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Paul Feeley: The Other Side

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to announce *Paul Feeley: The Other Side*, an exhibition of paintings and watercolors at **545 West 20th Street**. Opening on Tuesday, February 27, 2018, the exhibition is the artist's third with the gallery. Eight of Feeley's brightly colored abstractions will be on view, as well as a selection of related watercolors.

The exhibition provides a detailed view of Feeley's work from 1954 to 1959—the period during which he created what he considered his earliest “professional” paintings. In fall 1955, Feeley had his first solo exhibition at New York's Tibor de Nagy Gallery. Works on display dealt primarily, as art critic Lawrence Campbell wrote, “with struggling complexes, blobs elbowing each other and being rained on.” One painting in the exhibition, *Red Blotch* (1954), stood out as something distinctly different. What was the “strange red blob” surrounded by verdant green? And what about the silhouetted black forms along the painting's lower edge? With its inherent quietude and interlocking colors, *Red Blotch* set the tenor for the artist's mature pictorial sensibility—one that balanced Dionysian extravagance with Apollonian restraint. “With the red and green picture,” Feeley said, “I think I just sensed the shape of the canvas as an event, as against the notion of the canvas creating an arena for events.”



Red Blotch, 1954, oil-based enamel on canvas, 65 x 42 inches

The Apollonian character of the paintings created for Feeley's follow-up show in 1958 would have been hard to miss. Begun in 1956 and loosely titled after islands of the Cyclades, the series, completed in 1959, explores the terrain of organic abstraction through the most reductive of means. Muted reds and yellows, or yellows and blues, with occasional passages of bright orange and pink, distinguish the somatic nature of *Ios* (1957), *Sterope* (1957), *Syphos* (1958), and *Melos* (1958), as well as contemporaneous works such as *Kilroy*, *The Other Side*, and *Between the In and the Out*, all 1957. The critic Dore Ashton, covering the show for the *New York Times*, observed the paintings' “erotic sinuousness—great curving

(more)

bottomless shapes like chemists' retorts, or slithering, wasp-waisted forms embedded in blue ether," and their "obscure symbolism." While it would be entirely plausible to see the "Cycladic" series, along with kindred stained paintings like *The Other Side*, as Color Field abstractions related to Helen Frankenthaler's watershed *Mountains and Sea* (1952), there is indeed another side to Feeley's biomorphic projections that retains a kinship to Abstract Expressionism and earlier Surrealist automatism. The paintings' heuristic shapes, like an archetypal gestalt drawn from the depths of his fertile imagination, accrete into the canvas, where they confound expectations. To Feeley, a shape was a living thing, a vehicle for an abstract thought-complex, a carrier of the awesome feelings he felt before the "terror of the unknowable."

Born in 1910 in Des Moines, Iowa, Paul Feeley studied painting at Menlo College, Menlo Park, California, and at the Art Students League, New York. After completing his training, Feeley began teaching, first at Cooper Union (1935–1939) and later at Bennington College. The artist remained at Bennington for 27 years (1939–1966) and founded its celebrated art department. Committed to the art of his peers, Feeley exposed his students—among them, Helen Frankenthaler—to many of the most significant artists of his time. In addition, while at Bennington, he organized the first retrospective exhibitions of Hans Hoffmann, Jackson Pollock, and David Smith.

Throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Feeley had solo exhibitions at many prominent institutions, including Tibor de Nagy Gallery (1955, 1958, New York), Betty Parsons Gallery (1960, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1970, 1971, 1975, New York), and Kasmin Gallery (1964, London). During this period, his work was also featured in important museum exhibitions, such as *Post Painterly Abstraction* (1964, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), *The Shaped Canvas* (1964, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum), *The Responsive Eye* (1965, Museum of Modern Art), and *Systemic Painting* (1966, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum), among others. In 1968, the artist was the subject of a memorial retrospective exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. More recently, a full-career retrospective of Feeley's work took place at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (2014–2015, Buffalo) and the Columbus Museum of Art (2015–2016), accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue.

Feeley's work is featured in the collections of major museums around the country, including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; the Columbus Museum of Art; the Detroit Institute of Arts; the Fogg Museum, Harvard University; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution; the McNay Art Museum; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Modern Art; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Phoenix Art Museum; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent the Estate of **Paul Feeley**.

Paul Feeley: The Other Side will be on view at **Garth Greenan Gallery, 545 West 20th Street** (between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues), through **Saturday, April 7, 2018**. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For more information, **please contact the gallery at (212) 929-1351, or email info@garthgreenan.com**.

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