

For immediate release

PALERMO

Works on Paper 1976-1977

April 25 – June 29, 2013

Opening reception: Thursday, April 25, 6–8 PM



April, from the twelve-part work *1-12 12 Monate*, 1976
Acrylic on paper, mounted on cardboard in twelve (12) parts
Paper, each: 12¹³/₁₆ x 9⁷/₁₆ inches (32.5 x 24 cm)
Cardboard, each: 27¹/₂ x 19³/₈ inches (69.8 x 49.4 cm)
Photo courtesy of Palermo Archive/Artists Rights Society
(ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of works on paper from 1976-1977 by German artist **Palermo** (on view at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location). Drawn from museum and private collections, the exhibition has been organized in collaboration with the Palermo Archive on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the artist's birth. The majority of the works on view were executed in New York, where the artist lived and worked from 1973 until the spring of 1976. The artist died in February 1977.

Although it has been linked with distinct 20th Century art practices—including abstraction, Minimalism, and Conceptual art—Palermo's diverse body of work defies easy classification. Throughout his brief and influential career, Palermo executed paintings, objects, installations, and works on paper that addressed the contextual and semantic issues at stake in the construction, exhibition, and reception of works of art. His handling of form and color comprises a complex and experimental investigation of aesthetic concepts and of the semiotic possibilities of visual language.

The artist's late work is characterized by its explorations of the tensions and contrasts between, for example, material and color; surface and depth; and signification and abstraction. Like his paintings from this period, many of the drawings on view are serial in their composition, thus calling attention to the context in which they are exhibited. Included in the exhibition is *1-7 Untitled (for Babette)*, 1976 (collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York), a seven-part work executed in vibrant red acrylic on paper which presents the traces of the artist's brushwork and proposes variations of geometric forms. Similarly, *1-12 12 Monate*, 1976 (Private Collection) suggests an idiomatic language of form and composition in twelve distinct, painted drawings that refer abstractly to the twelve months of the year.

Works such as *Das Rätsel*, 1976 and *Nevada*, 1977 (both Private Collection) point towards the artist's interest in American abstract painting practices in their simultaneously expressionistic and minimal motifs and chromatic

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execution. While many of the works in the exhibition engage with a looser, more experimental approach to form, color, and composition, others relate more directly to fully-realized works, such as his proposals for compositions for *To The People of New York*, a large-scale installation of paintings comprised of forty metal panels grouped in variations of red, yellow, and black, which occupied most of his artistic focus during the last year of his life.

Executed at the end of the artist's brief career, Palermo's works on paper from 1976-1977 suggest a kind of summation of his artistic practice: not only do they exemplify his ongoing experimentation with the symbolic and formal possibilities of composition and space, but they also convey his understanding of color as a system of signs.

On the occasion of the exhibition, the gallery will publish a fully-illustrated catalogue that will include new scholarship by Christine Mehring (University of Chicago) and Christoph Schreier (Kunstmuseum Bonn).

(Blinky) Palermo was born Peter Schwarze in Leipzig, Germany in 1943 and was adopted and raised under the name Peter Heisterkamp. He changed his name to Palermo, taking the pseudonym from the American boxing promoter Blinky Palermo ("Blinky" Palermo later became his nickname; Palermo was his chosen artist name). In the 1960s, he studied under Joseph Beuys at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Palermo died in 1977 at the age of 34 while traveling in the Maldives. Since his first solo exhibition in 1966 at Galerie Friedrich & Dahlem, Munich, Palermo's work has been included in numerous important exhibitions in Europe and the United States at such institutions as the Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal (1968); Hamburger Kunstverein (1973); Städtisches Kunstmuseum, Bonn (1975); São Paulo Biennial (1975); Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (1986); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1986); Dia Center for the Arts, New York (1987); Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (1988); The Menil Collection, Houston (1989); Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig (1993); the Kunstmuseum Bonn (1994); MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; and the Serpentine Gallery, London (both 2002-03). More recently, his work was shown in a traveling retrospective exhibition organized by the Dia Art Foundation, New York and the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College (CCS Bard), Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. The exhibition itinerary included the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2010-11); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (2011); and Dia:Beacon/CCS Bard (2011). The Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Münster, Germany and the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland recently co-organized a traveling exhibition devoted to the artist's work titled *Palermo: who knows the beginning and who knows the end?* (2011).

For further information, please contact the gallery at 212 517 8677.

For press inquiries, please contact Julia Joern at 212 727 2070 or julia@davidzwirner.com.

For press images, please contact Lauren Knighton at 212 517 8677 or lauren@davidzwirner.com.