

VENUS

MANHATTAN

Walter Dahn: 4th Time Around / (My Back Pages)

curated by Richard Prince

September 12 - October 26, 2013

Opening: Thursday, September 12th, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Venus Over Manhattan

980 Madison Avenue

New York, NY 10075

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: RICHARD PRINCE TO CURATE A SURVEY OF WORKS BY WALTER DAHN AT VENUS OVER MANHATTAN



(New York, NY) – Artists **Walter Dahn** and **Richard Prince** first met in 1990 during Dahn's exhibition at Gladstone Gallery in New York. In the German-born Dahn, Prince detected a kindred spirit. Here was another artist exploring the underside of American culture, albeit from a European perspective. A shared interest in "outsider art" and fascination with New Wave and Punk music culture, solidified their friendship and ongoing rapport. Prince has been a collector of Dahn's work for two decades, and it is from this perspective and through the lens of personal history that he has curated the exhibition **4th Time Around / (My Back Pages)**, a showcase of work by Walter Dahn opening at Venus Over Manhattan gallery on September 12, 2013.

4th Time Around / (My Back Pages) will present paintings, "anti-silkscreens," and two rare bronze sculptures, all selected for the exhibition by Richard Prince to evidence the full sweep of Walter Dahn's practice since 1981. The exhibition takes its name from two songs by Bob Dylan, a favorite of both Prince and Dahn. "4th Time Around" is a song about a couple having an argument and later reconciling, while "My Back Pages" is Dylan's poignant look back at his own early, idealistic protest-song years. Together these song titles suggest not only a dialogue between two artists but an ongoing, unending internal conversation within Dahn, an artist constantly cycling and recycling through phases – his own and those of the popular culture at large – in a practice that forever defies stasis.

4th Time Around / (My Back Pages) will remain on view through October 26th.

In 1971, Walter Dahn became a student of Joseph Beuys at the Dusseldorf Art Academy, where he also encountered such fellow students as Blinky Palermo, Jorg Immendorf, Imi Knoebel, and Sigmar Polke. During this time Beuys' "extended definition of art" -- his interest in locating creativity outside of formal art practice, his belief that anyone could be an artist, and his ideas that art should eschew ideology – ignited Dahn's artistic development. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Dahn was associated with the Cologne-based *Neue Wilde* (Wild Youth) painters of the *Mülheimer Freiheit*. The collective's interest was in making work that avidly challenged the prevailing Minimalist and Conceptual art, and its collaborative practice, intensive engagement with music, and raucous group exhibitions are widely recalled as improvisational, experimental and highly charged: everything seemed to be made quickly and without premeditated plans or structures. "We were this group of painters, it was like a band. We went to every concert we could see," Dahn has said. "It was a kind of mixture of an insane asylum, kindergarten, and art school."

The impact of this period is revealed vividly in Dahn's large paintings of the early 1980s, including such works

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on view at Venus as 'The Momento m.' (1983) and 'Untitled' (1981). For the first half of the decade, the artist was engaged in "sampling," paralleling a phenomenon that was emerging in the contemporary music scene. Richard Prince has observed that Dahn's work "went through an incredible number of styles of painting very quickly," tearing through techniques, moods, and approaches to material and application in his work, even while adhering to figuration and a consistent engagement with popular music, as well as a consistent interest in mixing imagery drawn from disparate sources. In *4th Time Around / (My Back Pages)*, the energy of such avid experimentation is on view in an array of paintings, from the gently poetic "3 Sonnen" to the large-scale canvas "Ausfegen" (1986).

During the late 1980s, Dahn began applying his experimental approach to printmaking. Rejecting the prevailing model for silkscreens. Whereas the majority of artists produced multiples in which differences between strikes were subtle and uniformity was a value, Dahn began making "anti-silkscreens." Creating and manipulating his image, he would create a single unique edition and then discard the screen. With such works as 'Walter,' (1985), the layered, rough, and beautiful results of his innovative printing are revealed in the exhibition at Venus.

Eschewing formalism, Dahn's work favored experimentation and unexpected combinations of seemingly random imagery such as graffiti with Oceania; album cover art recycled with appropriated images drawn from popular culture; snapshots of friends juxtaposed with landscapes and architecture. Through such tactics Dahn's suggests there is no distinction between high and low culture: "You can transform the low, the most shitty and obvious things, into high quality art, recycle them into an art context where they take on different meanings... That's my strategy, working with these kinds of mass or working class icons. I show similarities and differences at the same time. After a while I really get absorbed in this kind of psychology, everything becomes meaningful and meaningless at the same time."

Since the 1990s, Dahn has circled back continuously through his different areas of interest, revisiting themes and techniques. After having been involved in various bands from the early 80s, for example, in 1994 he painted (with Phillip Pocock) the titles of his favorite songs onto canvases, and in 1997 made drawings that referenced an album cover by the band Palace. Such approaches continue now in Dahn's practice: "Now it seems like a way to move forward is to look back, sometimes to my teens and twenties. I work with memory," he once commented in an interview by Richard Prince. Recent works on view at Venus – the unique edition piece "Anne Frank wehrt sich" (2005) and the painting "Bill Callahan" (2004) – find the artist revisiting and masterfully reinventing, calling to mind Dylan's famous lyric, "Ahh, but I was so much older then/I'm younger than that now."

VENUS OVER MANHATTAN was founded by Adam Lindemann in 2012 as a curatorial platform for exhibitions and projects that expand upon the conventional gallery format through collaborations with artists, gallerists, collectors, curators, and institutions. The gallery is located at 980 Madison Avenue, between 76th and 77th Streets, on the 3rd floor, and is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 am - 6:00 pm.

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For further information about the exhibition and availability, please contact the gallery at info@venusovermanhattan.com

For all press inquiries related to the exhibition, please email press@venusovermanhattan.com