

CHRYSSA: HOMERIC WISDOM

28.11.24 – 15.02.25

We are pleased to present Homeric Wisdom, our second solo exhibition featuring works by Greek-American artist Chryssa (1933–2013). Renowned for her ability to bridge art, industrial processes, urban environments, and mass communication, Chryssa's work stands as a powerful testament to the early beginnings of Minimalism and Pop Art. As a pioneer in light art, she drew inspiration from the vibrant energy of 1950s New York, particularly the neon signs of Times Square and the dynamic interplay of typography in advertising.

Homeric Wisdom will feature significant and historical works from every phase of Chryssa's career. Highlights include iconic neon pieces from the 1960s that reflect her mastery of industrial materials and light, alongside early Cycladic Books and works with newspaper images featuring stamped advertisements and stock exchange charts.

A prominent artist in her own time—represented by Betty Parsons, Denise René, Pace, and later Leo Castelli—Chryssa was almost invariably at the forefront of post-war art, often predicting or pushing the limits of Pop, Minimalism, Conceptualism, and light art. The artist's biography is equally captivating: an immigrant to the United States from Greece and an openly queer woman long before Stonewall, Chryssa lived in New York City for nearly half her life, drawing inspiration notably from the neon signage of Times Square, the logographs of Chinatown, and her artistic milieu around the Coenties Slip. With major solo exhibitions at institutions like the Guggenheim and MoMA, her influence is evident in the works of contemporaries such as Andy Warhol and Agnes Martin.

"Best known for her *luminist* sculptures in brilliantly colored neon tubing, the Greek-born sculptor Chryssa is one of the outstanding artists working in America today. [...] Soon after her arrival in America, Chryssa found her inspiration in Times Square, and often in the newspaper for which the Square is named. Her early "Newspaper" paintings and sculptures were innovative experiments using typography, newsprint collages, metal moulds, and alphabetical forms in raised relief.

Chryssa related the dazzling neon signs of Times Square to the art of Byzantium: "In Times Square, the sky is like the gold of Byzantine mosaics or icons." Eventually these signs were transformed by the artist into her own mysterious symbols and alphabetical elements expressing what was for her the "Homeric wisdom" of the signs."

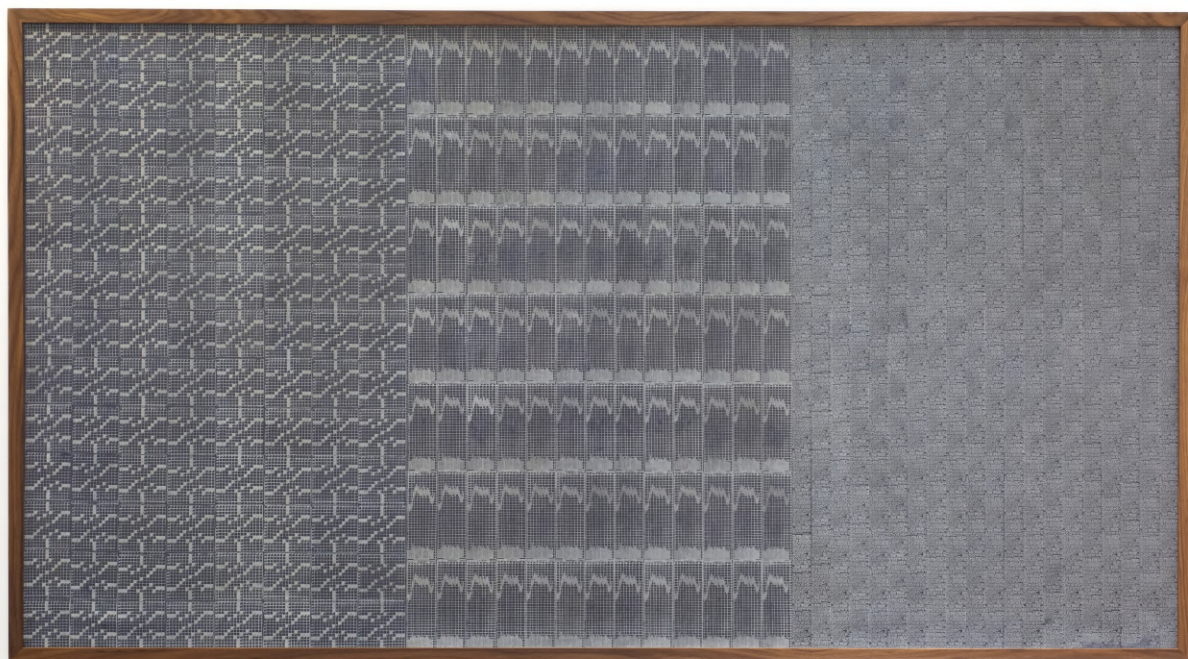
—Pierre Restany in: Restany, Chryssa, New York, 1977, inside cover

BLUE VELVET



Exhibition views of "Chryssa: Homeric Wisdom" at Blue Velvet, Zürich, 2024

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
The Magic Carpet (Newspaper), 1962
oil with stamp prints on canvas
123 x 227 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-15

BLUE VELVET

CHRYSSA – NEWSPAPER IMAGES

"Her work explores all aspects of the newspaper, particularly its most graphic representations: crossword puzzles, weather maps, and stock market reports. Repeatedly and mechanically marking the surface of her large canvases with stamps made from newspaper plates, Chryssa uses these instruments "to fill an entire area using a new energy. That's why I didn't use them disorderly, but I used them precisely." The newspaper paintings signal a critical return to painting for Chryssa. The work of Jackson Pollock is highly influential to her during this period, evidenced by a shared interest in the infinite expanse of the canvas."

