

AUREL SCHEIBLER

Öyvind Fahlström

Sitting...Blocks 1965–1966

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Sitting...Blocks, 1965-1966
Tempera on vinyl and wood, 10 blocks, 38 x 38 x 38 cm (each)

...The *Sitting...* series starts with the painting so titled (relating to a nonsense phrase “Sitting like Pat [Oldenburg] with a bat in her hat”) and with material from the Batman comics. From this material I distilled a set of “hieroglyphs” (signs, character forms) divided in different “families” according to colour and certain “properties”, “tendencies” that gradually became clearer through the following pieces: *Sitting...Six months later*, *Sitting...Break*, *Sitting...Tablet*, *Sitting...Stamp*, *Sitting...Dominoes*, *Sitting...Blocks* and *Sitting...Five Panels* and a number of drawings and an unfinished *Sitting...Directory* of drawings, one for each „character-form”....

Öyvind Fahlström
New York, October 18, 1967

Berlin – Aurel Scheibler, in collaboration with The Öyvind Fahlström Foundation, is pleased to present the solo exhibition by Öyvind Fahlström (1928–1976) featuring his first variable sculpture, *Sitting...Blocks* from 1965-66. It is the first time this important work is presented in Germany since it was shown in 1968 at documenta IV in Kassel. A selection of his works from the 1960s and 1970s will also be on view.

One of the most complex and extraordinary artists of his time, Öyvind Fahlström is regarded today as a pioneer of interactive multimedia art. Fahlström started his *Sitting...* series shortly after he moved to New York in 1961. It signifies a new period in Fahlström’s work in which he invented “variable painting” and began to express meanings and events solely with the use of abstract character-forms.

In the first work of the series, *Sitting...* (1962), Fahlström started using figurative elements and created a complex pictorial space in which many events happened at the same time, overlapping and influencing each other.

The subsequent work, *Sitting...Six months later* (1962) was Fahlström’s first variable painting. In these works, painted elements could be attached to a painted panel with magnets, string or inserted in slits in the panel. Theoretically, they could be arranged in any configuration.

Character-forms became basic elements of the *Sitting...* works: abstract pictograms with a unique shape that could be deciphered and “read”. The vocabulary of character-signs refers, among other sources, to Batman, the masked avenger fighting corruption in Gotham. The character-forms were compiled in *Sitting...Directory* (1962-63), which we are able to present in Germany for the first time.

By 1965 Fahlström had extended variability to a three-dimensional structure, *Sitting...Blocks*. The work consists of ten cubes with character-forms painted on their sides. The narrative is revealed by the combinations of the blocks. Here Fahlström perfectly implemented the idea of the game, which, though regulated by rules and the artist’s intention, involves the participation of the spectator, who can find the relations between the elements and “play” the work.

Sitting...Blocks was shown in numerous exhibitions, first at Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, in 1967 and most recently in a presentation of Fahlström’s oeuvre at the 32nd Bienal de São Paulo in 2016.