

VENUS

MANHATTAN

Press Release

Maryan: Curated by Eddie Martinez

October 7 – November 3, 2021

Opening: Thursday, October 7th, 2021

Venus Over Manhattan

120 East 65th Street

New York, NY 10065



(New York, NY) – Beginning October 7th, **Venus Over Manhattan** will present its first solo exhibition of work by the Polish artist and cult figure **Maryan**, curated by artist **Eddie Martinez**. Comprising more than twenty works selected by Martinez, and spotlighting Maryan's signature lurid palette, wildly gestural brushwork, and explosive figures, the exhibition serves as a prelude to "**My Name Is Maryan**," a major retrospective of the late artist's work that will go on view at the **Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami** on November 17, 2021. Curated by **Alison M. Gingeras**, that retrospective will travel to the **Tel Aviv Museum of Art** in 2023.

Maryan was born Pinkas Bursztyn in 1927, to a Jewish family in Nowy-Sącz, a town in southern Poland. He spent World War II separated from his family in various ghettos, labor camps, and concentration camps, before being sent to Auschwitz. The only member of his immediate family to survive the Holocaust, Maryan fashioned a private life and artistic practice deeply influenced by his experience of the war: his signature style, which used abstract forms to suggest brutally deformed characters, helped reintroduce the figure to contemporary painting in postwar Europe, and placed the artist in conversation with Jean Dubuffet, Enrico Baj, Karel Appel, and others associated with the CoBrA Group, Art Brut, and La Nouvelle Figuration.

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After the war, Maryan moved between displaced person camps, eventually spending two years in Jerusalem. While there, he began to focus in a sustained manner upon the advancement of his artistic practice; in 1950, Maryan mounted his first solo exhibition at the city's YMCA. Looking for a larger creative community, Maryan moved to Paris in the early 1950s, quickly becoming a preeminent figure in the post-war European neo-avant-garde, exhibiting his work at the Galerie de France alongside Hans Hartung, Serge Poliakoff, Pierre Soulages, and Zao Wou-Ki, as well as at the Galerie Claude Bernard, where he showed with Francis Bacon, Balthus, and Peter Blake.

Maryan's work boldly rejected the popular taste for total abstraction in contemporary art, and his brightly colored, expressionist canvases were immediately met with positive attention: in 1956 he was commissioned to design a tapestry for the *Monument to the Unknown Jewish Martyr in Paris* and was awarded the *Prix des Critiques d'Art* at the Biennale de Paris in 1959. His successes brought him several international exhibitions, and his first solo exhibition in the United States was held at the famed André Emmerich Gallery in New York City in 1960.

Shortly after his exhibition at Emmerich, Maryan moved with his wife, Annette, to New York. Settling into this new environment, Maryan unleashed new levels of energy and fury in his art with his the "Personnage" paintings, all characterized by the presence of a centrally positioned, wildly animated figure dominating canvas. As critic Grace Glueck described them in *The New York Times*, in a review of these works at the Allan Frumkin Gallery in 1985, the "Personnage" paintings began as "brutal, exaggerated Piccasoid forms in which could be seen the influence also of Dubuffet and the CoBrA group of young European painters that included Karel Appel and Asger Jorn. They were mocking, clownish zombies with mask like faces and lolling tongues, suggesting visual realizations of characters from Gunter Grass's *Tin Drum*. Later, they got wilder and more gestural, with maybe a touch of de Kooning, winding up as slobbering, almost illegible bundles of mouths, flailing limbs, and flying organs."

Exhibited to wide acclaim in the years before his death, Maryan's paintings presaged not only the Neo-Expressionist figuration that dominated the New York art world in the 1980s, but also the contemporary prevalence of work that blends abstract techniques with figurative subject matter. Despite acclaim for his work, Maryan began to suffer a series of breakdowns and emotional disturbances related to his memories of the Holocaust. His health deteriorated through the mid-1970s, and just months after the French awarded him the

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honorary title of *Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, Maryan passed away in his room at the Chelsea Hotel in 1977 – the year Eddie Martinez was born.

ABOUT EDDIE MARTINEZ

Eddie Martinez (b. 1977, Groton Naval Base, CT) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Martinez's unconventional practice has received growing institutional support, with five museum solo shows in the last three years, including at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit and the Yuz Museum in Shanghai in 2019, a show of new sculptures and paintings at the Bronx Museum in 2018, an exhibition that featured a rotating display of his recent works on paper at the Drawing Center in 2017, and an exhibition at the Davis Museum at Wellesley College, MA in 2017. His works are represented in international public collections including the Aurora Museum, Shanghai, China; Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY; Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA; Hiscox Collection, London, UK; La Colección Júmex, Mexico City, Mexico; Marciano Collection, Los Angeles, CA; Morgan Library, New York, NY; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; Saatchi Collection, London, UK; and the Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China, among others.

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120 East 65th Street
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Gallery hours:

Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm

To ensure the health and safety of staff and visitors, masks and social distancing will be required in accordance with public guidelines.

Press contact

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

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Maryan, *Personnage*, 1973. Oil on canvas; 39 3/8 x 28 3/4 in (100 x 73 cm).
Maryan, *Two Personnages*, 1968. Oil on canvas; 52 x 64 in (132.1 x 162.6 cm).
Maryan, *Dog*, 1968. Watercolor and ink on paper; 14 x 20 in (35.6 x 50.8 cm).
Maryan, *Personnage: On Hands and Knees*, 1972. Gouache on paper mounted to canvas; 12 x 16 in (30.5 x 40.6 cm).
Eddie Martinez, *Sun Setter*, 2011. Oil on canvas; 24 x 20 in (61 x 50.8 cm). Courtesy the artist and Venus Over Manhattan, New York.
Maryan, *Personnage XII*, 1963. Ink on board; 40 x 32 in (101.6 x 81.3 cm).