

Dan

kunstmuseum basel

Flavin

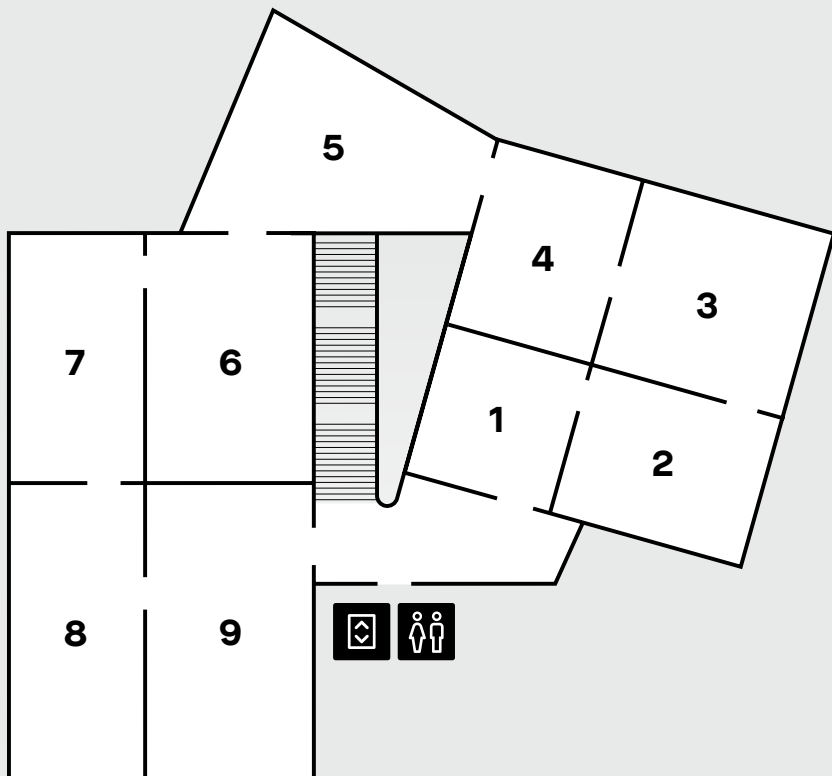
Dedications
in Lights

fluorescent
poles
shimmer
shivers
flick
out
dim
monuments
of
on
and
off
art.

Dan Flavin, *untitled*, 1961
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

This special exhibition is devoted to a pioneer of Minimal Art: the American artist Dan Flavin (1933–1996), who rose to fame in the early 1960s with his work with industrially manufactured fluorescent lights. At the time, the nascent Minimal Art movement emphasized serialism, reduction, and objectivity. Ironically, it was Flavin, an autodidact who never thought of himself as a full-fledged member of the movement, who literally became its most luminous exponent. Flavin made history by creating a new art form: his works made of light extricated color from the context of painting and transposed it into three-dimensional space. His decision to create art out of a mundane utilitarian object remains radical even today. Putting the focus on works he dedicated to other artists or events, the curators zoom in on these narrative strategies in Flavin's art and invite visitors to discover his singular oeuvre with their senses. Surveying the artist's entire career, the exhibition showcases works and series from eminent public and private collections, some of which have never been on display in Europe.

NEUBAU 2nd FLOOR



ROOM 1



the diagonal of May 25, 1963 (to Constantin Brancusi), 1963

yellow fluorescent light

Edition of 3

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

Flavin's artistic breakthrough came with *the diagonal of May 25, 1963 (to Constantin Brancusi)*, a yellow fluorescent light that he mounted at a 45-degree angle on the wall. The dedication is to sculptor Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), whose *Endless Column* at Targu Jiu (1938) served as inspiration. Flavin dedicated a subsequent version of this work made shortly thereafter, in cool white, to art historian Robert Rosenblum. Flavin attended his lectures at Columbia University in New York.



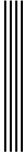
a primary picture, 1964

red, yellow, and blue fluorescent light

Edition of 3

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

ROOM 2



untitled (to Henri Matisse), 1964

pink, yellow, blue, and green fluorescent light

Edition of 3

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

Flavin dedicated this lightwork to Henri Matisse (1869–1954), a French artist active in the first half of the twentieth century, who was best known for his experiments with color and his expressive, flat painting style.



untitled, 1964

cool white deluxe fluorescent light

Edition of 3

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner



pink out of a corner (to Jasper Johns), 1963

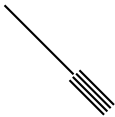
pink fluorescent light

Edition of 3

The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Gift of Philip Johnson

This work was first exhibited in Flavin's solo show *dan flavin: fluorescent light* at the Green Gallery in New York (November 18–December 12, 1964). He dedicated it to his fellow artist, the painter Jasper Johns (b. 1930), who caused waves in the art world in the 1950s. Flavin placed the work in a corner, making a bold statement by quite literally illuminating a space typically ignored.



alternate diagonals of March 2, 1964 (to Don Judd), 1964

red and yellow fluorescent light

Edition of 3

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

The group exhibition *Eleven Artists*, organized by Flavin, opened at the Kaymar Gallery in New York on March 31, 1964. There, Flavin showed his lightwork *alternate diagonals of March 2, 1964*. The work is part of a series with four different color versions. Flavin later added the dedication (*to Don Judd*). He had met the minimalist artist Donald Judd (1928–1994) in Brooklyn in 1962 and the two became lifelong friends.

