

ubu

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Julian Beck: Paintings & Drawings, 1944 – 1958

April 28 – June 8, 2001

Ubu Gallery will exhibit a group of early paintings and drawings, principally on paper, by the American polymath, **Julian Beck**, from Saturday, April 28th through Saturday, June 9th.

Beck, best known as the founder in 1947 –along with his wife, Judith Malina– of the itinerant, avant-garde performance ensemble known as The Living Theatre, dropped out of Yale in 1943 at the age of 18 to paint and write in New York City. Alongside Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, William Baziotos, Willem de Kooning and other members of the New York Abstract Expressionist group, he exhibited at Peggy Guggenheim's groundbreaking Art of This Century gallery in 1945 and in others – including Bernard-Ganymede and Tibor de Nagy – through 1958. At that time, he stopped painting to devote his efforts full-time to producing, directing, acting and designing sets, costumes and lighting for The Living Theatre. He continued to write poetry and plays until the late 1970s and acted in various plays, movies and on television until his death in 1985 at age 60.

A pacifist and anarchist, Beck was a major figure in the General Strike for Peace movement in the early 1960s, and his political activism was as much a part of his life as was his art. He collaborated extensively with Merce Cunningham and John Cage in several theater and performance pieces in the 1950s and 1960s. Beck, Malina and The Living Theater left New York in 1963 for Europe where they performed widely. They were expelled from Brazil by the military regime in 1971, having launched a series of politically strident street performances over a two-year period there, after which they returned to the United States until 1975. From 1975 through 1983, they were based once again in Europe.

The exhibition at Ubu consists principally of “gestural” and “automatic” works on paper, as well as a few on canvas, and date from 1944 to 1957. Prominently featured are a series of paintings with silkscreen overlay announcing The Living Theatre's performance in August, 1952 at the Cherry Lane Theatre of Ubu *The King (Ubu Roi)* by Alfred Jarry and *The Heroes* by John Ashberry.

Following the exhibition at Ubu, which is being presented in association with Janos Gat Gallery, Beck's work will travel to Rafael Vostell Fine Art in Berlin. A major exhibition of Beck's larger canvases and stage designs is planned for 2002 at a museum in Rome.