are thrilled to present to visitors this long overdue exhibition on the innovative career of dealer and patron Virginia Dwan," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "We are grateful to Virginia for this generous promised gift from her personal collection. And we are also grateful to the many lenders who have enabled us to present an exhibition that brings together highlights of more than 40 seminal shows that Dwan installed in her Los Angeles and New York galleries."

## **Organization and Support**

Los Angeles to New York: Dwan Gallery, 1959–1971 was organized by the National Gallery of Art. The exhibition travels to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where it will be on view from March 19 through September 10, 2017.

The exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation.

# Exhibition Highlights/History of the Dwan Gallery

During her more than eleven years as a gallerist, Virginia Dwan mounted 134 shows, introducing viewers in Los Angeles and New York to the most challenging art practices of the time. Her contributions to postwar art in the United States and France are explored chronologically in a multimedia installation throughout the renovated East Building galleries and spaces. Robert Smithson's iconic 1970 film, *Spiral Jetty*, will alternate with a special exhibition film featuring interviews with Dwan and several artists and both contemporary and archival footage and photographs of Dwan-sponsored exhibitions, performances, and earthworks. The exhibition film is sponsored by the HRH Foundation.

Founded by Virginia Dwan in a storefront in Los Angeles in 1959, Dwan Gallery was a leading avant-garde space, presenting exhibitions of such New York artists as Franz Kline, Philip Guston, Ad Reinhardt, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers, and Claes Oldenburg, as well as the Los Angeles-based artist Edward Kienholz. A keen follower of art developments in Paris, Dwan gave many of the nouveaux réalistes (the French counterpart to pop art) their debut shows in the United States, introducing artists such as Yves Klein, Arman, Jean Tinguely, Martial Raysse, and Niki de Saint Phalle. Her group

show *My Country 'Tis of Thee* (1962) is among the earliest exhibitions of pop art. Another exhibition, *Boxes* (1964), marked the first occasion that Andy Warhol exhibited his iconic Brillo boxes.

Dwan moved to New York in 1965, where she established a second space on West 57th Street. If the Los Angeles gallery featured abstract expressionism, pop, and nouveau réalisme, the New York gallery became associated with other emerging tendencies. 10 (1966) was a groundbreaking show of minimal art. Four "language" shows between 1967 and 1970 heralded conceptual art, while *Earthworks* (1968) ushered in site-specific projects. A leading patron of land art, Dwan sponsored Michael Heizer's monumental sculptures *Double Negative* (1969) and *Complex One* of *City* (begun 1972), Robert Smithson's masterpiece *Spiral Jetty* (1970), Walter De Maria's 35-Pole Lightning Field (1974), and Charles Ross's *Star Axis* (begun 1971).

A central theme of the Gallery's exhibition is the increasing mobility of the art world as a result of new modes of transportation including jet aviation and the interstate highway system during the late 1950s and 1960s, when artists, dealers, and works of art moved more swiftly between the coasts and Europe and with increasing regularity. The Dwan story also encompassed remote locations in the American West and the Yucatán, where artists made earthworks that Dwan sponsored.

By the late sixties, Dwan Gallery could no longer be said to exist solely on West 57th Street in New York, but in remote locations at a far distance from the gallery. The exhibition reexamines this important history, deepening the understanding of a remarkable artistic exchange set in motion by Dwan between Los Angeles, New York, and Paris during a seminal era of postwar art.

#### Virginia Dwan Pledge (2013)

In 2013, the Gallery announced Virginia Dwan's promised gift from her collection to the National Gallery of Art. Comprising 250 paintings, sculptures, works on paper, photographs, and artists' books of extraordinary quality, the vast majority acquired directly from the artists, Dwan's generous gift is among the most historically significant ever received by the institution. Including major examples of postwar abstraction, nouveau réalisme, minimalism, conceptualism, and land art previously unrepresented in the collection, the gift will extend and redefine the Gallery's modern collection. What makes the Dwan gift unique is her involvement in the creation of the works in her collection as both the dealer and patron of the artists.

#### **Curator and Catalog**

Los Angeles to New York: Dwan Gallery, 1959–1971 was conceived by James Meyer, former associate curator of modern art at the National Gallery of Art and currently deputy director and chief curator at Dia Art Foundation.