ROOM 3



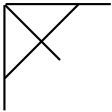
four red horizontals (to Sonja), 1963

red fluorescent light

Edition of 5

Private Collection, Bellevue, Washington State, USA

In 1961, Flavin married Sonja Severdija, a student of art history at New York University, who worked as an assistant in the Museum of Modern Art offices. At the same time, he began working on his *icons* — simple wood constructions he and Sonja built with electric light. Flavin dedicated many of his works to his wife over the coming years, including this one.



monument 4 for those who have been killed in ambush (to P. K. who reminded me about death), 1966

red fluorescent light

Edition of 3

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

The exhibition *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* (April 27–June 12), curated by Kynaston McShine, opened at the Jewish Museum in New York in April 1966. Flavin's corner work *monument 4 for those who have been killed in ambush (to P. K. who reminded me about death)* was included, and he intended it as a symbol of protest against the Vietnam War. The dedication to his friend Paul Katz references a conversation in which Katz mentioned how many people had likely lost their lives in the war. When the exhibition closed, the work was installed in the nightclub Max's Kansas City, which had become a popular artist gathering spot in Lower Manhattan, New York, shortly after it opened in 1965.



untitled (to the "last war", the final one) 4, 1966–1976

red and green fluorescent light

Edition of 5

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

ROOM 4



“monument” for V. Tatlin, 1981
red and daylight fluorescent light

Edition of 5

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

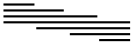


“monument” 7 for V. Tatlin, 1964

cool white fluorescent light

Edition of 5

**Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen — Sammlung
Moderne Kunst in der Pinakothek der Moderne München**



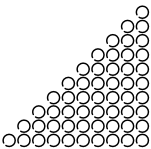
“monument” for V. Tatlin, 1964

cool white fluorescent light

Edition of 5

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

Between 1964 and 1990, Flavin made a total of fifty works in the series *“monument” for V. Tatlin*. Russian Constructivist Vladimir Tatlin (1885–1953) was an influential artist following the 1917 Russian Revolution, and sought to express its ideals in his works. Flavin was particularly impressed by his *Monument to the Third International*, which Tatlin planned in 1919–20. It inspired Flavin to create numerous configurations by simply using white fluorescent light. The tower Tatlin planned in the form of a double helix was never realized due to a lack of materials and structural weaknesses. Tatlin himself fell out of favor during Stalinism.



untitled (to a man, George McGovern) 2, 1972

warm white fluorescent light

Edition of 3

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi

Flavin dedicated this work to the Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern, who ran against the Republican Richard Nixon in 1972. Flavin was one of many artists to support McGovern's campaign. The work was first shown in the exhibition *an exposition of cool white and warm white circular fluorescent light from Dan Flavin* at Leo Castelli Gallery, New York (November 4–25, 1972). The exhibition opened only three days before the presidential election, in which McGovern lost.

ROOM 5

untitled (to you, Heiner, with admiration and affection),
1973

green fluorescent light

Edition of 3

**Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen – Sammlung
Moderne Kunst in der Pinakothek der Moderne München**

Starting in 1968, Flavin worked consistently with German art dealer Heiner Friedrich (b. 1938), who ran a gallery in Munich and immigrated to the United States in 1970. Flavin made this work for the *Dan Flavin: three installations in fluorescent light / Drei Installationen in fluoreszierendem Licht* exhibition at the Kunsthalle Köln (November 9, 1973–January 6, 1974). Friedrich co-founded the Dia Art Foundation in 1974. He was, and still remains, an important supporter of Flavin's work.



ROOM 6



untitled (for Otto Freundlich) 3a, 1990

blue, pink, red, yellow, and green fluorescent light

Edition of 5



untitled (for Otto Freundlich) 3ab, 1990

blue, pink, yellow, and red fluorescent light

Edition of 5



untitled (for Otto Freundlich) 3p, 1990

red, blue, pink, and yellow fluorescent light

Edition of 5

Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg

In the exhibition *Dan Flavin: untitled (for Otto Freundlich) 1990 themes and variations* at Annemarie Verna Galerie in Zurich (May 31–July 14, 1990), Flavin dedicated a series of lightworks to German painter, sculptor, and glass painter Otto Freundlich (1878–1943). Born in Germany, Freundlich moved to Paris in 1924. He lived there until 1943, when he was deported to a concentration camp and murdered. He is regarded as one of the first abstract artists in Europe. His work was seized by the Nazis and branded “degenerate.” In 1971, Flavin bought an ink drawing by Freundlich dated 1930.



untitled (to Don Judd, colorist) 1, 1987
pink fluorescent light
Edition of 5



untitled (to Don Judd, colorist) 2, 1987
pink and red fluorescent light
Edition of 5



untitled (to Don Judd, colorist) 3, 1987
pink and yellow fluorescent light
Edition of 5



untitled (to Don Judd, colorist) 4, 1987
pink and blue fluorescent light
Edition of 5



untitled (to Don Judd, colorist) 5, 1987
pink and green fluorescent light
Edition of 5

Panza Collection, Mendrisio

Flavin dedicated this series to his friend Donald Judd, which references the latter's artistic work and use of industrially manufactured materials and forms in primary colors with heavy irony. In 1997, numbers 1 to 5 in the series were installed in the building Judd bought at 101 Spring Street, New York (today the Judd Foundation) in 1986.

