

**PRESS RELEASE
FEBRUARY 2025**

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GALLERY HOURS:
Tue-Fri: 10:00-18:00
Sat: 11:00-15:00



DAN FLAVIN

25 FEBRUARY – 25 APRIL 2025

From 25 February to 25 April 2025, Ordovas presents an exhibition dedicated to the work of **Dan Flavin** (1933-1996), one of the leading exponents of minimalism and a pioneer of installation art. The gallery is devoted to four major 'situations' spanning Flavin's career and celebrating the artist's importance and influence within the canon of Post-War art.

Comprising works representing the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the exhibition begins in the lower ground floor gallery which is devoted to showing **four red horizontals (to Sonja)**. This installation was conceived in 1963, the pivotal year in which Flavin first started using his signature fluorescent light bulbs, turning an everyday object into a work of art and exploring the ways in which light sculpts space. As well as representing a key year in Flavin's artistic career, this work also represents a momentous period personally; it is dedicated to Sonja Severdija, the artist's first wife whom he had married in 1961 and with whom he had his only child, Stephen, the following year in 1964. It was included in the recent exhibition *Dan Flavin: Dedications in Lights* at the Kunstmuseum Basel, 2024.

The ground floor gallery displays three situations representing the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and showing how the artist went on to create increasingly complex and expansive configurations. **untitled** from 1969 is a vertical work of two pink fluorescent bulbs installed leaning against a wall. This work was first shown at the artist's solo exhibition at the Irving Blum Gallery, Los Angeles, in 1969; the same year as his first major retrospective at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. Another edition from the series is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago.

untitled (to Virginia Dwan) 1 is a corner piece of blue, red, pink and yellow fluorescent light which was executed in 1971. It is dedicated to the pioneering New York City gallerist, collector and patron who was a pivotal figure in the development of Post-War American art and a champion of minimalism and conceptualism. As well as Flavin, Virginia Dwan's galleries in Los Angeles (1959-67) and New York (1965-71) promoted Post-War titans including Philip Guston, Yves Klein, Joan Mitchell and Robert Rauschenberg; this work was conceived the same year that she unexpectedly closed her gallery.

Dan Flavin, *untitled (for Fredericka and Ian) 3*, 1987

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The third light is dedicated to another celebrated gallerist, Fredericka Hunter, and her partner, Ian Glennie; Hunter's influential Texas Gallery in Houston hosted a solo exhibition of Flavin's lights in 1987. **untitled (for Fredericka and Ian) 3**, 1987, which was included in that show, consists of pink, yellow and blue fluorescent lights placed in a diagonal installation; another variation from this series can be found in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Flavin created it in the same year that he gave the memorable description of his oeuvre: *"It is what it is, and it ain't nothin' else... There is no overwhelming spirituality you are supposed to come into contact with... It's in a sense a 'get-in-get-out' situation. And it is very easy to understand. One might not think of light as a matter of fact, but I do. And it is, as I said, as plain and open and direct an art as you will ever find."* (*Art International*, Autumn issue, 1987).

Born in New York in 1933 to a devout Irish-Catholic family, Flavin attended a preparatory school for the seminary but, after graduation, enlisted in the United States Air Force. He first studied art while serving as an air weather meteorological technician in Korea in 1954; following his return to New York in 1956, he undertook further brief stints of training in art and art history at the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts, the New School for Social Research, and Columbia University.

In 1961, Flavin had his first solo show of collages and watercolours at the Judson Gallery, New York. That same year, he began the first of his works to incorporate light. By 1963, Flavin began to work solely with his signature fluorescent bulbs after creating the breakthrough piece *the diagonal of May 25, 1963 (to Constantin Brancusi)* (Dia Art Foundation, New York), which comprises a single yellow, fluorescent light placed on a wall, at a 45-degree angle rising from the floor. Flavin observed that the unadorned bulb *"seemed to sustain itself directly, dynamically, dramatically"*, requiring no further intervention other than a careful consideration of the hue and intensity of the light, and its placement within a given architectural space.

Through relentless experimentation, Flavin learned how to masterfully manipulate the limited number of combinations proposed by his standardised light fixtures. In the 1970s and 1980s, he began to create more ambitious and elaborate compositions including large barriers, corridors, and corner installations. He spent much of his later career designing large-scale architectural interventions including at both Grand Central Station and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas – the last completed posthumously. In 1983 he designed the Dan Flavin Art Institute in a converted firehouse in Bridgehampton, New York, now managed by the Dia Art Foundation.

Flavin's situations have been collected by public institutions worldwide. Major museum retrospectives include those organised by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa in 1969, St. Louis Art Museum, 1973, Kunsthalle Basel, 1975, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, 1984, and the Dia Art Foundation in association with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, which travelled internationally from 2005 to 2007. More recently, Flavin's work has been presented in significant institutional solo shows at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, 2019-20, and the Kunstmuseum Basel, 2024.

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