

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Jordan Belson: Paintings 1950–1965**

May 2 – June 29, 2019

Opening: Wednesday, May 1, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce **Jordan Belson: Paintings 1950–1965**, the next exhibition in his gallery at 523 West 24th Street. It features twenty-three paintings, the majority of which are being shown publicly for the first time, and four films.

Jordan Belson (1926–2011), a seminal figure in twentieth-century avant-garde cinema, studied painting as a young man, and in 1949 his work was included in two exhibitions at the Guggenheim Museum, then called the Museum of Non-Objective Painting. In the late 1940s he began making films, settling in San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood, where he lived for the remainder of his life. In the early 1950s, well before hippies replaced beatniks and San Francisco became known as a center of psychedelic activity, Belson started experimenting with hallucinogens and devoted himself to meditation and a rigorous yoga discipline in an effort to expand his consciousness, resulting in films that were tightly controlled yet often ecstatic transmissions of a liberated mind's eye.

Although Belson never exhibited his paintings again after 1950, the medium remained central to his art, and reflected and informed the films for which he later became renowned. The highly inventive approach to abstraction in his paintings anticipated the work of better-known artists by more than a decade. Belson did not, in fact, consider his work abstract but rather a faithful record of altered psychic states. He explained, "I'm trying to focus on something, bring it back alive from the uncharted areas of the inner image, inner space." Through these interior voyages he hoped to discover the universal, and many of his paintings, with their highly centered primary forms, resemble sacred art. The earliest works in the exhibition are mandala-like compositions of interwoven rhythmic lines, while a series from the mid-1950s features circular shapes that recall tantric painting.

Despite Belson's mysticism, he was deeply committed to science. His technical control of color and light, the fundamental elements of his filmmaking, are on full display in his paintings. He also turned to geometry and physics for his subject matter, as in the painting *Porazzo Polyhedra* (c.1965), which depicts a spherical shape made up of pentagons and octagons, like the geodesic domes of Buckminster Fuller, one of Belson's heroes. *Spiral Hall* (c.1961) resembles a diagram of subatomic particles, while several paintings from the mid-1960s depict vividly colored nebulae, vast clouds of space dust and stars.

"Intuition is the basis of my aesthetic judgment," Belson said. "The more you allow intuition to speak to you, the closer you are to the truth, and the origins of the universe."

This exhibition has been organized in association with Raymond Foye and the Estate of Jordan Belson.

**Jordan Belson: Paintings 1950–1965** is on view at 523 West 24th Street from May 2 to June 29, 2019, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM. On May 6, Anthology Film Archives (32 Second Avenue) will present a screening of Belson's films. On May 21, Light Industry (155 Freeman Street, Brooklyn) will show Donald Cammell's 1977 film *Demon Seed*, for which Belson created special effects.

For additional information, please contact Jacqueline Tran at 212-243-0200 or [jacqueline@matthewmarks.com](mailto:jacqueline@matthewmarks.com).