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# Yves Klein's 'Monotone' Symphony Is Headed to New York

By **CAROL VOGEL**

On March 9, 1960, 100 people, all in black tie, gathered in a Paris gallery to see the artist Yves Klein conduct a 10-piece orchestra in a performance of his first sound composition. Called the “Monotone-Silence” Symphony, it consisted of a single chord played for 20 minutes straight, followed by 20 minutes of silence. At the same time, Klein directed three female models (whom he called his “living brushes”) to roll themselves in blue paint and press their bodies against sheets of paper lining the walls and floors. When the music stopped, the models froze.

That was the only time the “Monotone-Silence” Symphony, composed in 1947-48, was presented in Klein’s lifetime. (He died in 1962 of a heart attack at 34). Since then, it has been performed nine times in Europe and once in Los Angeles. But the piece is finally coming to New York: On Sept. 18, to celebrate the opening of her new gallery at 909 Madison Avenue, the dealer Dominique Lévy is to present a performance next door at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. Ms. Lévy is flying in the Swiss conductor and composer **Roland Dahinden**, who is putting together a 32-piece orchestra and a chorus of 30 to 40 singers. (There will be no naked models.)

The symphony is being staged as part of the gallery’s inaugural exhibition, “Audible Presence: Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Cy Twombly.”

“Yves Klein is such a pillar, and yet he’s not well enough known here,” Ms. Lévy said. She said she had asked Mr. Dahinden, who frequently collaborates with contemporary artists, to lead the performance because he has conducted the piece before and was recommended by the Yves Klein Archive, which is lending works for the show.

The performance will be free, but seating is limited. Reservations can be made online at [yveskleinmonotonesymphony.eventbrite.com](http://yveskleinmonotonesymphony.eventbrite.com)

## **ART EXPERIMENTS RELIVED**

Klein’s symphony won’t be the only homage to historic performances. Jay Sanders, a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, is organizing an exhibition to respond to a growing fascination

among young artists with experimental performances of the past.

“I’m trying to make a show that feeds this curiosity,” Mr. Sanders said. Titled “Rituals of Rented Island: Object Theater, Loft Performance, and the New Psychodrama — Manhattan, 1970-1980,” it will focus on works created in alternative spaces — lofts, storefronts, city streets — by a group of groundbreaking artists including Vito Acconci, Laurie Anderson, Mike Kelley and John Zorn. Running from Oct. 31 to next February, the Whitney’s show takes its title from a nickname for Manhattan coined by the artist Jack Smith for his 1976 performance epic, “The Secret of Rented Island.”

The exhibition “deals with a lost generation that came after Happenings, Fluxus and John Cage but before punk,” Mr. Sanders said. He will recreate some performances, but the heart of the show will be installations of sets and environments, video, photographs and ephemera, he said, including “stuff from a lot of people’s basements.”

The aim is to capture a moment when SoHo in particular was the setting for scrappy experimental theater that addressed social, political, commercial and cultural issues.

“It will really be a downtown show uptown,” Mr. Sanders said, “and will embody the cool underground of New York.”

## **KANDINSKY’S BIG LEAP**

The Russian avant-gardist Kandinsky has been the subject of countless exhibitions in recent years, including a traveling retrospective that opened in 2009 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and traveled to the Pompidou Center in Paris and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus in Munich. A current open-ended show at the Guggenheim, culled from its holdings, focuses on his final years, 1934-44, when he was living in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine.

Still, some curators feel there’s more to be explored. This fall the Neue Galerie will tackle a perhaps lesser-known dimension of the artist’s work in “Vasily Kandinsky: From Blaue Reiter to the Bauhaus, 1910-1925.” On view from Oct. 3 through Feb. 10, it will cover Kandinsky’s transition from a more realistic style of painting in his so-called Blue Rider period to biomorphic abstraction, and later to his creation of total environments. The show will highlight how Kandinsky’s work is as much about theater and music as it is about traditional art forms.

“The exhibition will go beyond conventional easel painting,” said Jill Lloyd, a London art historian who has organized other shows at the Neue Galerie. Around 80 works will be on display —

monumental paintings, drawings and decorative materials — including four 1914 [wall panels](#) on loan from the Museum of Modern Art that Kandinsky made for Edwin R. Campbell, founder of the Chevrolet Motor Company, for the foyer of his New York apartment.

## AN EYE FOR LATIN ART

The Guggenheim's [UBS Map Global Art Initiative](#) has appointed Pablo León de la Barra, an independent curator in London, as its curator for Latin America. The \$40 million global art initiative, unveiled last year, enables the museum to invite curators from South and Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa for two-year residencies in New York.

Mr. de la Barra will work with the Guggenheim's curatorial staff to identify prime works by contemporary Latin American artists that will then be acquired by the museum. The purchases are to form the basis of an exhibition that will open next year before traveling abroad to two museums that have yet to be named.

*This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:*

### **Correction: August 1, 2013**

*An earlier version of this article misstated the term used by the artist Yves Klein to refer to naked models who rolled in paint at a 1960 performance of his "Monotone-Silence" symphony. It was "living brushes," not "naked brushes."*

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