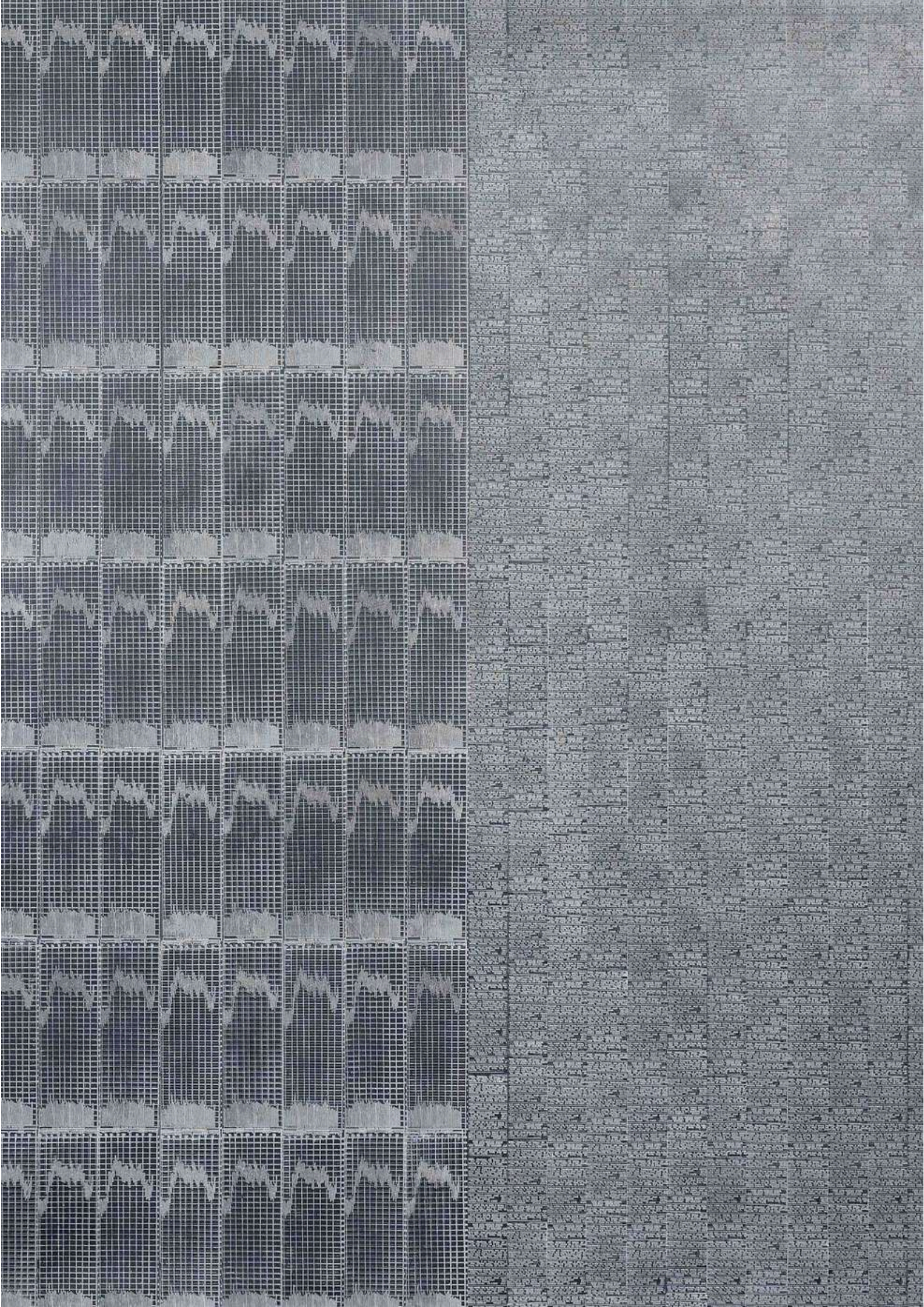
Megan Holly Witko in: Witko, Chryssa & New York, New York, 2023, p. 165 -166

SELECTED COLLECTIONS (with works from the Newspaper series)

