

## PRESS RELEASE



Dan Flavin

*monument 4 for those who have been killed in ambush (to P. K. who reminded me about death)*, 1966, red fluorescent light, 244 x 244 cm.

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## Opening the Box: Unpacking Minimalism

Curated by Mark Godfrey

Opening 22 October, 2015, 7-9.30pm | Curator Talk 8pm

22 October, 2015 – April 2016

**Dan Flavin | Isa Genzken | Robert Gober | Roni Horn | Rashid Johnson | Donald Judd | Agnes Martin | John McCracken | Nikolai Mikhailovich Suetin**

The George Economou Collection is pleased to announce *Opening the Box: Unpacking Minimalism*. This group exhibition curated by Mark Godfrey, opens on Thursday, October 22, 2015, at the Economou Collection Space in Athens, Greece.

When people think of Minimalism, they often think of a generic grey metal box that has been fabricated in a workshop in the United States and is displayed with other similar if not identical boxes. Although this box often features in accounts of Minimalism, it is a mythical, rather than a real artwork. This exhibition of ten works from the George Economou Collection attempts to tell a more nuanced story about Minimalism by looking at a number of different debates, places and time periods.

On the ground floor, three works surround a magnificent 1978 brushed aluminium “channel” piece by Donald Judd comprised of six open modular units, an early relief of Judd’s from 1961, a 1966 painting by Agnes Martin and a 1988 plank by John McCracken. This ensemble already raises several intriguing questions: given the compositional ideas Judd’s work shares with Agnes Martin’s, was he mistaken in so often dismissing painting? And how did John McCracken negotiate the relationship of painting and sculpture when he leaned his works between the wall and the floor? What role did colour play for Judd and McCracken, and how did they approach the difference between applied and integral colour? What differentiates these two artists’ handling of texture and reflectivity?

Entering the darkened space on the second floor, viewers encounter Dan Flavin's *monument 4 for those who have been killed in ambush (to P. K. who reminded me about death)*, 1966, whose top element points towards them from the corner. This is a rare work for Flavin, made entirely with red fluorescent lamps, and directly addresses the violence of the Vietnam War. If this piece foregrounds the relationship between Minimalism and its historical moment, the other two works on this floor look back and forwards from this time. Nikolai Suetin's 1921 *Suprematist Composition* shows various precedents for the diagonal composition of Flavin's work in another moment of historical crisis, while Isa Genzken's *Gelbes Ellipsoid (Yellow Ellipsoid)*, 1976, is one of the best examples of the German reception of Minimalism in the 1970s: a wooden form created with the use of computers, reminiscent of a javelin or a spear, but lying directly on the floor.

On the light-filled top floor, works by a subsequent generation of artists reveal how they turned Minimalism's formal vocabulary to new ends, addressing desire, loss and identity. Robert Gober's *The Silent Sink*, 1984, may evoke Judd's wall-mounted stacks, yet the representation of a sink and plug-hole introduces thoughts of the body, along with loss, cleanliness and dirt, even disease. Roni Horn's *Untitled (Billie)*, *Untitled (Holiday)*, 2012, is a cast glass sculpture in two parts. At various times of the day, one will glow in the sunlight, while the other will be in shade—which one can link to the tragic and romantic poles of Billie Holiday's music. The third work in the space, Rashid Johnson's *Cosmic Slop "Hotter than July"*, 2014, also carries a title alluding to African American music: in this case, Stevie Wonder's legendary album as well as Funkadelic's 'Cosmic Slop'. In this monochrome, made with black soap and wax, the gestures that Minimalism banished have returned.

By the time the viewer leaves the exhibition, the reductive concept of the 'Minimal box' will have collapsed in on itself. The show makes clear that a Minimal tendency has existed in art from the 1920s to the present; artists related to Minimalism have worked with a wide range of materials, colours and textures; they have explored formal ideas and engaged deeply with the world around them. For all its supposed coolness, Minimalism can be hot as well as cold: it has many different moods.

**The exhibition will be on view from 22 October 2015 until April 2016 at the George Economou Collection Space, 80 Kifissias Ave., 15125 Marousi, Athens, Greece. Our opening hours are Monday to Friday from 10 am to 6 pm. For further information or images, please contact Caroline May at +30 210 8090566 or [cmay@economoucollection.com](mailto:cmay@economoucollection.com)**

### **Notes to Editor**

Mark Godfrey is Senior Curator, International Art (Europe and Americas) at Tate Modern, London. At Tate he has worked on several exhibitions including retrospectives of Sigmar Polke, Richard Hamilton, Alighiero Boetti, Gerhard Richter, Francis Alÿs and Roni Horn. Outside Tate he has curated exhibitions by Christopher Williams and R.H. Quaytman. He is the author of 'Abstraction and the Holocaust' and 'Alighiero E Boetti', both published by Yale University Press, and several catalogue essays on artists including Frances Stark, Laura Owens, Sharon Lockhart, Rodney Graham, Tacita Dean, Thomas Demand, Albert Oehlen and Fischli & Weiss. He is the curator of the 2015 Turbine Hall Hyundai commission by Abraham Cruzvillegas and in 2015 he was the winner of the Absolut Art Prize for Art Writing.

### **The George Economou Collection**

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