ROOM 7

On March 8, 1975, the Kunsthalle Basel and the Kunstmuseum Basel opened an exhibition of Dan Flavin's work at both venues. The Kunsthalle showcased Flavin's installations, while the Kunstmuseum turned the spotlight on his graphic oeuvre: the artist produced figurative drawings throughout his life and left innumerable works on paper. The installation *untitled (in memory of Urs Graf)* in the courtyard of the Kunstmuseum's main building, which Flavin created especially for the exhibition, was initially met with a tepid response, and the offer of an American foundation to give it to the museum as a gift was declined. Five years later, when the Dia Art Foundation renewed the offer, the museum's board of trustees accepted, though less out of genuine conviction than out of diplomatic considerations. The work's dedication to the Swiss artist Urs Graf, a Renaissance master who is largely obscure outside his own country, may seem incongruent. Reviews of the exhibition and the correspondence collected in the museum's archive reveal that Flavin presented a personal selection from Graf's oeuvre side by side with his own drawings. A lifelong collector of works on paper, he took great delight in Graf's "vulgar sketches," as he put it in a leaflet available in the gallery.

Urs Graf (1485–1527/28)

Exhibited 2.3.–26.5.2024

Town on the Lakeshore, 1514
Pen in black on paper
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. U.X.62

Foolish Virgin, 1513
Pen in black on paper
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. U.X.46

***Bearded Man with Branch
and Pointed Hat, 1512***
Pen in black on paper
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. U.X.40

Capture of Christ, 1521
Pen in black on paper
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. U.X.87

***Three Mercenaries and
a Prostitute in Front of
a Seascape, c. 1520/21***
Pen in gray on paper
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. U.XVI.49

Exhibited 27.5.–18.8.2024

***Farmer, Turned to the Right,
c. 1512***
Pen in black on paper
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. U.X.106

Prostitute in Half Figure, 1518
Pen in black on paper
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. 1927.111

***Warrior With Woman on
Horseback, c. 1521/23***
Pen in black over preliminary
drawing in black
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. U.IX.32

***Two Prostitutes Robbing
a Monk, 1521***
Pen in black-brown over preliminary
drawing in black
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. U.X.92

***Landscape With Rocks and
a Castle, 1514***
Pen in black on paper
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-
Kabinett, Inv. U.X.65



1
untitled (Apollinaire wounded),
1961
graphite on paper

untitled, 1961
graphite on paper
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

2
from Apollinaire wounded,
1959–1960
charcoal on paper
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

3
Apollinaire wounded
(to Ward Jackson), 1959–1960
crushed can, oil paint,
and graphite pencil on Masonite,
and plaster on pine
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

This work is an assemblage made from plaster, wood, oil paint, pencil, and a crushed aluminum can, and is dedicated to Flavin's painter friend Ward Jackson (1928–2004). He met Jackson in 1958 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, where both were working as guards. Jackson became a close friend and important advisor. The title refers to French poet Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918), who fought on the French front in World War I. He was injured in action in 1916 when a grenade fragment struck his head. He later received an award for bravery.

4

***untitled*, 1959**

graphite on paper

**The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner**

5

***Brancusi*, 1959–1960**

oil paint and crushed cans on

Masonite construction

**The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner**

6

***blue trees in wind*, 1957**

grease pencil on paper

**The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner**

7

***untitled (self-portrait)*, 1960**

graphite on paper

**The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner**

8

***PAUL CEZANNE*, 1958**

charcoal on paper

**The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner**

9

untitled (from Rembrandt's

***"Study of an Old Man")*, 1957**

conté crayon, charcoal,

and graphite on paper

**The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner**

10

***BRANCUSI AS AN OLD MAN*, 1963**

charcoal on spiral-bound

sketchbook paper

**The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner**

11

***Vincent at Auvers*, 1960**

watercolor and carbon ink on paper

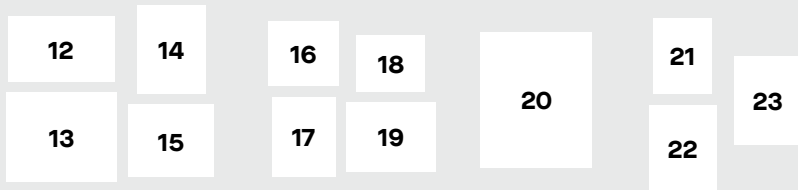
mounted in a Japanese folding

sketchbook; crushed can on the

cover construction

**The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner**

Flavin's early work consists largely of drawings and watercolors. Throughout his career, he dedicated works not only to friends and relatives, but also to historical figures he admired, such as Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890). Flavin was often inspired by the artists of the previous epochs and had a large collection of 19th century drawings. The words "As for my work, I do it at my life's risk and half my reason has foundered in it." can be read across the first six pages of Flavin's leporello. The quote comes from a letter van Gogh wrote to his brother, Theo. The letter was found on Vincent's body after his suicide attempt on July 27, 1890.