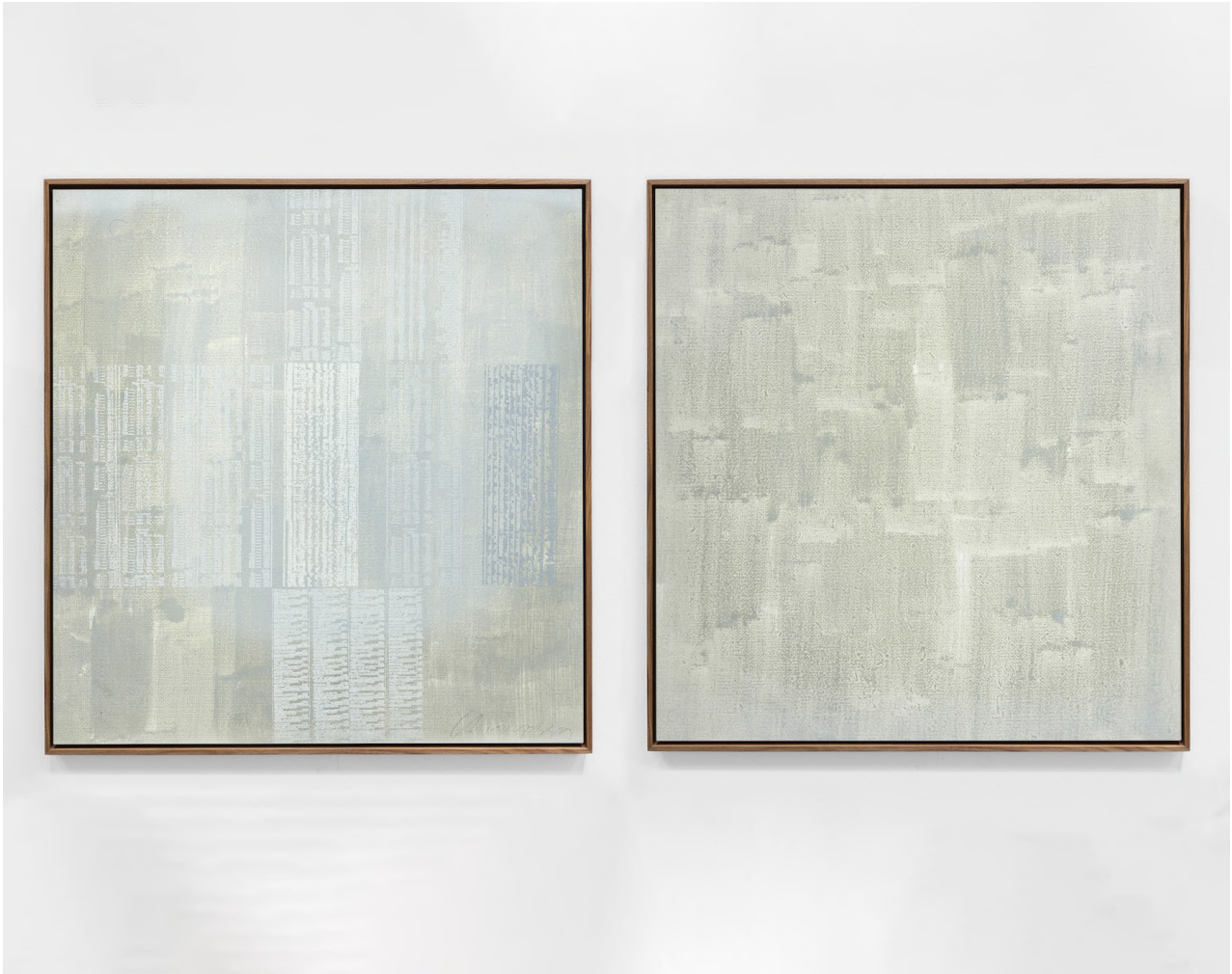
National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Museum of Modern Art, New York
New York University Art Collection, New York
Collection Irene Panagopoulos, Athens
The Menil Collection, Houston
Collection Milly and Arne Glimcher, New York

SELECTED LITERATURE

Megan Holly Witko: Chryssa & New York, New York, 2023
Yannis Bolis: Chryssa – Light, Negative, Positive, Athens, 2023
Jacques Lassaigue: Chryssa, Paris, 1979
Douglas Schultz: Chryssa: Urban Icons, Buffalo, 1983
Pierre Restany: Chryssa, New York, 1977
Sam Hunter: Chryssa, New York, 1974
Werner Spies: Chryssa, Stuttgart, 1974
Diane Waldman: Chryssa. Selected Works 1955–1967, New York, 1968



