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Press Release

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National Gallery of Art Announces Virginia Dwan Collection Promised Bequest and Exhibition for Reopening of East Building, *From Los Angeles to New York: The Dwan Gallery 1959–1971*



Robert Smithson, American, 1938-1973
Spiral Jetty, 1970
crayon on paper
Collection of Virginia Dwan
Photo: Joshua Nefsky

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art announces a major promised bequest of 250 objects from the Virginia Dwan Collection, including distinguished works by renowned artists Robert Smithson, Yves Klein, Ad Reinhardt, Agnes Martin, Dan Flavin, Walter De Maria, Carl Andre, Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt, Fred Sandback, Michael Heizer, and Jean Tinguely, among others.

Recognized as a “legendary dealer, the grande dame of the avant-garde” (*The New York Times*, May 11, 2003), Virginia Dwan (b. October 18, 1931) is an American collector, art patron, philanthropist, and former owner and executive director of Dwan Gallery Los Angeles (1959–1967) and Dwan Gallery New York (1965–1971).

The promised bequest is comprised of 250 works by 52 artists, including 34 sculptures, 15 paintings, 159 prints and drawings, 39 photographs, two films, and one set of artist’s books. In addition, Dwan donated two outright gifts of sculpture—Robert Smithson’s *Glass Stratum* (1967), and *Non-Site #1 (Pine Barrens, New Jersey)* (1968), as announced by the National Gallery of Art in July 2013.

Planned for the reopening of the East Building galleries in late 2016, ***From Los Angeles to New York: The Dwan Gallery 1959–1971*** will feature works in the Dwan collection and supplemental works that Dwan exhibited from other collections to tell the story of her remarkable career as a gallerist and patron.

“The National Gallery of Art is thrilled to be the beneficiary of Ms. Dwan’s seminal collection,” said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. “The pledge will significantly strengthen our holdings of art from the 1960s and 1970s, and it builds on the generous legacy of gifts of modern art to the Gallery, in the same manner as the Robert and Jane Meyerhoff and

Dorothy and Herbert Vogel collections. These iconic works will add to the story of contemporary art that our nation's museum is able to tell."

Dwan's promised bequest will enrich a number of collection areas, including postwar abstraction, nouveau réalisme, minimalism, and land art, with "seminal examples of works by the leading artists associated with these tendencies," said James Meyer, associate curator of modern art and curator of ***From Los Angeles to New York: The Dwan Gallery 1959–1971***. "Among the many strengths of the collection is its remarkable holding of works by Robert Smithson, one of the great figures of land art and one of the most influential artists of the last half-century. In addition to three major sculptures, the Gallery will receive unique photcollages, 24 drawings, and the prints of Smithson's film *Spiral Jetty*, which Dwan sponsored—establishing the Gallery as a key repository for the artist's work."

Additionally, the Dwan bequest will include five paintings by Yves Klein—the Gallery's first acquisition of works by Klein, a leading member of the nouveau réalistes—as well as paintings by Ad Reinhardt and Agnes Martin; and sculptures by such minimalist artists as Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, and Fred Sandback.

About the Dwan Gallery

Founded by Virginia Dwan in a storefront in the Westwood neighborhood in Los Angeles in 1959, the Dwan Gallery moved to a larger space nearby in 1962. Along with Walter Hopps' and Irving Blum's Ferus Gallery, the Dwan Gallery was a leading avant-garde space in Los Angeles during this period, presenting exhibitions by Franz Kline, Philip Guston, Ad Reinhardt, Joan Mitchell, Niki di Saint Phalle, Yves Klein, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers, Ed Keinholz, and Claes Oldenburg, among others.

A keen follower of contemporary French art, Dwan gave many of the nouveau réalistes their first shows in Los Angeles, including Arman, Yves Tinguely, Martial Raysse, Niki di Saint Phalle, and Yves Klein. Her group show, *My Country 'Tis of Thee* (1962), was among the earliest exhibitions of pop art.

Dwan moved to New York in 1965 and established a second space on West 57th Street in 1966. While the Los Angeles gallery featured abstract expressionism, neo-Dada and nouveau réalisme, Dwan New York became associated with other emerging tendencies. *Ten* was a pivotal presentation of minimalism. A series of *Language* shows heralded conceptual art, while the exhibition *Earth Works* ushered in land art.

Andre, LeWitt, Morris, Flavin, Smithson, Sandback, De Maria, Heizer, Robert Ryman, Arakawa, Charles Ross, David Novros, Kenneth Snelson, and other distinguished artists had one-person shows at Dwan. Some exhibited in both the New York and Los Angeles galleries before the latter closed in 1967.

From Los Angeles to New York: The Dwan Gallery 1959–1971

"The Dwan exhibition will be more than a collection show; it will attempt to capture the creative spirit of Dwan herself and that which she nurtured in her artists as well as the extraordinary period of art-making in which she was active," Meyer said. "She had one of the most cutting-edge galleries of the era, along with Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend. She sponsored major earthworks, such as Heizer's *Double Negative*, Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, and in later years, the Dwan Light Sanctuary designed by Charles Ross."

One theme of the exhibition is mobility, made possible by commercial

aviation at the time when Dwan founded her gallery in Los Angeles—only a few years before she owned and operated galleries on both coasts. During the Dwan Gallery years, French artists and New Yorkers traveled to present shows in Los Angeles, Los Angelenos exhibited their work in New York, and New York artists built major earthworks in the American west.

“The Dwan Gallery played an important role at the beginning of the ‘global’ art world in which we now live,” Meyer said. “The exhibition will explore the linkages created by Dwan between Europe and the two coasts of the United States. Dwan was interested in new aesthetic forms and ideas. She was as much a patron as a gallerist. Her gallery represents an alternative to today’s scene, dominated primarily by commercial values.”

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Meyer, a detailed chronology, and a list of works in the exhibition.

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. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/modern-art-during-renovation.html>.

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery’s Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at www.twitter.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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