



Nick Cave, *Sea Sick*, 2014  
mixed media, 96" x 72" x 10½".

## NICK CAVE

JACK SHAINMAN  
SEPTEMBER 4 - OCTOBER 11



Roman Opalka, *Chronome No. 2*, 1963,  
tempera on canvas, 24" x 24".

## ROMAN OPALKA

DOMINIQUE LÉVY  
SEPTEMBER 4 - OCTOBER 18

114

Two sides of Nick Cave were on view at the gallery's two Chelsea venues. They were different but also linked by a mordant humor.

"Made by Whites for Whites" at 513 West 20th Street was concerned with black history and the inception of the slave trade, which was documented by a huge mixed-media work *Sea Sick* (2014), combining paintings of sailing ships blithely plying the waves with the head of a black man, originally a humidor for storing cigars made from tobacco harvested by slaves. Cave's title is ironic: in English-speaking America, the slave was made by whites for whites, first as agricultural laborers but then in myriad roles, ranging from bathroom attendant to object: a humidor, a golliwog, or the slave-boy figurine holding his master's horse. The black man was transmuted into the white man's creation. Cave brilliantly inverts the process, making black art out of the collected wreckage of racist artifacts.

"Rescue," at 524 West 24th Street, evinced another facet of Cave's humor. Here statues of rescued dogs were posed on furniture and surrounded by halos of flowers. Cave's rescues are caught up in a world of kitsch, reminding us that we romanticize animals while treating our fellow men inhumanely. The pastoral settings Cave created for his dogs contrast with the pastoral hell of slavery. Cave touchingly dedicated this show to Claude Simard. **ALFRED MAC ADAM**

In 1965, the French-born Polish artist Roman Opalka (1931–2011) began his magisterial project *1965 / 1 - ∞* by placing the number 1 on the upper corner of a canvas using a No. 0 brush. He followed this feat up with more than five-and-a-half-million other numerals to create an "infinite" work that ended only with his death. From a total of 233 canvases, a dozen were shown for this very quietly absorbing exhibition. The paintings at first appeared to be large, grisaille monochromes, but upon closer viewing, the numbers gradually became visible and created irregular surface undulations that suggested a kind of weaving. It was as if Opalka were one of the Fates, spinning his own destiny.

The works were accompanied by recordings of the artist reciting the numbers in Polish in a neutral voice; a few of the passport-like, unblinking photographs he took of himself every day; and some vibrant, densely gestural works that were made in the early 1960s, including the entire, rhythmically inked "Etude sur le mouvement" series of drawings. Each was a way of documenting time in which beginnings inexorably lead to ends. The mark, and later the numbers, were an actualization of existence, shaping and ordering formlessness in a gesture that was at once romantic and pragmatic, realistic and utterly abstract, taking Opalka from the methodical into the miraculous. **LILLY WEI**