

PEDER LUND

Dan Flavin: Selected Works
January 26 – April 27, 2019

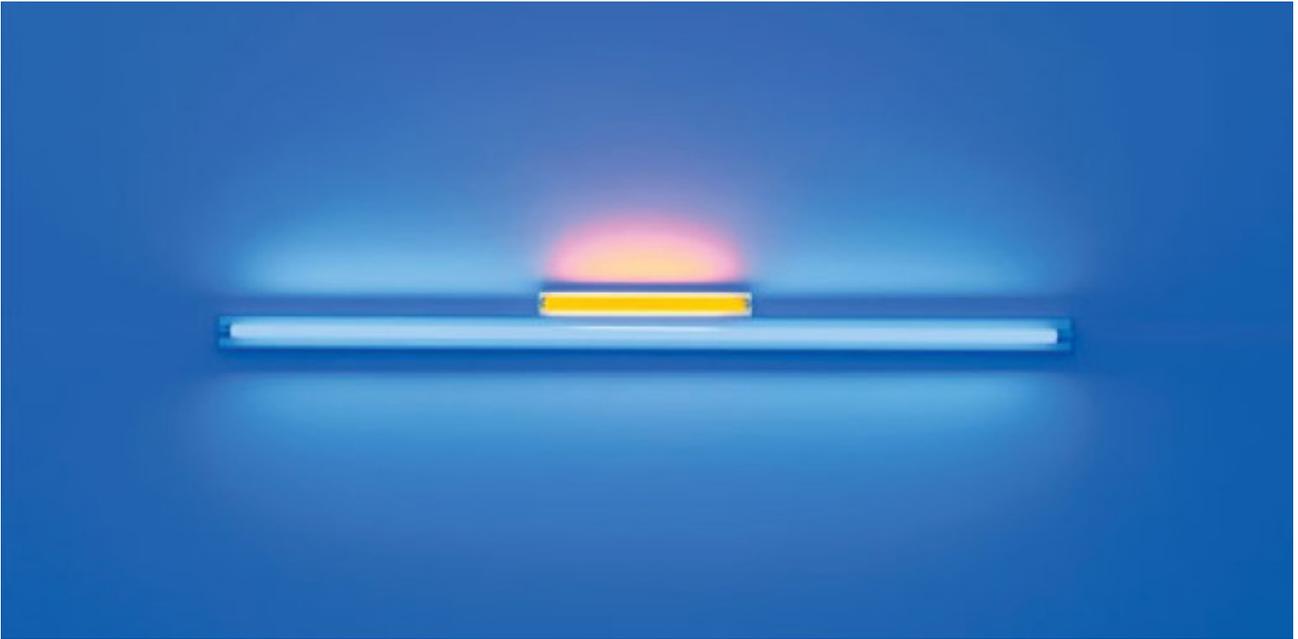
Beginning Saturday, January 26, Peder Lund will present a selection of light works by the American artist Dan Flavin (1933–1996), a key figure of minimal and conceptual art. The show is the first solo show of the artist in Norway and includes central works, mostly from the 1960s, that have never been shown in Scandinavia before.

On display in this exhibition is one of the earliest examples of Flavin's famous series "*monuments*" for *V. Tatlin*, which the artist started in 1964, just one year after he decided to exclusively employ fluorescent lamps in his work. During this early period, Flavin was to discover the variability of this new medium, working with commercially available fluorescent lamps of differing colors and sizes and playing with different possible configurations.

The "*monument*" for *V. Tatlin* (1968) on display comprises a quintessential example of the ideas of minimal and conceptual art. In Flavin's investigation of variations of a simple set of fixed sculptural elements, the artist designed numerous related variations of cool white fluorescent lights, made up of differing combinations of 8-, 6-, 4- and 2-foot lamps. The "monuments" embody what the artist himself has described as his goal of working on "a sequence of implicit decisions to combine traditions of painting and sculpture in architecture with acts of electric light defining space." In following a strict serial concept, which he varied consciously, Flavin's artistic practice also shows similarities to the composition of classical music, where one theme unfolds through variation to its full potential.