12

**ONE (TO WILLIAM OF OCKHAM),
1963**

graphite on paper mounted
on cardboard

**ONE (TO WILLIAM OF OCKHAM),
1963**

graphite on paper mounted
on cardboard

**THE DIAGONAL OF PERSONAL
ECSTASY, 1963**

graphite on paper mounted
on cardboard

***the gold diagonal (completed),
1963***

grease pencil on paper mounted
on cardboard
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

13

**three studies for “red and green
alternatives”, 1964**

colored pencil on paper

**two studies for “a primary picture”,
1964**

colored pencil on paper

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

14

untitled (Green Gallery), 1964

graphite on paper mounted on
cardboard

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

15

untitled (Green Gallery), 1964

colored pencil on gray paper

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

16

***untitled (four “monuments”
for V. Tatlin), 1970***
ballpoint ink on paper
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

17

***untitled (fourteen “monuments”
for V. Tatlin), 1969 (?)***
ballpoint ink on paper
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

18

***a corner monument for those who
have been killed in ambush (for
the Jewish Museum) (to P. K. who
reminded me about death), 1966***
pencil and crayon on paper
The Museum of Modern Art, New
York. Gift of Kynaston L. McShine,
2006

19

***untitled (to the “last war”,
the final one), 1976***
ballpoint ink on paper
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

20

I BELIEVE HIM, 1972
original campaign poster
offset lithograph printed in black
and light blue with silkscreened
red lettering on white rag paper
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

21

***Heiner Friedrich (for Luciano
with fond regards), 1975***
ballpoint ink on paper
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

22

Guido Baumgartner in Basel, 1975
ballpoint ink on paper
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

23

***untitled (possible use for
Kunstmuseum Basel), 1972***
ballpoint ink on loose-leaf
notebook page
The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of
David Zwirner

CHRONOLOGY

1933

Dan Flavin Is Born

Daniel Nicholas Flavin and his twin brother, David John Flavin, are born on April 1, 1933, in Queens, New York. Their father, Daniel Nicholas Sr., is Irish Catholic, and their mother, Viola Marion Bernzott, has German heritage.

Hitler Seizes Power

On January 30, Adolf Hitler becomes the Chancellor of Germany and the National Socialist German Workers' Party (the NSDAP, or Nazi party) becomes the country's most powerful political party.

1941–1945

Attack on Pearl Harbor

Two years after the start of World War II, on December 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service attacks the US Pacific Fleet docked in Pearl Harbor. The next day, the United States declares war on Japan, and World War II expands across the Pacific.

World War II Ends

The unconditional surrender of the German High Command on May 8, 1945, marks the end of World War II in Europe. In the Pacific region, the



Dan Flavin, New York, 1970; Photo: Gianfranco Gorgoni © Maya Gorgoni
© Stephen Flavin / 2024, ProLitteris, Zurich

Japanese authorities only capitulate after the US drops nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 15, 1945. Subsequently, the Cold War between Western nations, led by the United States, and the Eastern Bloc, led by the Soviet Union, begins.

1952–1957

Schooling and Military Training

Flavin completes his schooling at a Roman Catholic high school in Brooklyn, New York. He then trains as an air weather meteorological technician with the US Air Force, and is stationed at the Fifth Air Force headquarters (the Osan Air Base in South Korea) and the Roslyn Air Force Station in East Hills, New York. He devotes his free

time to his interest in art: drawing, visiting museums, and beginning to collect works of art.

1955

Civil War Begins in Vietnam

Following the First Indochina War (1946–54), Vietnam is divided, and unrest prevails. South Vietnam declares independence with US support in 1955, and a civil war begins with North Vietnam, which is supported by China and the Soviet Union.

1957–1959

First Artist Friends

Flavin enrolls at Columbia University in New York for three semesters and attends lectures given by internationally renowned art historian Meyer Schapiro. He also makes small drawings, watercolors, and collages. He first works at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and then the Museum of Modern Art as a guard and lift operator. At the latter, he meets his future wife, Sonja Severdija, and becomes friends with artists Sol LeWitt, Ward Jackson, Michael Venezia, Ralph Iwamoto, and Robert Ryman.

1961

First Solo Show

Flavin's first solo exhibition, *d. n. flavin: constructions and watercolors*, is held at Judson Gallery in New York (May 8–June 5).

Marriage and the first icons

Flavin marries Sonja Severdija, who is studying art history at New York University and working as an assistant in the Museum of Modern Art offices. They move to a factory

building in Williamsburg, New York. This is where Flavin begins working on his *icons*: he and Sonja build and paint wooden boxes onto which they mount electric lights that are then hung on the wall. He dedicates *icon IV (pure land)* to his brother, David, who dies a year later as a result of polio.