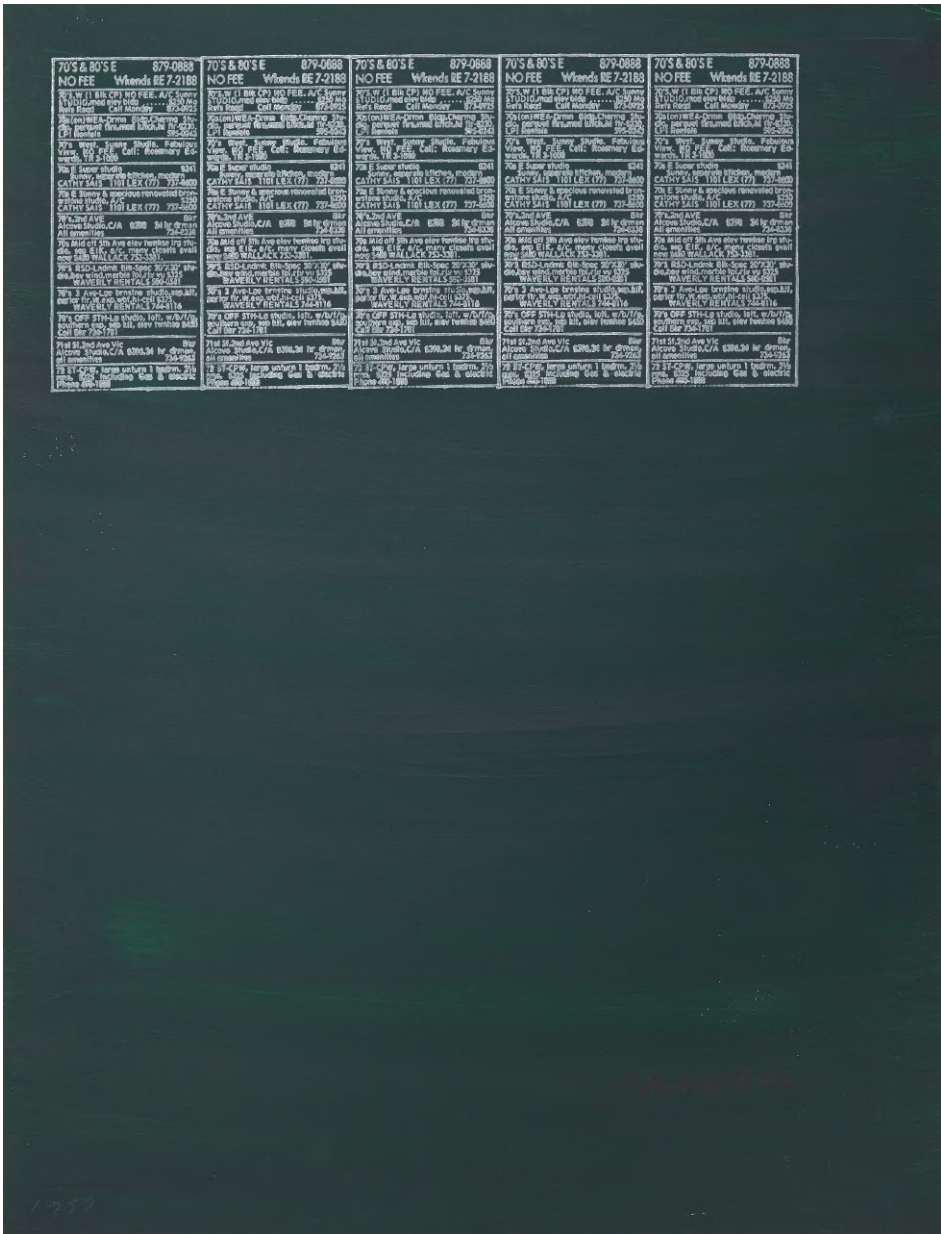
BLUE VELVET



Chryssa

Untitled (Diptych, Grey newspaper stock exchange stamps "Industrials"), 1960s
oil and watercolour on canvas
53.5 x 51.5 cm each

Inv.-Nr. 235-58



Chryssa
 Untitled, 1959
 oil with stamp prints on paper
 61 x 46 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-77

