

Hermann Nitsch: Selected Paintings, Actions, Relics, and Musical Scores, 1965–2020

Featuring Pace Live Performance and Installation by Miles Greenberg



Hermann Nitsch, *Schüttbild*, 1992 © Nitsch Foundation, courtesy Pace Gallery

New York – Pace is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings, photographs, relics, and musical scores by Hermann Nitsch at its 510 West 25th Street gallery in New York. This will be Pace’s first show—and the first planned posthumous exhibition—dedicated to Nitsch, a founder of the Viennese Actionism movement who died last year at age 83. On view from March 17 to April 29, the exhibition will be accompanied by the premiere of a new performance and installation by artist Miles Greenberg, presented by Pace Live. Performances on March 17, 18, 24, and 25 will complement and speak to Nitsch’s oeuvre, and Greenberg’s presentation, titled *Fountain II*, will situate Nitsch’s experimental practice within a contemporary context.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Pace Publishing, in collaboration with the Nitsch Foundation, will produce the first English translation of Nitsch’s autobiography, an oral history of the artist’s life that he first published in 1995 (second edition 2005, third edition 2018).

Over the course of more than 60 years, Nitsch cultivated an intensive practice that spans performance, painting, drawing, printmaking, film, photography, music, poetry, and philosophy. A leading figure of the Austrian avant-garde, Nitsch was a founder of the Viennese Actionism movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The disruptive ethos of this movement brought irreverent performance work to the forefront of Vienna’s art scene in the latter half of the 20th century. A key art historical figure in Europe, Nitsch has been cited as an influence by Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley, Chris Burden, and other major American artists.

Nitsch’s extensive performance work often features nudity, multifarious noises, and enactments of tragedy in explorations of rituals and primordial urges. The artist’s seminal work is the large-scale six-day *Orgies Mysteries Theatre*, which he began developing in the mid-1950s. For this work, the artist drew inspiration from literature, art, music, and philosophy to produce “a total work of art” that engages all five senses. In the *Orgies Mysteries Theatre*, Nitsch incorporates substances like blood and meat to elicit intense and varied reactions from viewers.

In summer 2022, an extended version of the *6-Day-Play of the Orgies Mysteries Theatre*, first performed in full in 1998, was staged at Austria’s Prinzenhof Castle, which the artist purchased in 1971 and used as a set for his ambitious performances. This extended performance has a strong emphasis on music. Also last year, Nitsch’s 20th Painting Action works, which he first presented in the Wiener Secession in 1987, were shown at Oficine 800 on the island of Giudecca, Venice during the 59th Venice Biennale.

Pace's upcoming exhibition will bring together works created by Nitsch between 1962 and 2020, offering a holistic survey of his painting and photography practices. In his paintings, the artist often incorporated splatters and splashes of oil or acrylic sometimes mixed with blood, producing visceral and evocative abstractions through a highly physical and gestural process. Nitsch understood his painting actions as the visual grammar of his theatrical actions, applied to a picture plane. The gallery's presentation will include a selection of Nitsch's large-scale paintings as well as two vibrant works on paper that the artist created in 2020—these dynamic abstractions featuring mesmeric plays of color and line speak to Nitsch's formal explorations in his late career.

The show will also feature three photo collages that chronicle a so-called Penis Irrigation Action staged in Nitsch's Vienna apartment over the course of four hours in January 1965. These works reflect the artist's interest in uniting the mediums of photography, painting, and performance in a singular body of work. *Hermann Nitsch: Selected Paintings, Actions, Relics, and Musical Scores, 1965–2020* has been curated by Mark Beasley, Curator and Director at Pace Gallery, Valentina Volchkova, Senior Vice President at Pace Gallery; and Gudrun Marecek, Managing Director of the Nitsch Foundation, Vienna.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Pace Live—the gallery's interdisciplinary platform for commissioning and presenting new live art performances, musical acts, and other events—will premiere *Fountain II*, a new durational performance and installation by Miles Greenberg. On view and performed alongside Nitsch's work during the first weeks of the exhibition's run, *Fountain II* expands upon Greenberg's initial performance from 2021, *Fountain I*, which was heavily inspired by the late Viennese actionist painter and resulted in sculptures that were presented in a two-person exhibition at the New Museum in New York during the fall of 2022. Greenberg has nurtured a practice that spans performance and sculpture, activating his large-scale, immersive, and site-specific environments with durational, poetic productions. A protégé of Marina Abramović, who participated in Nitsch's 50th action in 1975, Greenberg has been deeply influenced by Nitsch, and he attended the performance of the *6-Day-Play* at Prinzendorf Castle last summer.

