

«...I was moving away from that notion of paint applied on the canvas with deliberate actions: left, right, up, down...»

Michael Venezia

PRESS RELEASE

Exhibition: Michael Venezia «1967 | Spray Paintings»

Opening: Friday, March 17, 2017, 7 pm

Duration: until September 2017

Häusler Contemporary proudly presents in Lustenau a special group of works by Michael Venezia: in the paintings on view from 1967 the artist first used spray as a painterly technique, a technique with which he significantly contributed to the renewal of painting around 1970. Our exhibition first unites these early works in a public presentation. Against the backdrop of Haus 2226's special architecture they fully unfold their aura of innovation.

The paintings by Michael Venezia (*1935 in Brooklyn, US, lives in Brooklyn and Trevi, IT) that Häusler Contemporary presents in Lustenau give an almost majestic impression with their equal size and upright format. All works are made of several vertical bonds of rather earthy toned paint the surface of which shows different textures – dense, glazing or cloudy. The different structures of these picture planes open up space and depth, entering into dialogue with «be»'s unique architecture and with the surrounding nature that is visible through the similarly narrow upright windows.

Häusler Contemporary unites these works in an exhibition for the first time. They were mainly created in 1967 and they mark a crucial stage in Venezia's artistic development: in this series he first uses spray gun paint, being one of the first artists who introduces this technique to painting. With this measurement and by «limiting» himself to a uniform picture carrier size, Venezia consciously sets boundaries to the artistic creative drive. At the same time he discovers new freedoms by working simultaneously on several canvasses and by not subordinating his compositions to neither mathematical nor structural criteria.

This approach that resulted in the famous 1970 «Spray Paintings» and that similarly applies to the current «Block Paintings» is Michael Venezia's significant contribution to the renewal of painting. The traditional genre was in a crisis after the end of Abstract Expressionism which was then frowned upon due its idolization of the artist as a genius. Most representatives of Minimal Art and Concept Art such as Dan Flavin or Sol LeWitt, with whom Venezia was close friends, favored sculpture and installation. Michael

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Venezia though has always been passionately devoted to painting. Against the backdrop of Minimal Art's concepts and by using the spray gun he found a possibility to leave Abstract Expressionism behind while at the same time further developing its achievements.

Our exhibition in Lustenau thus marks a major point in the history of painting and in Michael Venezias career. Until this day, the artist relentlessly challenges the painterly possibilities and fathoms its border zones.

Deborah Keller, Häusler Contemporary

**If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact Deborah Keller:
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Exhibition with generous support from



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Michael Venezia lives in Brooklyn, US and Trevi, IT. Early in his career he participated in group exhibition of major museums such as The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1971) or the Whitney Museum of Art, New York (1977). He often was presented alongside important artists of the 1960s, for example Dan Flavin, Fred Sandback, Donald Judd or Bruce Nauman. His most important solo exhibitions to date were shown at Kunstmuseum Winterthur (1996), at Westfälischer Kunstverein Münster (1997), at the Josef Albers Museum Bottrop (2009), and at Kunstverein Heilbronn (2016). Works by Michael Venezia are part of various renowned collections, among others Museum of Modern Art, New York, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Collection Mondstudio, Cologne, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung Munich, Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Kunsthaus Zürich and Kunstmuseum Basel.