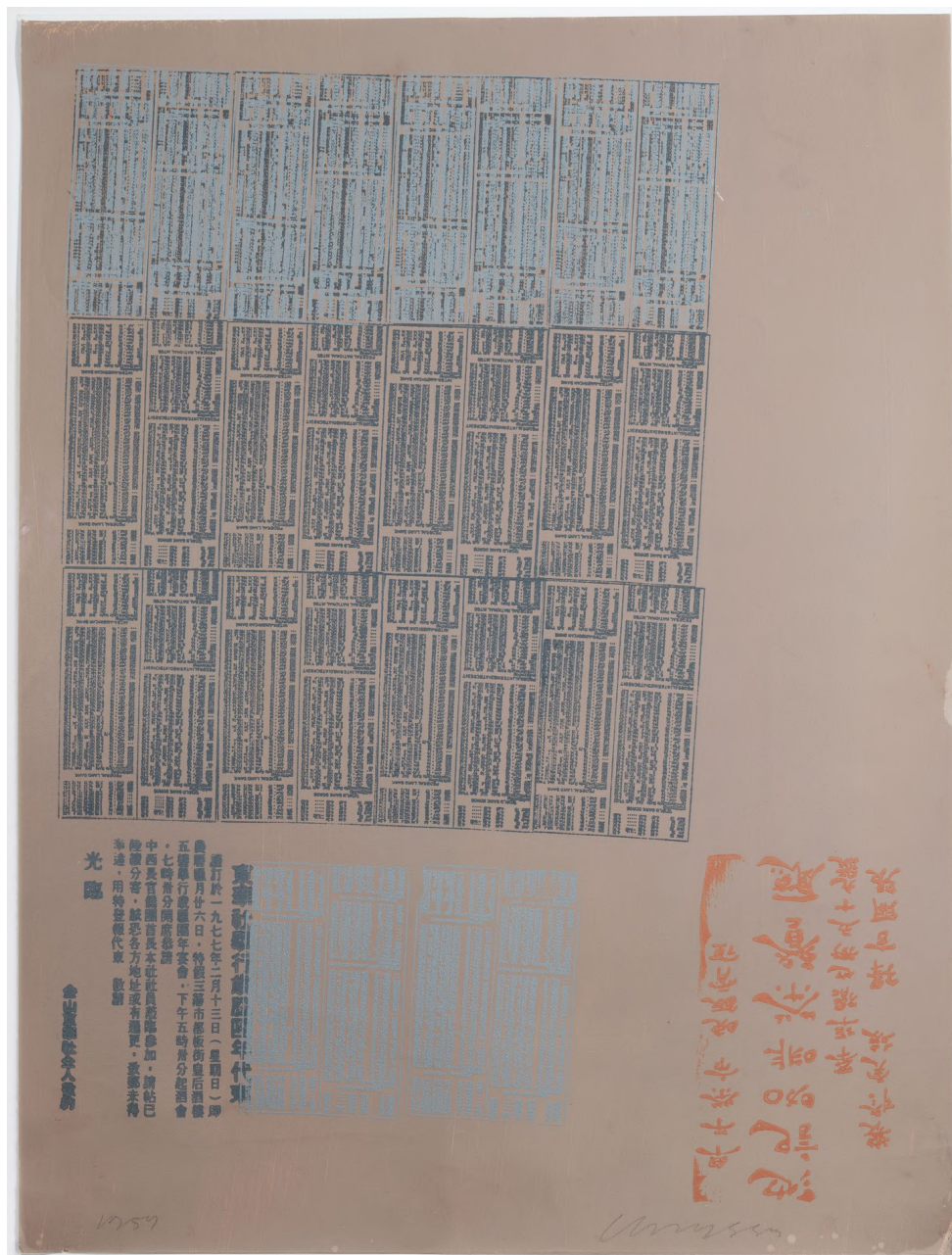
BLUE VELVET



Chryssa

Untitled (study for Newspaper), early 1960s
gouache with stamp prints on Rives paper
56 x 76 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-85



光臨
金山證券社全人敬啟

東華銀行創辦週年紀念
通訂於一九七五年一月十三日(星期日)即
農曆臘月廿六日,特假三藩市華埠皇后酒樓
五樓舉行慶祝週年茶會,下午五時開始酒會
七時開始慶祝茶會
中西長官顧問及本社職員均將參加,請帖已
陸續分寄,敬希各方地址或有變更,妥即來特
奉達,用特登報代蒙 敬請

東華銀行
創辦週年
紀念
茶會
敬請
光臨

1979

Chryssa

Chryssa
Untitled (stock market stamps & sienna chinese characters), 1959
oil with stamp prints on paper
59 x 45 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-6

BLUE VELVET

CHRYSSA - CYCLADIC BOOKS, 1954 – 1962

The Cycladic Books are among Chryssa's most iconic works. They are notable for being one of the earliest examples of Minimalism, while also foreshadowing her interest in mass culture and Pop Art.

"In 1954-55 the Cycladic Books appeared. These are reliefs in plaster, the image T-shaped, and corresponding to the mold of the inside fold of a cardboard packing box. The inside fold of the carton, once it was cast, produced the purified and stylized geometric relief characteristic of Cycladic sculpture. Chryssa had had an intuitive vision of this tablet hinting at a Cycladic face (the horizontal fold suggests brows and eyes, the vertical ridge the nose) while looking at the bottom of one of those countless cardboard boxes that are symptomatic of our consumer society.

The Cycladic Books are not encumbered with discourse. They are "letterless." Apart from their intrinsic beauty, the objects are fascinating because of the definitive, irrevocable, axiomatic aspect of their presence. Her (Chryssas) vision acquired at the outset its rigor of synthesis, its power for order, its poetic sharpness. In short, she begins at the end, if I may say so, or rather her first work is an end in itself."

Pierre Restany in: Restany, Chryssa, New York, 1977, p. 17

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Betty Parsons, New York, 1961

Guggenheim, New York, 1961

MoMA, New York, 1963

Documenta 4, Kassel, 1968

Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens, 1997

Rethymnon Center for Contemporary Art, Crete, 2000

Mihalarias Art Gallery, Athens, 2001-2002

Documenta 14, Kassel, 2017

Chryssa & New York, Dia Chelsea, New York, 2023

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Daskalopoulos Collection, Athens

The Menil Collection, Houston

National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington

SELECTED LITERATURE

Megan Holly Witko: Chryssa & New York, New York, 2023

Barbara Rose: Chryssa: Cycladic Books 1957-1962, Athens, 1997

Pierre Restany: Chryssa, New York, 1977

Diane Waldman: Chryssa. Selected Works 1955-1967, New York, 1968

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
Cycladic Book, 1957 - 1962
plaster
28 x 14 x 3 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-171

