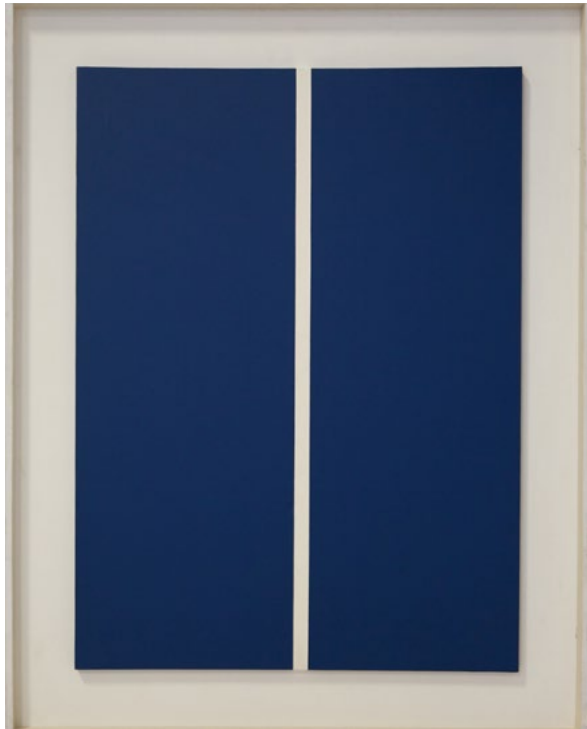


1959-1963 AMERICAN PIONEERS AT CASTELLI GALLERY, A TRIBUTE TO NASSOS DAPHNIS

RICHARD TAITTINGER GALLERY:
FEBRUARY 23 - APRIL 15, 2017
OPENING FEBRUARY 23, 6-8 PM

THE ARMORY SHOW: BOOTH 430
MARCH 1-5, 2017



Nassos Daphnis, 8-60 (1960). Magna on canvas 36.75 x 28.75 in. / 93.35 x 73 cm (framed)

Richard Taittinger Gallery is honored to present at the Gallery and The Armory Show, the historical group exhibition, *1959-1963 American Pioneers of Castelli Gallery, a Tribute to Nassos Daphnis*.

Since its founding in 2015, Richard Taittinger Gallery has represented the Estate of Nassos Daphnis, who was an artist of Leo Castelli's Gallery for almost 40 years. Along with Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, Daphnis was the most exhibited artist of this legendary gallery.

From 1959 to 1963 Lee Bontecou, John Chamberlain, Daphnis, Robert Rauschenberg, Salvatore Scarpitta, and Frank Stella were exhibited side by side at the Castelli Gallery yearly. Together, they were seen as the cutting edge alternative to the era's widely revered Abstract Expressionist movement.

The purpose of *1959-1963 American Pioneers* is to underline the importance of Daphnis' Minimalist works during this period. It showcases the artistic dialogue shared with his peers from the Castelli Gallery, as pioneers of the midcentury New York art scene as we know it today.

In 1958, Daphnis wrote his Color and Plane theory,

which marked his jumping off point as a Minimalist. His works of this period are best characterized by his effort to liberate color from the restriction of form. In doing so, he used multiple planes of solid color to create the illusion of depth, space, and movement amid smooth, uninterrupted surfaces. According to his theory, primary colors create a buzzing energy when they collide. Black is perceived to be at the forefront of the surface, then blue, red, yellow fall behind it until white recedes infinitely.

He translated this theoretical and experimental approach to art through his use of materials, as well. He was one of the first artists to use acrylic-based Magna paints, which gave the surface luminosity as opposed to the dull reflection that oil paints create. Daphnis was also a pioneer in his use of Masonite on painting and Plexiglas in his sculptural work, which brought new dimensions the planes of color in his paintings.

Acclaimed New York art critic April Kingsley reflected in 1980 that *"some of Daphnis' paintings from the later 50s are so radical you'd assume they'd been painted at least 10 to 15 years later. His devotion to purity predicts 60s minimalism; his systemic approach predates systemic painting."*

His technical approach to making art allowed him to move quickly through styles and practices of painting. By 1963, Daphnis had moved away from Minimalism, a near decade before his contemporaries.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Nassos Daphnis (1914-2010) was a Greek-born American painter and sculptor recognized for his mastery of geometric abstraction and his evolution into what became known as hard-edge painting. Daphnis was the recipient of numerous prestigious art awards, including the National Endowment of the Arts Grant Award (1971), the Guggenheim Fellowship (1977), the Francis J. Greenburger Foundation Award (1986), and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award (1986). His work is included in the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Baltimore Museum, MD; and Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY.

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