1963

Artistic Breakthrough

Flavin becomes known as an artist with *the diagonal of May 25, 1963 (to Constantin Brancusi)*. From then on, Flavin uses exclusively standardized, readily available fluorescent tube lamps for his work and thus limits the

possible forms (specifically to tubes measuring 2, 4, 6, or 8 ft., and circular lights from 1972) and colors (red, blue, green, pink, yellow, ultraviolet, and four shades of white).

Kennedy Is Assassinated

US President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on November 22. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as president on the same day and carries forward Kennedy's plans until the end of his first term.

1964

First Exhibition with Fluorescent Lights

On March 5, the solo exhibition *dan flavin: some light* opens at Kaymar Gallery in New York (until March 29). In it, Flavin shows both his *icons* and his first works using fluorescent tubes.

“I fortunately missed variously prejudiced professional art school training. I haltingly contrived my own artistic ‘education’. I really made a noteworthy New York start between the paintings of Bill De Kooning and those of Jackson Pollock. But I was unable, as they were, to believe in painting as a sufficient, practical end in itself. I had to push to put painting to use – first, all around manuscript pages then, spread out at length across the folds of Japanese notebooks.”

Dan Flavin, “some more information ... (to Sabine),” in: new uses for fluorescent light with diagrams, drawings and print from Dan Flavin exhibition catalog Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, 2/26 – 4/16/1989, p. 45.

Birth of Son

On July 7, his son, Stephen
Conor Flavin, is born.

US Enters Vietnam War

Under President Johnson, the
US officially enters the Vietnam
War on August 7.

1965

Anti-War Protests

At the start of the year,
President Johnson intensifies
the attacks on North Vietnam.
There are major protests
from the US population, and in
April, a group of artists and
writers calls for an end to the
war. Many artists take a pacifist
stance, take part in demonstra-
tions, and/or express their
dissent in their work.

Assassination of Malcolm X

Civil rights activist and "Black
Muslim" leader Malcolm X
is assassinated in New York
on February 21. His murder
and that of other Black
individuals in the US precipi-
tates a larger movement,
fighting for equal rights for
Black Americans.

Move to Cold Spring

Flavin, his wife, Sonja, and
son, Stephen, move to Cold
Spring, a village in the Hudson
River Valley in New York State.
He buys a former butcher's
shop with support from art
dealer Richard Bellamy.

Publication of '...in daylight or cool white'

Flavin's first major piece,
'...in daylight or cool white.'
an autobiographical sketch
is published in *Artforum*.
He publishes further pieces
in the magazine and in *Studio
International* over the next
four years.

***"We worked around the clock during the week
before the opening. (...) Since Dan always
declared his own 'inability' with all things
mechanical, and, since I was 'always' handy
with tools (but never in a union), I wired all
the pieces. (...) Dan was quite certain about
how individual pieces were to be installed.
He made small drawings, which indicated place-
ment of each work in relation to the
architecture of the gallery space, and he
thought a great deal about how the colors of
different works would interact."***

Sonja Flavin remembers the exhibition in the Green Gallery,
2008, in: *Dan Flavin: The 1964 Green Gallery exhibition*,
exhibition catalog, Zwirner & Wirth, New York,
3/6 – 5/6/2008, p. 24.

1966

Move to Lake Valhalla

Flavin and his family move to
Lake Valhalla, New York, a
private community located
near Cold Spring.

Primary Structures Exhibition

The exhibition *Primary
Structures: Younger American
and British Sculptors*, curated
by Kynaston McShine, opens
at the Jewish Museum in
New York (April 27–June 12).
Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald
Judd, and Robert Morris
take part. Flavin's corner work
*monument 4 for those who
have been killed in ambush (to
P. K. who reminded me about
death)* is shown.

Award

Flavin receives his first National
Endowment for the Arts award,
given to individual artists.

First exhibition in Europe

Flavin opens his first European
solo show at Galerie
Rudolf Zwirner in Cologne
on September 16.

1967

Anti-War Demonstration

In April, 200,000 people take
part in an anti-war demon-
stration in New York. Martin
Luther King Jr. leads the March
on Washington in October.

First Museum Show

Flavin's first solo museum
exhibition, *Dan Flavin:
alternating pink and 'gold'*,
opens at the Museum of
Contemporary Art in Chicago
on December 9 (to January 14,
1968).

1968

Meets Heiner Friedrich

Flavin begins a collaboration with German art dealer Heiner Friedrich, who goes on to become an important supporter of the artist. Friedrich later co-founds the Dia Art Foundation.

documenta 4

Flavin takes part in the 4th documenta in Kassel, Germany (June 27 to October 6), where his site-specific installation occupies an entire room with ultraviolet light.

Benefit Exhibition at Paula Cooper Gallery

Paula Cooper opens the first art gallery in SoHo, New York. The first exhibition is *Benefit for the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam* (October 23–31). The exhibition is curated by artist Robert Huot, art historian Lucy Lippard, and war veteran Ron Wolin, and shows works by contemporary minimal artists, including Flavin. Half the proceeds go to charities campaigning against the war.