The accompanying exhibition catalog *Dwan Gallery:* Los Angeles to New York, 1959–1971, copublished by the National Gallery of Art and the University of Chicago Press, is a richly illustrated scholarly study of the history of the Dwan Gallery by Meyer with writings by Virginia Dwan on the movements and artists she showed, and a chronology of Dwan's life and professional activities and a complete exhibition history of the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles and New York by Paige Rozanski, curatorial assistant in the department of modern art at the National Gallery of Art. The 408-page hardcover catalog includes 325 color illustrations and is available at <a href="http://shop.nga.gov/">http://shop.nga.gov/</a>; (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002 (phone); (202) 789-3047 (fax); or mailorder@nga.gov).

## **Related Activities**

## Concerts

Tristan Perich's *Surface Image* September 30 at 12:30

East Building Auditorium

Pianist Vicki Chow performs Tristan Perich's *Surface Image*, a full-length work for piano and 40 one-bit speakers. Perich is the grandson of Virginia Dwan.

Yves Klein's *Symphonie Monotone-Silence* October 1 at 4:00 p.m. East Building Auditorium

Klein's Symphonie Monotone-Silence is an avant-garde 32-piece orchestra and 40-voice choir performance where instruments and voice sustain a D-minor chord for 20 minutes, and then sit, frozen in silence, for 20 minutes.

Philip Glass, "Collaboration and Creativity"

October 2 at 2:00

East Building Auditorium

Philip Glass performs and discusses the creative process of collaborating with visual artists and reminisces about SoHo in the seventies.

### Lectures

Discoveries from the Dwan Gallery and Virginia Dwan Archives

Paige Rozanski

September 26 at 12:10, 1:10

West Building Lecture Hall

Conversation with Collectors: Virginia Dwan and James Meyer

September 27 at 3:30 East Building Auditorium

Book-signing of Dwan Gallery: Los Angeles to New York, 1959—1971 follows.

#### **Public Symposium**

November 18 at 3:30; November 19 at 11:00

East Building Auditorium

November 18: West Coast, East Coast

Pamela M. Lee, Jeanette and William Hayden Jones Professor in American Art and Culture, Stanford University

November 19

Julia Robinson, associate professor of art history, New York University

Alex Potts, Max Loehr Collegiate Professor, University of Michigan

Robert Hobbs, Rhoda Thalhimer Endowed Chair, Virginia Commonwealth University, and visiting professor, Yale University

Emily Taub Webb, professor of art history, Savannah College of Art and Design

Jane McFadden, department chair of humanities and sciences, ArtCenter College of Design

## Films

Series: Film, Video, and Virginia Dwan

Virginia Dwan was instrumental in the development and exhibition of artists' work in all media, including the motion picture arts. This eight part series features archival materials, documentation of happenings and installations, contemporary films, as well as documentaries—some produced and directed by the gallerist Virginia Dwan herself. With special thanks to Anne Kovach, Doug Dreishpoon, Tom Martinelli, Richard Shebairo, Jay Sanders, Whitney Museum, Canyon Cinema, Electronic Arts Intermix, LUX, and Video Data Bank.

The following films will screen in the East Building Auditorium.

Dwan Los Angeles

October 8 at 2:00

A program of historic works related to the Los Angeles-based Dwan Gallery and some of the artists exhibited there in the early 1960s, such as Jean Tinguely, Edward Kienholz, Claes Oldenberg, and Yves Klein, among others. Featuring a selection of short, mid-century animated 16mm films by American icon Robert Breer—all of which were projected in L.A. during the opening of a Larry Rivers exhibition in 1963—including *A Man and His Dog Out for Air* (1957), *Eyewash* (1959), and *Homage to Jean Tinguely's Homage to New York* (1960). (Total running time approximately 95 minutes)

Niki de Saint Phalle—An Architect's Dream

October 8 at 4:00

The first U.S. solo show by nouveau réaliste artist Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002) opened at the Dwan Gallery L.A. at the beginning of 1964 and featured many of her Tirs or "shooting pictures" including King Kong. This recent documentary on the life of de Saint Phalle features archival interviews and footage of her practice, public art installations, and legacy. (Louise Faure and Anne Julien, 2014, subtitles, 52 minutes)

Dwan New York City

October 9 at 4:00

Includes documentation of Walter De Maria's installation *Bed of Spikes* (1969) and his avant-garde *Western Hardcore* (1969), made in the Black Rock desert, Nevada, with Michael Heizer as a gun-slinging cowboy. Also included in the program is the early video piece East Coast/West Coast (Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, 1969), where Holt and Smithson humorously take on the stereotypical and opposing personas of the coastal "art scenes" in philosophical debate; and the conversational *Carl Andre: A Video Portrait*, produced by Virginia Dwan in 1976—just one document reflective of Dwan's many relationships and sustained friendships with the artists she represented. (Total running time approximately 120 minutes)

Ongoingness: Smithson and Holt Films

October 15 at 2:00

Introduced by Alena Williams

As partners and frequent collaborators, artists Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt often used 16mm and 8mm film formats to document and develop their investigations into the earthworks for which they are best known. Two resulting films—Swamp (1971) and Mono Lake (1968-2004)—offer insights into their processes and reflect their shared interests in perception and entropy, among other concepts. The program culminates with a screening of Spiral Jetty (1970) in its original 16mm film format, an integral part of Smithson's master earthwork situated at Rozel Point, spooling into the Great Salt Lake,

Utah. Alena Williams is assistant professor, University of California, San Diego. (Total running time approximately 71 minutes). With thanks to the Museum of Modern Art film archive for the loan of the Spiral Jetty print.

## Casting a Glance

October 15 at 3:30

Contemporary avant-garde master James Benning—perhaps best known for his minimal landscape films—takes up Smithson's fascination with duration by recording sixteen visits to the site of Spiral Jetty in the Great Salt Lake. Casting a Glance "maps the Jetty back onto its own ... history—looking at and listening to its reoccurring changes. I found the Jetty a barometer for a variety of cycles. From morning to night its allusive, shifting appearance may be the result of a passing weather system or simply the changing angle of the sun... Sounds may come from a navy jet, wildlife, lapping or splashing water, a visitor's car radio, converging thunderstorms, or be a silence so still you can hear the blood moving through the veins in your ears"—James Benning. (2007, 16mm, 80 minutes)

#### Nancy Holt Film and Video

October 16 at 4:00

Introduced by DeeDee Halleck

Video activist and filmmaker DeeDee Halleck collaborated with Nancy Holt as editor on several of her films, including *Sun Tunnels* (1978), which documents the making of Holt's major site-specific sculptural work in the northwest Utah desert; and *Pine Barrens* (1975), a film that evokes "a barren wilderness in south-central New Jersey... (with) the voices of the local people, the 'Pineys,'".. heard relating their feelings about the land, their attitudes about city life, their myths of the area"—Nancy Holt. Other titles in this program include *Underscan* (1973-4) and Holt's final film (also edited by Halleck), *The Making of Amarillo Ramp* (2013), about Smithson's unfinished earthwork from 1973. (Total running time approximately 100 minutes). Digital restoration of Pine Barrens and Sun Tunnels made possible by the National Gallery of Art.

#### Of Minimalists and Land Artists

October 29 at 2:00

The influence and impact of artwork supported by the Dwan Gallery still reverberates, as evidenced by the following selection of films and videos from the mid 1970s to the present day. Titles include *Boomerang* by Richard Serra (1974), featuring Nancy Holt vibrantly experimenting with the then-new and immediate medium of video; *SHEDS* (Jane Crawford and Robert Fiore), a short documentary produced for the 2004 Robert Smithson retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, that features newly compiled footage of two Smithson works (*Partially Buried Woodshed* and *Mica Spread*); video excerpts from artist Renee Green's *Partially Buried* gallery installation; and the experimental 16mm films *Monuments* by Redmond Entwistle (2010) and *Center of the Cyclone* by Heather Trawick (2015), among other titles. (Total running time approximately 150 minutes)

### Produced by Virginia Dwan

October 30 at 4:00

The final program of the series is devoted to videos that reveal Dwan's personal fascination with repetition and seriality and her continued commitment to the exploration of process. The following document performances, explorations, and conversations with seminal American artists: *Sturtevant: Various Beuys Actions* (1972) by Robert Fiore, with Virginia Dwan directing Sturtevant through Joseph Beuys actions based on her memory of those performances by Beuys; *Carl Andre: Reconfigurations* (1976), a document of Carl Andre's interaction with his sculptures at the close of a PS1 exhibition in Long Island City that year; and *John Cage: James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Eric Satie, An Alphabet*, an on-screen reading by Cage of a radio play he was commissioned to write for Cologne's West German Radio (WDR). (Total running time approximately 138 minutes). With thanks to the Dwan Archive.

## In the Library: Selections from the Dwan Gallery and Virginia Dwan Archives

On view in the East Building Study Center from September 30, 2016, through January 29, 2017, the National Gallery of Art Library presents an exhibition of ephemera and documentary material from the Dwan Archive. A combination of exhibition announcements and posters, photographs, ledgers and checklists, and private correspondence will provide a look inside the workings of the gallery and the life of its founder, Virginia Dwan.

## Press Contact:

Anabeth Guthrie, (202) 842-6804 or a-guthrie@nga.gov

## General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at http://instagram.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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Exhibition Page:

Los Angeles to New York: Dwan Gallery, 1959–1971

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