

## Ralph Humphrey: Frame Paintings

For the 2016 edition of Frieze New York, Spotlight, Garth Greenan Gallery presents a solo-exhibition of works by Ralph Humphrey—*Ralph Humphrey: Frame Paintings*. The two paintings are from a series of eleven unframed works made in New York in the mid-1960s. With the exception of *Grey Painting* (1963), all of them are named for single-room occupancy hotels (those dedicated to assisted living for the homeless) near the artist's studio on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

The mid-1960s were a difficult time for the dignity and future of painting. It was the peak moment of Pop Art and Minimalism. One can feel the pressure of those witheringly reductive movements in the Frame paintings. They are symbols of resistance to aesthetic cold-bloodedness by someone determined to retain certain painterly poetics—psychological dynamics, spiritual associations—that had been a miracle of Abstract Expressionism. But, there is trouble within the walls too: the protected, central gray expanses broadcast nothing or, rather, almost nothing. The Frame paintings are elegiac, worried pictures, unsure of their medium's capacity to subsist in a hostile environment. As much as contemporaneous paintings by Agnes Martin and Robert Ryman, they mark a sea change in the history of abstraction.



*Grey Painting*, 1963, oil on canvas, 70 x 70 inches

Our booth presentation is the first time that any of the Frame paintings have been displayed since 1990.

Born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1932, Ralph Humphrey studied painting at Youngstown University. In 1957, Humphrey relocated to New York, where he met artists Theodoros Stamos and Mark Rothko. Rothko's fierce opinions and strong, personal emotionalism were major influences on the young artist—ones that continued throughout his career. From 1966 to 1990, Humphrey taught painting in the graduate art department at Hunter College. He remained at Hunter until his death in 1990.

Humphrey's work is in the collections of major museums around the world, including: the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Modern Art; the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Smithsonian American Art Museum; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; the Walker Art Center; the Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro; and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent the Estate of Ralph Humphrey.