In *Fountain II*, two performers will stand atop a plinth surrounded by a pool of blood-red water. The performers will engage in a sustained and choreographed embrace over the course of 6 hours, with dyed water hemorrhaging from their bodies onto the plinth and into pool below. The work serves as a poem about the final stages of heartbreak—when one turns their entire body inside out to reach a sort of ecstasy. The visceral, poetic, and graphic work transcends gore, existing in the space of the surreal. Four performances of *Fountain II* will be held at Pace, with Greenberg figuring in a selection of these presentations. The durational performance will be set against a backdrop of Nitsch's paintings, conjuring new connections between contemporary and 20th century performance. The gallery's staging of *Fountain II* as part of its Nitsch exhibition continues its enduring interest in and support of experimental performance, both contemporary and historical.

Following Pace's Nitsch exhibition, another iteration of the *6-Day-Play* (*Day 3, The Day of Dionysus*) will be staged at Prinzendorf Castle in Austria from May 28 to 29 this year. This fall, the artist's work will be exhibited in the Museum at St. Peter an der Sperr, a secularized church in Austria, as part of a presentation of the Trenker Collection. On October 31, Nitsch's *IX Symphony* ("*The Egyptian*") will be performed for the first time in the Golden Hall at Musikverein Vienna. Later this year, the artist's work will be included in a group show at the British Museum in London.

Hermann Nitsch (b. 1938, Vienna; d. 2022, Mistelbach, Austria) is known for his interdisciplinary practice that encompasses performance, painting, musical composition, and more. Having trained at Vienna's Graphische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt in the 1950s, the artist became a pioneer of the city's avant-garde scene in the 1960s and 1970s, staging radical and controversial performances as part of the Viennese Actionism movement. The artist's work in performance and painting, which has incorporated blood, flesh, and other materials, has itself become a kind of religious practice. He conceived his famed Orgies Mysteries Theatre in the 1950s, and the expansive, sensorial performance has since been realized as the *6-Day-Play*. In the early years of his painting practice, Nitsch created Action paintings by splattering paint onto canvases, and some of his paintings from the 1960s also feature fabric and blood.

Additionally, the artist has been creating graphic prints that examine the labyrinthine makeup of the human body, which he has described as “the architecture of the O.M. Theatre,” since the 1970s. During the 1990s, Nitsch began adding paint and blood splashes to his printing process, establishing a dialogue with his works on canvas. Over the course of his career, Nitsch has exhibited work at the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Moderna Museet, Stockholm; the Leopold Museum, Vienna; the Albertina Museum, Vienna; and other institutions worldwide. His performances have also been staged internationally at venues in Vienna, New York, London, Havana, Leipzig, Hobart, and elsewhere. Nitsch lives and works at Prinzenhof Castle on the Zaya River in Lower Austria and in Asolo, Italy.

Miles Greenberg (b. 1997 in Montreal, Canada) is a New York-based performance artist and sculptor. His work consists of large-scale, sensorially immersive and site-specific environments revolving around the physical body in space. These installations are activated with often extreme durational performances that invoke the body as sculptural material. These performances are then captured in real-time before the audience to generate later video works and sculptures. Rigorous and ritualistic in its methodology, Greenberg’s universe relies on slowness and the decay of form to heighten the audience’s sensitivities. The work follows self-contained, nonlinear systems of logic that are best understood in relation to one another.

At age seventeen, Greenberg left formal education, launching himself into four years of independent research on movement and architecture. He has worked under the mentorship of Édouard Lock, Robert Wilson, and Marina Abramović and has been an artist in residence at Fountainhead Arts, Miami (2023); La Manutention at Palais de Tokyo (2019), and The Watermill Center Residency, NY (2017 & 2018) among others. In 2023, Greenberg was featured on the Forbes 30 Under 30 in the Art & Style Category.

He has exhibited and performed internationally at museums and galleries, including The Louvre (Paris), Neue Nationalgalerie (Berlin), The New Museum (New York), Arsenal Contemporary (Toronto), Jeffrey Deitch Gallery (New York), Galleria Continua (Les Moulins) and more. Greenberg’s work has also been included in numerous international art surveys, including the Athens Biennial, BoCA Lisbon, and the Bangkok Art Biennale.

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