1969

Nixon Doctrine

President Richard Nixon, who entered office in January, initiates a doctrine in July that will slowly withdraw American troops from Vietnam and transfer more military and financial independence to the South Vietnamese government.

Flavin Retrospective

A major retrospective, *fluorescent light, etc. from Dan Flavin*, is held at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa (September 13–

October 19). It later travels to the Vancouver Art Gallery (November 10–December 7) and the Jewish Museum in New York (January 21–March 1, 1970).

Expanding Gallery Network

Flavin also begins divided representation between Dwan Gallery and Leo Castelli at this time.

1970

Move to Garrison

Flavin buys and moves to a renovated barn in Garrison, New York.

Police Violence Against Students

In May, unarmed students were shot by the National Guard during demonstrations at Kent State University and Jackson University. There were fatalities and injuries. The students demonstrated against the expanding involvement of the Vietnam War into Cambodia by US military forces as well as the

National Guard presence on campus. Flavin dedicated a work to the victims called *untitled (to the young woman and men murdered in Kent State and Jackson State Universities and to their fellow students who are yet to be killed)*. It was shown at the Biennale in Venice that same year.

1972

Purchase of Summer House

Flavin buys a summer house in Bridgehampton on Long Island, New York.

Art for McGovern Campaign

Flavin supports the *Art for McGovern* campaign, organized by Senator George McGovern with an eye to his candidacy for president. Flavin designs an election poster and becomes the spokesperson for artists supporting McGovern. In November, McGovern loses to Republican Richard Nixon, who wins by a landslide.

1973

Exhibition in St. Louis

corners, barriers and corridors in fluorescent light from Dan Flavin opens January 26 at the St. Louis Art Museum, Missouri.

“Dan had been a man of the cloth, but gave it up for the wild world of art. I loved his work. It seemed to be an ethereal feeling transferred from his spiritual upbringing. It was special, colorful and illuminating, but like life, could be turned off with a light switch.”

The artist **James Rosenquist** about Flavin, 2008, in: Dan Flavin: The 1964 Green Gallery exhibition, Ausstellungen-katalog, Zwirner & Wirth, New York, 3/6 – 5/6/2008, p. 23

Withdrawal from Vietnam

The US signs a ceasefire agreement on January 27 and withdraws its troops from Vietnam.

1975

Exhibitions in Basel

The exhibitions *fünf Installationen in fluoreszierendem Licht von Dan Flavin* at Kunsthalle Basel (March 8–April 16) and *Zeichnungen, Diagramme, Druckgraphik 1972 bis 1975 und zwei Installationen in fluoreszierendem Licht von Dan Flavin* at Kunstmuseum Basel (March 8–April 27) open simultaneously.

1976

Separation

Flavin and his wife, Sonja, separate.

Award

Flavin receives the Skowhegan Medal of Sculpture from Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (Maine).

“He has taken the light bulb which is a thing and turned it into an innate material, as if it were paint, or canvas, or crayons, or steel, or an I-beam, and he has turned this thing, this material, into something personal, in order to make a statement that goes beyond the material as formal material.”

Barnett Newman, transcript of talk given at the opening of “fluorescent light, etc. from Dan Flavin”, September 12, 1969, in: Chinati Foundation Newsletter 5, 2001, p. 15.

1977

Light Installation at Grand Central

Supported by the Dia Art Foundation, Flavin installs lightworks along tracks 18–19, 39–40, and 41–42 at Grand Central Terminal in New York.

1979

Renovation of Dick’s Castle

Dia Art Foundation buys Dick’s Castle in Garrison, New York, intending to transform it into a museum with a permanent display of installation works by Flavin. The artist is to be involved in the renovation plans and determine the exhibition program and the installations shown. Commissioned by the Dia Art Foundation, he begins to acquire nineteenth-century Hudson River School drawings and paintings. After countless discussions and plans, the project is abandoned in the mid-1980s due to a lack of funding.

1980

Move to Long Island

Flavin purchases a saltbox house in Wainscott, Long Island, that will be his primary residence until his death. Renovations of the house are concluded in late 1981, at which time he moves into the home with Helene Geary (later McQuade), his office manager and companion.

1983

Dan Flavin Art Institute Opens

On June 18, a permanent installation of Flavin’s lightworks marks the opening of the Dan Flavin Art Institute in Bridgehampton, Long Island. The 1909 building was used as a fire station and later as a Baptist church. Over the coming years, Flavin organizes temporary exhibitions including a retrospective of paintings by Michael Venezia, a show of James Brooks’s works on paper, and an exhibition of craft pieces created on Long Island between 1890 and 1920.

1985

Mikhail Gorbachev Elected

Mikhail Gorbachev becomes president of the Soviet Union. He advances a re-structuring (*perestroika*) and modernization of society, politics, and economics in the Soviet Union. As a result, Soviet and communist influence in Eastern Europe is reduced.