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
Cycladic Book, 1957 - 1962
plaster
32.5 x 30.5 x 3.5 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-189

BLUE VELVET

CHRYSSA - NEON WORKS

At just twenty-one, Chryssa sailed to New York. "I had an enormous curiosity about America and I felt that it would be much easier in America to achieve a freedom of expression rather than in European countries." Shortly after her arrival in the early 1950s, she discovered the neo-Byzantine world of Times Square, with its glowing, blinking signs and letters. The dazzling neon imagery of Times Square had a profound impact on her: "I saw Times Square with its light and letters, and I realized it was as beautiful and difficult to do as Japanese calligraphy... In Times Square the sky is like the gold of Byzantine mosaics or icons. It comes and goes in the foreground instead of remaining in the background." Chryssa transformed these signs into her own symbols and alphabetic forms, capturing what she referred to as the "Homeric wisdom" of the signs. Her genius spanned various mediums, with her neon works standing out as some of her most innovative and groundbreaking creations.

"Chryssa was the first artist to repeatedly work with and push the medium of neon. Engaging with the material in both deconstructive and reconstructive ways, she was asking: Why does it have mass appeal? In the 1960s, when she started working with it, neon as an art form was still in its infancy in relation to, for example, printmaking or painting. Chryssa was a pioneer in the medium, which was likely both a privilege and challenge: artistic constraints in neon had not yet been established, so she could innovate, but she didn't have the benefit of seeing and building on a precedent. On a metaphysical level, she channeled and respected neon's vernacular, use, meaning, and culture. But her orientation was much deeper than that; her use of the medium went beyond how it's perceived culturally and into the real magic of finding ways to harness, bend, and create light. The bend backs and drop backs in her neon work are very intricate. I can imagine her talking to the tube benders and watching them roll their eyes and say, "You want me to do what? And why?" Hers is not the logic of a neon tube bender, it's the logic of an artist- someone who can see dimension. She channeled and brought out the truth of the medium, its full potential. That, I think, is a really impactful part of what pushed neon forward at that time."

Matt Dilling in: Witko, Chryssa & New York, New York, 2023, p. 55

SELECTED LITERATURE

Megan Holly Witko: Chryssa & New York, New York, 2023

Yannis Bolis: Chryssa – Light, Negative, Positive, Athens, 2023

Jacques Lassaing: Chryssa, Paris, 1979

Douglas Schultz: Chryssa: Urban Icons, Buffalo, 1983

Pierre Restany: Chryssa, New York, 1977

Sam Hunter: Chryssa, New York, 1974

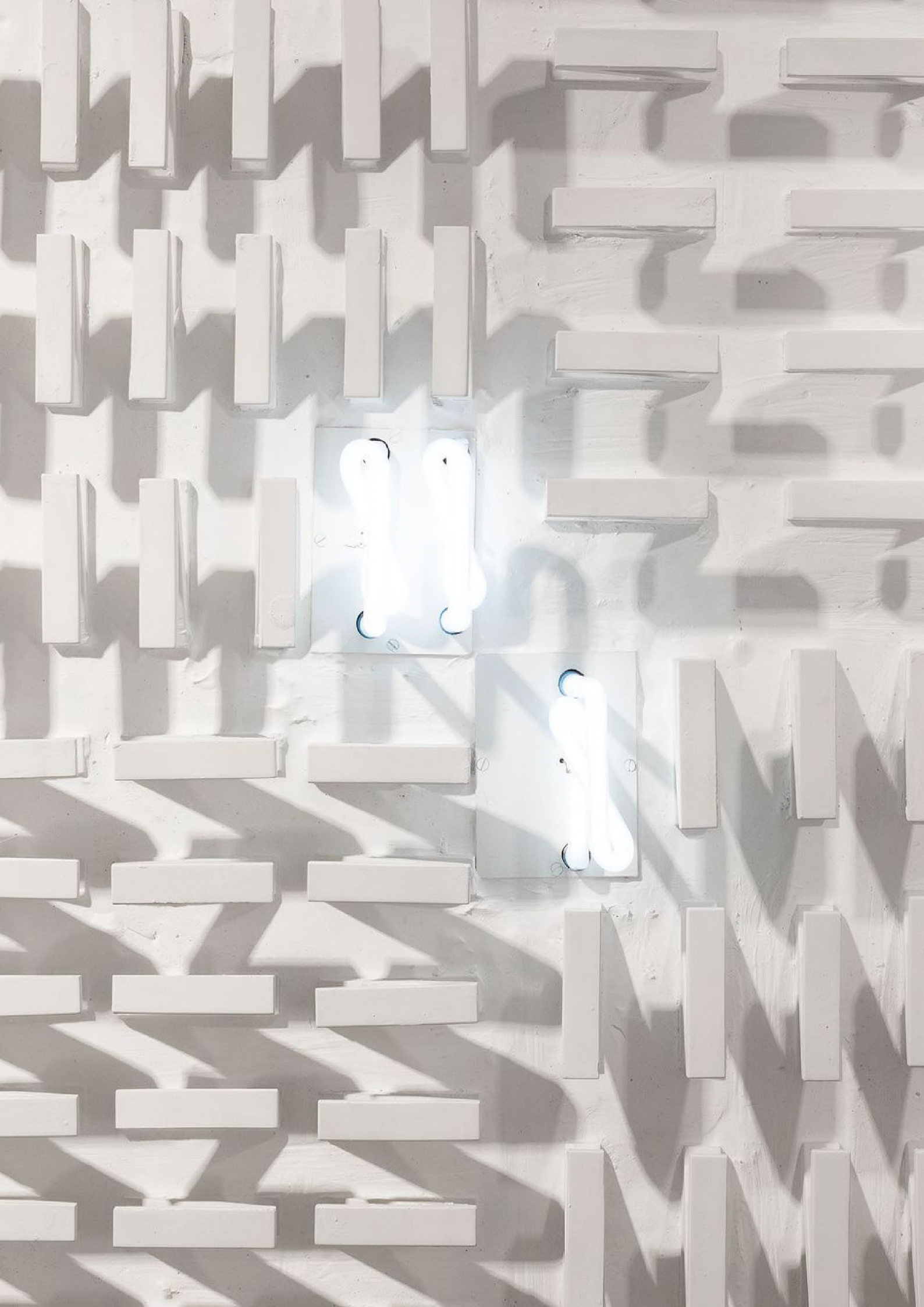
Diane Waldman: Chryssa. Selected Works 1955–1967, New York, 1968

