

DAVID KLEIN GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
AL HELD: WATERCOLORS
March 21 – May 9, 2020



Al Held, *Plaza 7*– 1993, Watercolor on paper mounted on board, 49 x 67 inches

David Klein Gallery, 163 Townsend Street, BIRMINGHAM, Michigan is pleased to announce the opening of *AL HELD: WATERCOLORS*. An opening reception will take place on March 21, 6-8pm.

Al Held (1928-2005) was already an established American abstract painter when he started making watercolors in 1988 after purchasing a home in Camerata di Todi, Italy. The watercolors, with their intense color and pure geometry, were an intimate, contemporary response to the great 14th and 15th Century Renaissance paintings that surrounded him in Italy. Held used to speak of the “sheer sensuous joy” of pulling a wet brush across paper. He would soak the large sheets of paper in water, then wrap the moist paper around a board, attaching the edges to the board with staples. This is very similar to the way artists traditionally stretch a canvas, and it prevented the paper from warping or wrinkling. Held would apply layer over layer of wet color over dry, glazing and re-glazing, until he achieved the color and density he desired. By using this unique technique, he was able to create a richly stained surface of crystalline luminosity.

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A leading American Post-War abstract painter, Held had his first exhibition in New York City in 1956 and exhibited regularly until his death in 2005. His work in the 1950s, called Pigment Paintings, mirrored the work of many of the Abstract Expressionist painters. By the 1960s he had developed his own visual language of hard-edged, geometric abstraction. Held was always dissatisfied with two-dimensional space and in his later work he was able to masterfully create the illusion of depth and movement on a flat canvas. And in the 1990s, the lyrical geometry of the Luminous Constructs paintings anticipates the pulsing, impossible landscape of the virtual realm. They explore a space that seems to hail simultaneously from the art historical past and the digital future.



Al Held, *Plaza 5* – 1993, Watercolor on paper mounted on board, 49 x 67 inches

Al Held's work is in numerous major museum collections including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH; the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; the Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Held had his first retrospective exhibition, curated by Marcia Tucker, at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1974.

For additional information, please contact:

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