1986–1987

Collaboration with International Galleries

Flavin begins working with a number of galleries in the United States and Europe. These include Margo Leavin Gallery in Los Angeles, Donald

Young Gallery in Chicago, Annemarie Verna Galerie in Zurich, and Galerie Nikki Diana Marquardt in Paris.

Diabetes

Due to further complications caused by his diabetes, which he was diagnosed with in 1973, Flavin spends an extended period in a hospital in New York in 1987. In order to avoid the amputation of both legs, he has to have surgery on both feet.

1989

Exhibition in Baden-Baden

On February 26, the exhibition *new uses for fluorescent light with diagrams, drawings and prints from Dan Flavin* opens at Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany (to April 16).

Fall of the Berlin Wall

When the Berlin Wall falls on November 9, the most visible symbol of the Cold War is destroyed. The global conflict ends in 1991 when the Soviet Union crumbles.

1992

Marriage to Tracy Harris

Flavin creates a new installation for the rotunda in the newly renovated Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1943. The day after

“I can take the ordinary lamp out of use and into a magic that touches ancient mysteries. And yet it is still a lamp that burns to death like any other of its kind. In time the whole electrical system will pass into inactive history. My lamps will no longer be operative; but it must be remembered that they once gave light.”

Dan Flavin, in a journal entry of August 18, 1962, in: Barbara Rose: “ABC Art”, in: Barbara Rose, *Autocritique, Essays on Art and Anti-Art, 1963–1987*, New York 1988, p. 71.

the opening, on June 25, Flavin marries artist Tracy Harris standing in front of his newly installed work.

1996

Flavin Dies

Flavin dies on November 29 in Riverhead, Long Island.

Many of his works are completed posthumously, including the installations for the Chiesa di Santa Maria Annunciata in Chiesa Rossa, Milan (1997), Richmond Hall in the Menil Collection in Houston, Texas (1998), and the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas (2000).

“Flavin’s arrangements of fluorescent tubes within the interior or adjacent exterior of the gallery space function only in the context of the installation. Upon completion of the exhibition, they cease to function artistically.”

Dan Graham, “Art in Relation to Architecture / Architecture in Relation to Art,” *Artforum* 17, no. 6 (February 1979), p. 22.

ROOM 8



untitled (in memory of Josef Albers) 1, 1977

pink, blue, and green fluorescent light

Edition of 5



untitled (in memory of Josef Albers) 2, 1977

green, blue, and pink fluorescent light

Edition of 5

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

Flavin made two lightworks dedicated to German painter and art theorist Josef Albers (1888–1976), both of which were among other works shown at the *large installations by Dan Flavin* (January 15–February 26, 1977) exhibition at Heiner Friedrich, Inc., in New York. Albers, considered one of the key Bauhaus figures, left Germany in 1933 when the Nazis came to power and immigrated to the United States, where he taught for many years. He worked closely on color theories as well as the interplay and the effect of individual colors.



untitled (to Barnett Newman) one, 1971

yellow, red, and blue fluorescent light

Edition of 5

Collection Carré d'Art-Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes



untitled (to Barnett Newman) four, 1971

yellow, blue, and red fluorescent light

Edition of 5

Sammlung Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich

Painter Barnett Newman (1905–1970) died on July 4, 1970. Flavin dedicated the lightwork series *untitled (to Barnett Newman)* to his deceased friend. Considered an Abstract Expressionist, Newman's art was an important source of inspiration for Flavin. Shortly after Newman's death, Flavin saw his series *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue* (1969/70) in his studio and was so enthused by Newman's exploration of primary colors that he used red, yellow, and blue fluorescent lamps in a number of his own works.

ROOM 9



untitled (for John Heartfield) 3a, 1990
red fluorescent light
Edition of 5



untitled (for John Heartfield) 3b, 1990
red and blue fluorescent light
Edition of 5



untitled (for John Heartfield) 3c, 1990
red and blue fluorescent light
Edition of 5



untitled (for John Heartfield) 3d, 1990
red and blue fluorescent light
Edition of 5



untitled (for John Heartfield) 4a, 1990
red, pink, yellow, and green fluorescent light
Edition of 5



untitled (for John Heartfield) 4b, 1990
red, pink, yellow, and blue fluorescent light
Edition of 5