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
Plaster N's I, 1970
mixed media
116.8 x 78.7 x 22.8 cm

Inv.-Nr. 8-28



BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
Untitled, 1973
neon light, plexiglass
98 x 68 x 25.5 cm

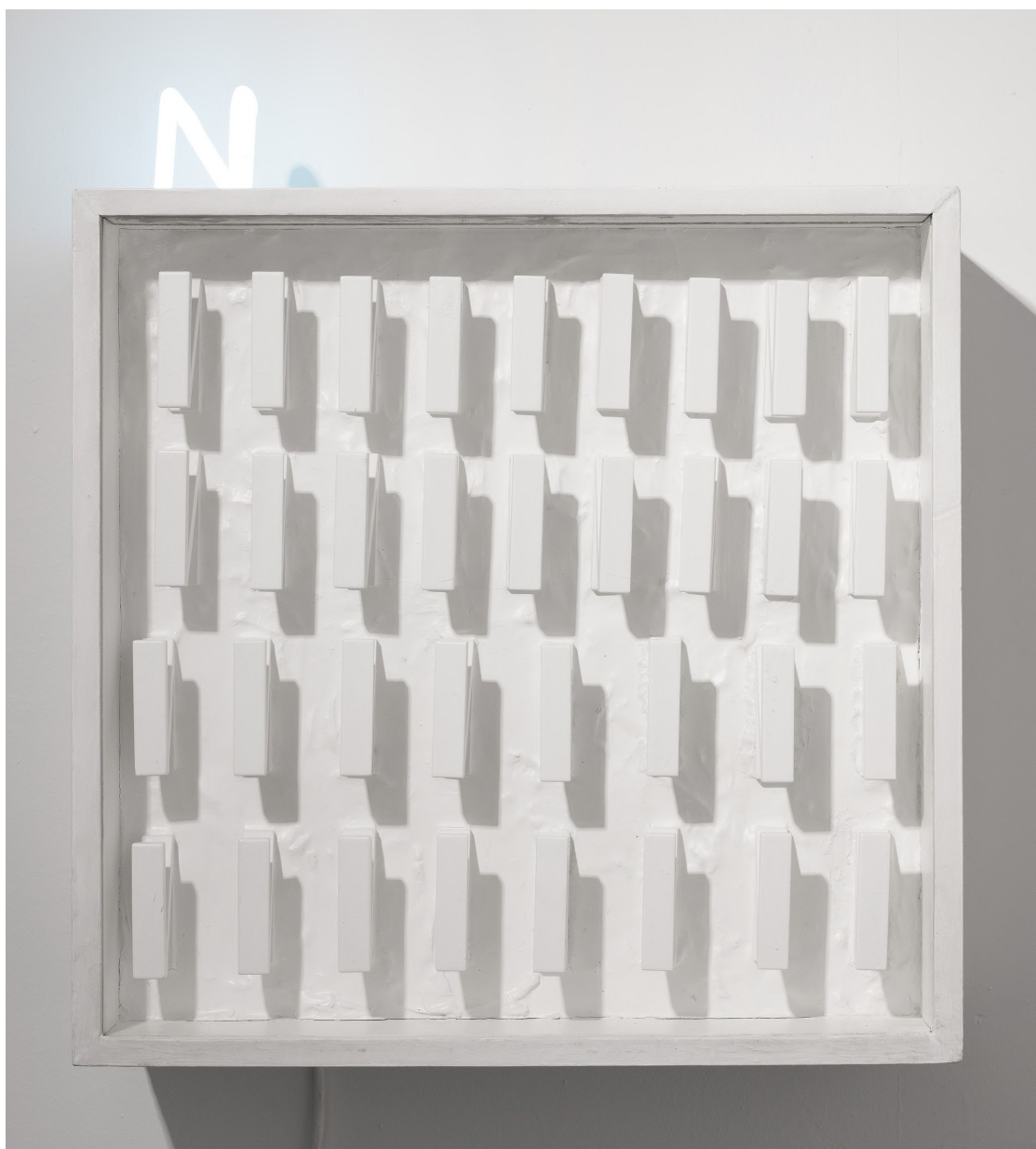
Inv.-Nr. 243-1

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
New York Cityscape, 1974
neon light, plexiglass
92 x 70 x 25 cm

