

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## VAN DOREN WAXTER

### **Al Held: *Brushstrokes* May 12–July 8, 2016**

Van Doren Waxter is proud to present an exhibition of 29 India ink drawings by Al Held, a crucial figure of American Abstraction. Completed in 1960, these rarely exhibited works on paper were largely unseen during Held's lifetime and offer a new perspective on the artist's attempts to advance ideas of form and space in contemporary painting.

A departure from Held's more recognizably hard-edged, overlapping geometric abstractions, these are spare works consisting of one or two brushstrokes of black ink on waxed paper each. Disarmingly simple, they are not considered studies but rather a series unto itself, existing as an exacting visual preamble to his larger-scale statements on perception and depth of field.

In their scale and willingness to subsume massive swaths of the visual field, the works in *Brushstrokes* share a theoretic disposition with the architectural forms of Held's Alphabet Paintings, which were completed around the same time. While that body of work sought to impose order, the India ink drawings selected for this exhibition exist as far more liberated, near-organic forms.

Al Held was born in Brooklyn in 1928. A product of New York City's public schools, Held enlisted in the US Navy before studying at the Art Students League of New York from 1949-1952, and at The Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris under the GI Bill. Influenced by prevailing Expressionists like Pollock, de Kooning, and Kline, Held began explorations into abstraction, becoming active in New York's avant-garde "10th Street Scene." By 1959, in an attempt to impart structural form to Abstract Expressionism's predominant discourse, Held began incorporating short gestural strokes and geometric forms, ideas which he and artists like Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly would later expand. The Whitney Museum of American Art held a retrospective in 1974. Held died in Italy in 2005.

#### **About Van Doren Waxter**

Established in 2013, Van Doren Waxter specializes in American Abstraction from 1950-1990, including works by Richard Diebenkorn, Manny Farber, Sam Francis, Joe Goode, and John McLaughlin. The gallery exclusively represents the James Brooks Foundation, the Richard Diebenkorn Foundation, works on paper from the Al Held Foundation, the Alan Shields Estate, and the Hedda Sterne Foundation. Additionally, the gallery handles secondary market works, specializing in Anthony Caro, Helen Frankenthaler, Hans Hofmann, Ellsworth Kelly, Franz Kline, and Frank Stella, among others.

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