



Dan Flavin

Born:

Jamaica, New York, 1933

Daniel Flavin was born in Jamaica, New York, on April 1, 1933. In the mid 1950s he served in the US Air Force as an air weather meteorological technician in Korea and studied art through the University of Maryland Extension Program there. Upon his return to New York in 1956, he briefly attended the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts and studied art history at the New School for Social Research. In 1959, he took drawing and painting classes at Columbia University; this year, he began to make assemblages and collages in addition to painting. Flavin's early paintings reflect the influence of Abstract Expressionism. His first solo show of constructions and watercolors was held at the Judson Gallery, New York, in 1961.

In the summer of 1961, while working as a guard at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, Flavin started to make sketches for sculptures in which electric lights were incorporated. Later that year he began experimenting with electric light in a series of works called "Icons," which led him to his inaugural work in pure fluorescent light, the diagonal of May 25, 1963. Flavin married Sonja Severdija in 1961, and their son, Stephen Conor, was born in 1964. In 1965, he moved from Manhattan to the shores of the Hudson River where he continued his drawings of water and landscape and developed his interest in nineteenth-century Hudson River landscape painters. With a recommendation from Marcel Duchamp, Flavin received an award from the William & Norma Copley Foundation, Chicago, in 1964, the same year that he exhibited his Icons at the Kaymar Gallery and had his first exhibition in fluorescent light at the Green Gallery, both in New York City. He also began his nearly life-long series of monuments dedicated to the Russian Constructivist Vladimir Tatlin.

Flavin became known as an originator of minimal art through inclusion in key group exhibitions such as *Black, White, and Gra* at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut in 1964 and *Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum in New York City in 1966. Flavin's recognition began to spread to Europe in 1966 following his first solo exhibition at the Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, Cologne, and his first "barrier" installation greens crossing greens (to Piet Mondrian who lacked green), created for the exhibition *Kunst Licht Kunst* at the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.

He was featured in the *Minimal Art* exhibition at the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, in 1968. Flavin's first single large-scale installation, alternating pink and "gold", was made for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, in 1967. In 1969 his retrospective exhibition *Fluorescent light, etc.* from *Dan Flavin*, opened at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, before traveling to the Vancouver Art Gallery, British Columbia, and to the Jewish Museum in New York City. Circular fluorescent lights entered Flavin's artistic vocabulary in 1972 in an installation at the Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York, and were a key element of an important exhibition at the St. Louis Art Museum, Missouri in 1973.

From its inception in 1974, the Dia Art Foundation acquired numerous works by Flavin, and supported larger projects including: an outdoor work for the four corners of the courtyard of the Kunstmuseum Basel,



GEMINI G.E.L. AT JONI MOISANT WEYL

in 1975; lighting several train platforms at New York's Grand Central Station in 1977; and a permanent installation of nine works in a former firehouse and Baptist Church in Bridgehampton, New York (The Dan Flavin Art Institute) in 1983. Among Flavin's most important late large-scale installation was his project to light the entire rotunda of the Frank Lloyd Wright designed Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City to commemorate its restoration and reopening in 1992 (based on a smaller installation he had made there for the 1971 *Sixth Guggenheim International*).

Flavin married Tracy Harris, at the Guggenheim, in 1992. He completed a major installation for the Kunstbau Lenbachhaus, Munich, in 1974. Flavin died in Riverhead, New York, on November 29, 1996, near his Long Island, New York home. Three of Flavin's most ambitious permanent installations were completed after his death: the lighting of Santa Maria Annunciata in Chiesa Rossa, a 1920s designed Catholic Church in Milan, in 1997; a project for Richmond Hall at the Menil Collection in Houston, Texas in 1998; and the completion of an installation in six former army barracks at Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas in 2000.

Selected Exhibitions:

- 2006 Gallery Nikki Diana Marquardt, Paris
Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, France
- 2004 National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
"Design, Art: Functional Objects from Donald Judd to Rachel Whiteread,"
Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York, NY
- 2003 "Flavin, Andre, Judd", National Gallery of Canada, Halifax
"Collection, Nouvelle Presentation", Musée Art Contemporain Lyon, France
"Flavin, Judd, Lewitt, Serra - Early Works", Zwirner & Wirth
Paula Cooper Gallery, New York
- 2000 Galerie Trabant, Vienna, Austria
Zwirner & Wirth, New York, New York
- 1999 Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, New York
Annemarie Verna Galerie, Zürich, Switzerland
- 1989 Gallery Nikki Diana Marquardt, Paris
- 1987 Gallery Nikki Diana Marquardt, Paris