Flavin's exceptional talent to follow an analytical concept and transform it into works that also touch the viewer emotionally becomes even clearer when one looks at his multicolored installations. One of the earliest examples of these light works is *untitled (to Mr. and Mrs. Giuseppe Agrati)* (1964). It is comprised of consecutively arranged pink, daylight, green, and yellow fluorescent light and reminds the viewer of a vertical rainbow that is stretched out to a thin line. Utilizing the architecture of the room, Flavin attached the work directly to the wall in a vertically oriented configuration that casts a spectrum of color outward into the room, so the viewer is practically bathed in light when he stands in front of the work. In the same year, 1964, Flavin also created *untitled (for Charlotte and Jim Brooks) 3*, another multicolored work that is on display. It is part of a series of six works in which Flavin experimented with different colors in a horizontal configuration.



Another signature series of the artist's are his corner pieces like the displayed work *untitled (to Janet and Allen)* (1966–1971). It belongs to a series of nine works collectively referred to as the “*European Couples*.” This architecturally-related work frames the corner of a room. Flavin's corner pieces relate to his continued interest in the Russian constructivist Vladimir Tatlin, whose corner constructions from 1915–16 radically extended the work of art out of its conventional “frame” or “wall,” into the space of the viewer. Flavin, in his use of readily-available fluorescent light, develops Tatlin's principles in a minimalist idiom. Here, Flavin merges the work of art with architecture, simultaneously animating and diffusing the corner of the room in a subtle manipulation of space through the use of light and color.

The tallest work on display, *untitled* (1968), also transforms the spatial conditions of the architectural site it inhabits. It belongs to a series of nine works made in 1968. In each work, half of the lamps are red while the other half are either blue, yellow, or green. Through the sequential arrangement of color and light fixtures, each set creates a definite and complete pattern. While they each stand alone as individual works, these constructions demonstrate Flavin's interest in serial and additive configurations. In this particular work on view in the exhibition, Flavin employed six 4-foot lamps (three red and three green), placed side by side in a staggered, vertical composition.

The latest work in the exhibition, *untitled (for Ad Reinhardt) 2h* (1990), belongs to a series of ten works (CL nos. 563–572) dedicated to the painter Ad Reinhardt (1913–1967), whom Flavin admired. It is comprised of six rows of horizontal lamps; each row alternates between two 2-foot lamps and one 4-foot lamp.

Through this assembly of key works by the artist, the viewer can experience firsthand what it means to treat “light as a matter of fact,” as Flavin once described his practice. Even though it is of course obvious that visual art is only visible to the human eye through light, and the importance of light is a theme throughout the history of art and was for example a central aspect for many painters in the creation of their works, Flavin was one of the first contemporary artists whose art actually consists purely of this element. Although Flavin's light is artificial, his preference for rational patterns clearly mirrors the mathematical beauty of nature itself, whose complicated algorithms the science still try to grasp in every detail. Hence, his minimalistic approach and the effect of his works, which he described once as “limited light,” is actually limitless. Due to the ethereal way in which the essence of his work – light – strikes the viewer, the recipient is literally enlightened.

Flavin's work was included in a number of key, early exhibitions of minimal art in the 1960s and his work would continue to be presented internationally over the course of the pursuant decades at such venues as the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1986) and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1992), among others. A major museum retrospective devoted to Flavin's work was organized, in cooperation with the Estate of Dan Flavin, by the Dia Art Foundation in association with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., where it was first on view in 2004 and traveled from 2005 to 2007 internationally. In 2012, the Morgan Library and Museum, New York, presented a retrospective of the artist's drawings and, in 2012–13, a retrospective exhibition of the artist's work traveled from the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, to the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland. In 2016, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK, presented Dan Flavin: It is what it is and it ain't nothing else.

Illustrations: Dan Flavin, “monument” for V. Tatlin, 1968; Dan Flavin, *untitled (for Charlotte and Jim Brooks) 3*, 1964 © 2019 Estate of Dan Flavin / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy David Zwirner & Peder Lund.