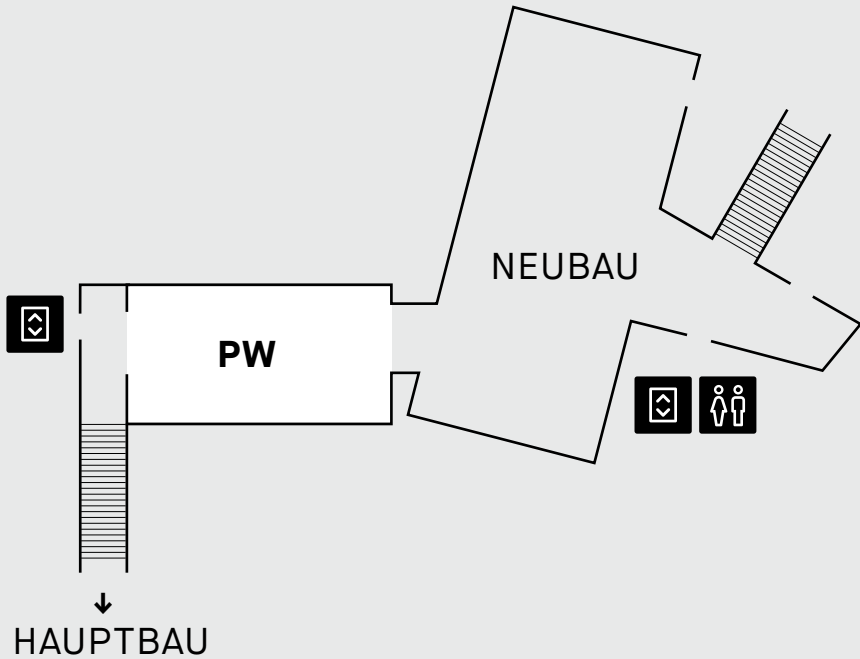


untitled (for John Heartfield) 5a, 1990
red, pink, yellow, and green fluorescent light
Edition of 5

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

The exhibition in 1990 at the Donald Young Gallery in Chicago (September 27–October 27) featured this series for the first time. The lightworks were similarly constructed, apart from the different color combinations, and were arranged as a series in the room. Flavin dedicated the work to the German artist John Heartfield (1891–1968), whose politically charged works were banned in Germany by the Nazi regime.

NEUBAU -1 PASSAGEWAY TO THE HAUPTBAU



PASSAGEWAY (PW)

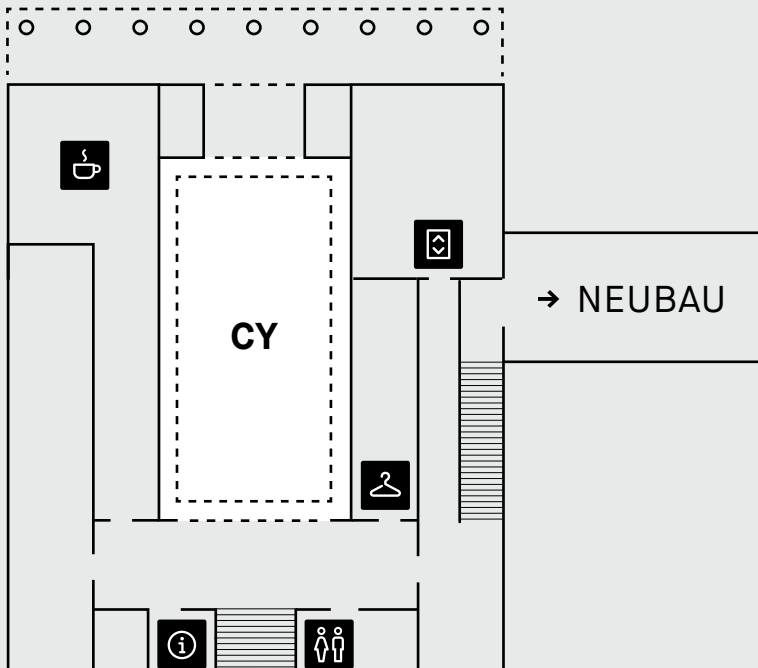
untitled (to my dear bitch, Airily) 2, 1985

blue and green fluorescent light

The Dan Flavin Estate, courtesy of David Zwirner

Flavin traveled to many dog shows with his golden retriever, Airily. The dog won several competitions and received the highest rating ever awarded to a golden retriever in the United States. He dedicated this major installation to Airily as a sign of his affection for her.

HAUPTBAU GF COURTYARD (OUTDOORS)



COURTYARD (CY)

untitled (in memory of Urs Graf), 1975
pink, yellow, green, and blue fluorescent light
Kunstmuseum Basel, Gift of the Dia Art Foundation,
New York 1980

Flavin made this work for the inner courtyard of the Kunstmuseum Basel for a joint exhibition there and at the Kunsthalle Basel in 1975. It is dedicated to Swiss Renaissance artist Urs Graf (1485–1527/28). Flavin selected a number of his drawings from the museum's department of prints and drawings to be exhibited in the Kunstmuseum Basel that spring.

Öffnungszeiten / Opening Hours / Heures d'ouverture

Di–So 10–18 Uhr / Tue–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m. / Mar–Dim 10h–18h
Mi 10–20 Uhr / Wed 10 a.m.–8 p.m. / Mer 10h–20h
Sonderöffnungszeiten / Special opening hours /
Heures d'ouverture spéciales → kunstmuseumbasel.ch/besuch

Eintrittspreise / Admission / Prix d'entrée

Erwachsene / Adults / Adultes CHF 26
Ermässigt / Reduced / Prix réduit CHF 16, 13, 8

All-in-One-Ticket (25.5.–18.8.)

Dan Flavin + When We See Us + Sammlung / Collection CHF 39

Kunstmuseum Basel

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#kunstmuseumbasel #kumubaselflavin

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