

Alexander Gray Associates

508 West 26 Street #215
New York NY 10001
United States
Tel: +1 212 399 2636
www.alexandergray.com



THE ART SHOW

Jack Whitten, *Sphink's Alley III*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 73h x 84w in (185.4h x 213.4w cm)

Art Dealers Association of America | The Art Show | Booth A9

Alexander Gray Associates features 1970s works by Jack Whitten, which embody a key moment in the formal development of Whitten's work.

Through the 1970s, Whitten's aesthetic decisions turned toward abstraction and his process exemplified a desire to stretch the limits of paint as medium. Whitten's non-relational abstract paintings of this period experiment with horizontality as an extension of gesture, with keen interest in exploring the potential for speed and automation, with acrylic as his muse. Working collaboratively with paint manufacturers and activating his knowledge in science and carpentry, Whitten developed new formulations of paint and new methods of painting—implementing tools like squeegees, rakes, and Afro combs—dragging large amounts of acrylic polymers across the canvas with a single gesture.

Beta Group (1976), from Whitten's Greek Alphabet Series, and *Sphink's Alley III* (1975) are triumphs of this process. Investigations of space, paintings such as these break away from traditional concepts of depth and void embedded in traditional two-dimensional compositions, while remaining committed to working within the limitations of the picture plane. Whitten's works on paper, particularly *Study for Greek Alphabet Series* (1976), illustrate his process in formation, providing insight into the experimentation at the core of the larger-scale canvases.

Jack Whitten's innovative process resulted in dense surfaces of rich textures amplified by ghosted geometric forms. As in photography or printmaking, tools are employed to generate a transformative effect upon the surface in a matter of seconds. An enigmatic image of this process, Whitten's paintings from this period capture the motion, immediacy, and fluidity of Whitten's technique while remaining static, as if stalling time.

Jack Whitten (b.1939) began his earliest experiments in painting during the 1960s by creating dynamic works inspired by Abstract Expressionism. Born and raised in Bessemer, AL, he moved to New York City in 1960 to attend The Cooper Union. Whitten's work has been exhibited in the 1969 and 1972 Whitney Annuals at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the landmark 1971 exhibition *Contemporary Black Artists in America* at the Whitney Museum of American Art; *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964–1980* at The Studio Museum in Harlem, NY (2006); *Blues for Smoke* (2012), organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; *The Encyclopedic Palace* at the 55th Venice Biennale, Italy (2013); *Light Years: Jack Whitten, 1971–73* at the Rose Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA (2013); and will be included in *The Paintstroke*, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2014) and the subject of *Jack Whitten: Evolver*, at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2014). A retrospective of Whitten's work will be presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA in September 2014.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery in New York. The Gallery presents exhibitions focused on artists who emerged in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Influential in political, social and cultural spheres, these artists are notable for creating work that crosses geographic borders, generational contexts and artistic disciplines. Alexander Gray Associates is a member of the Art Dealers Association of America. Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM.