

For immediate release

AD REINHARDT: BLUE PAINTINGS

September 12 – October 21, 2017

Opening reception: Tuesday, September 12, 2017, 6 – 8 PM



Ad Reinhardt: Blue Paintings, organized by the Ad Reinhardt Foundation, will present the largest number of the artist's "blue" paintings ever shown together. Drawn exclusively from museum and private collections, this will be the first exhibition devoted entirely to this body of work since the artist's 1965 solo show at the Stable Gallery, New York, over fifty years ago. This presentation will focus on works made between 1950 and 1953, in addition to related earlier canvases from the 1940s.

The perceptual demands of these compelling works are intense and reward sustained looking: the blues in Reinhardt's paintings appear to change before one's eyes, influenced by subtle shifts in color within each canvas and in neighboring works. Reinhardt paired tones of blue that are so similar that it may take minutes to see they are not the same, creating resonant compositions that challenge the limits of perception. In bringing these works together, this exhibition will afford a rare opportunity to experience one of the greatest twentieth-century painters thinking in color.

The Ad Reinhardt Foundation would like extend its deep gratitude to the many generous lenders who have made this unprecedented exhibition possible. *Ad Reinhardt: Blue Paintings*, which is free and open to the public, will introduce a new audience to these iconic works, and has already contributed immensely to the study of the artist's oeuvre.

Ad Reinhardt (1913-1967) is among the most significant American artists of the twentieth century. His paintings encourage the viewer's active engagement in the act of looking at and experiencing "art as art." As he declared, "Art is art. Everything else is everything else."

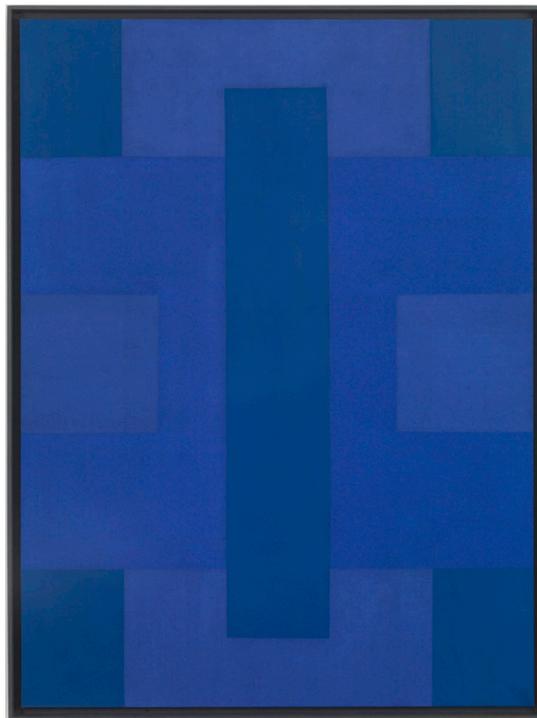
Born in Buffalo, New York and raised in Queens, New York, Reinhardt was recognized for his skill as an artist from an early age. He attended Columbia University on a scholarship, where he studied art history and graduated in 1935. In 1936, Reinhardt was hired by the Works Progress

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Administration's Federal Art Project to paint abstract paintings in the Easel Division. In 1937, he joined the American Abstract Artists, with whom he would exhibit through the early 1950s. These formative experiences demonstrated an early dedication to the cause of abstract painting, to which Reinhardt would devote himself for the rest of his life.

He had his first solo show in 1943 at The Artists' Gallery, New York, and was included in a number of important group exhibitions of abstract painting throughout the 1940s, alongside artists such as Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still, Hans Hofmann, and others. During this time, Reinhardt studied with Alfred Salmony at the Institute of Fine Arts and developed a keen interest in Asian art, which he would continue to explore in his writings, slide shows, and teaching. The diverse approaches he employed in this period emphasized expressionistic brushwork, all-over composition, calligraphic elements, and an increasing interest in close color value and monochrome canvases, as he investigated the possibilities of expanding the limits of abstract painting.

Around 1950, Reinhardt began paring down his compositions, exploring color through arrangements of overlapping and interlocking rectangular "bricks" of paint. He ultimately arrived at a reduced color palette of blue, red, and black, which he explored in symmetrical and geometric monochrome canvases. At the time, he considered his blue, red, and black paintings equal parts of a general investigation into subtle chromatic variations and the perceptual properties of color, originally exhibiting these works together. By 1954, however, Reinhardt devoted himself exclusively to his black canvases. He described these emblematic works, which the artist considered to be his "ultimate" aesthetic expression, as: "A pure, abstract, non-objective, timeless, spaceless, changeless, relationless, disinterested painting—an object that is self-conscious (no unconsciousness), ideal, transcendent, aware of no thing but art (*absolutely no anti-art*)."



In 1965, Reinhardt staged concurrent exhibitions of his blue, red, and black paintings at three galleries in New York: blue at the Stable Gallery, red at Graham Gallery, and black at Betty Parsons Gallery. At the end of 1966, Sam Hunter, with the assistance of Lucy Lippard, mounted a major retrospective of Reinhardt's work at The Jewish Museum, New York.

On the occasion of this exhibition, the Ad Reinhardt Foundation will be publishing a special volume of their ongoing catalogue raisonné project, dedicated to the blue paintings. This scholarly publication will include comprehensive documentation on each known work along with full color reproductions and new scholarship on Reinhardt's work. To date, the Ad Reinhardt Foundation has documented 40 blue paintings from this period and is actively researching this body of work. Please visit their website for more information: adreinhardtfoundation.org.

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Previous page:

Ad Reinhardt in his studio, 1953. Works on view in the current exhibition include *Number 88, 1950 (Blue)*, 1950, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (far left); and *No. 15, 1952*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo (directly to the left of the artist). Photo by Walter Rosenblum. Artwork © Ad Reinhardt Foundation. Photo © Walter Rosenblum

Above:

Blue Painting, 1951-1953. Oil on canvas. 80 x 59 7/8 inches (203.2 x 152.1 cm). Private Collection, Europe