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PAUL JENKINS

6 November – 20 December 2014

Opening reception on 6 November 2014, 6 – 8 pm

Robert Miller is pleased to present *Paul Jenkins*, a survey exhibition of the artist's paintings from the 1960s to the early 2000s. The *Chapel of Meditation*, a four-painting suite from the early 1970s, will be on view for the first time.

During the 1950s, American artist Paul Jenkins (1923-2012) entered into friendships with Jean Dubuffet, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning et al, and his unorthodox application of paint brought him into association with Abstract Expressionism. As Jonathan Goodman, author of the essay "Thresholds of Color," writes,

"Independent, intuitive, technically gifted, Paul Jenkins embodies many of the strengths of the New York School... Still, unlike the other artists and art-world inhabitants who, at the time, sided with one or the other painter, Jenkins remained a bit outside the fray. His readings of Asian classics, such as the *Tao Te Ching*, *I Ching* and *Zen and the Art of Archery*, gave him the needed — indeed, the necessary — psychic distance to pursue a vision on his own terms."

The paintings are not representational, but rather express the essence of paint as a medium – Jenkins, in this sense, was very much of his time. However, his vigorous process differs from the action-oriented intentions of his New York contemporaries. Jenkins controlled the paint flow across the canvas with an ivory knife, producing diaphanous and intensely colored multi-layered works. While the initial glance may lead one to believe that he stained the canvases, he in fact primed them and poured veils of vivid, jewel-toned paint onto the surfaces. Equally important are the white spaces where the underlying primed canvas is revealed. The influence of China and Japan, including his study of Asian texts, left an indelible impression on his practice. Informed by Zen thought in particular, he integrated ideas from Eastern notions of negative space or "emptiness," using white background to intensify the presence of the overlapping hues.

The term *phenomena*, which from 1960 on prefaces the titles of his works, reflects the artist's strong interest in Kant and in the color theories of Goethe. The pursuit of the sublime, which has reappeared in both American art and literature in today's cultural climate, re-contextualizes Jenkins' work within the framework of the long-standing tradition of exalting the transcendent. The *Chapel of Meditation* four-painting installation, which until now has never been exhibited as a whole configuration as the artist originally intended, offers a contemplative space in which the viewer can meditate on the radiant visuals enveloping them and perhaps walk away with a new internal realization that lies beyond understanding. Goodman elaborates,

"His pictures are truly powerful in their ongoing function to convey what cannot be heard or seen. The four paintings here that make up a specific aspect of Jenkins' contemplative vision cannot be called empty oratory; instead, their tenacious pursuit of the artist's vision should be read as a challenge to us all: to see with more than our actual eyes."

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by Robert Miller Gallery.

Paul Jenkins (b. 1923 Kansas City, Missouri – d. 2012 New York, New York) attended the Kansas City Art Institute ca. 1936 to 1941. Using his GI Bill at New York's Art Students League (1948-1952), he studied for four years with Yasuo Kuniyoshi. Throughout his career, he divided his time between New York and Paris. His works are represented in private and public collections internationally, including the Tate Gallery, London; the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard University, Cambridge; The Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; among many others.