

Ronald Bladen: New York Paintings 1955-1962



Installation View

Long renowned as a minimal sculptor of great import, prior to 1963 Ronald Bladen was a painter. After his death these paintings were unearthed, according to Bill Berkson "...since a cache of some thirty-five canvases and panels was discovered behind a wall in his studio that Bladen built in 1978 to seal them from sight, a legend has grown about his New York pictures."



Ronald Bladen, Untitled (Black Painting) 1956-1959, Oil on Canvas, 96 x 72 Inches

His heavily impastoed paintings were often constructed with masonry trowels and two by fours as the artist spread, packed, kneaded and pounded his heavily pigmented, handmade oil paints into place. His surfaces are marked by their sensitivity, chromatic intensity and earthy texture. Massive topographies of paint and pigment, these works invite comparison to landscape. They too display an aesthetic concern born throughout the artist's entire oeuvre. These works radiate with the subject and power of nature. Bladen's paintings are a conduit into his

complex sculptural search. Bladen's painting reliefs welcome the viewer to step into the artist's next body of legendary work.

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Ronald Bladen in Context: Works on Paper

On view in the upstairs gallery, Bladen in Context is an exhibition of works on paper by Bladen's sculptor peers. At its core is the young group of artists who started at Park Place and were made famous by the exhibition "Primary Structures" at the Jewish Museum. A seminal moment in the history



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of sculpture, the work on view offered a sober, intellectual counterpoint to its painterly predecessor.

In her essay "10 Structures in 20 Paragraphs" the art critic Lucy R. Lippard frames Tony Smith and Ronald Bladen in both conjunction and opposition to their younger contemporaries: "Both had underground reputations before their work was seen, relatively late. Both consider themselves sculptors rather than anti-sculptors. Both retain the 'romantic' values of a previous art."

Bladen in context offers a glimpse of this dialog as it is caught on paper. Works by Carl Andre, Stephen Antonakos, Larry Bell, John Chamberlain, Tom Doyle, Mark di Suvero, Michael Goldberg, Robert Grosvenor, Al Held, Eva Hesse, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Forrest Myers, Robert Murray, Salvatore Romano, Richard Serra, Tony Smith, David Smith, Robert Smithson, George Sugarman, Anne Truitt, David von Schlegell, Dorothea Rockburne, Connie Reyes, Richard Van Buren and Ruth Vollmer. illustrate how notions about form and content began to diverge as a radical group of artists came into its own.