Inv.-Nr. 209-33



Chryssa

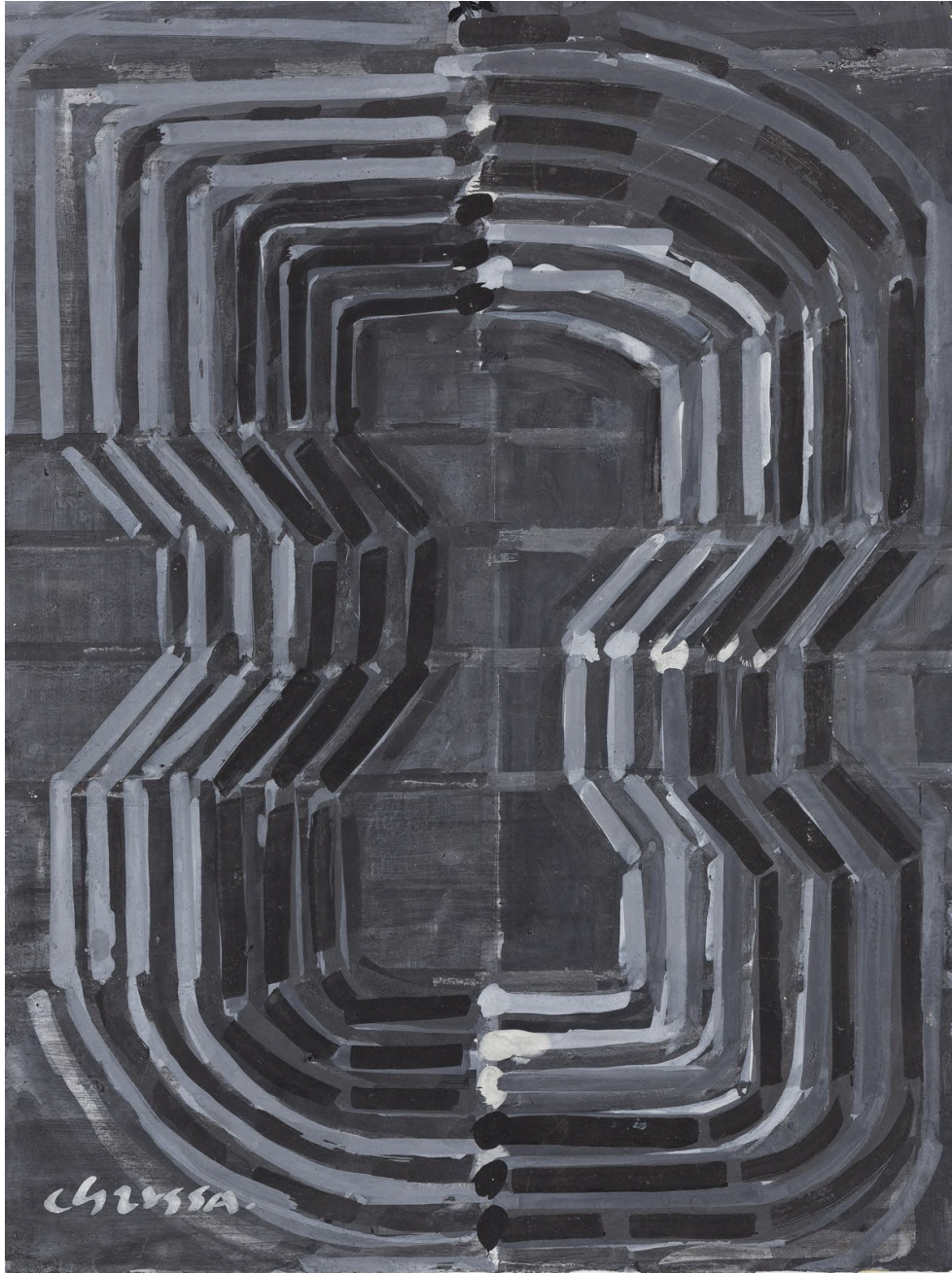
White Plaster with neon N's, 1975 - 1976

plaster, wood and neon light

49 x 49 x 15 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-16

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
Clytemnestra, 1971
gouache on wove paper
38.5 x 29.5 cm

Inv.-Nr. 8-33

This work on paper reflects Chryssa's iconic neon work *Clytemnestra* (1968).

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa

Blue "Hamburger Heaven/Ice Cream Parlour" (BUR), 2009 - 2010

painting aluminium, neon tube

118 x 92 x 40 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-12



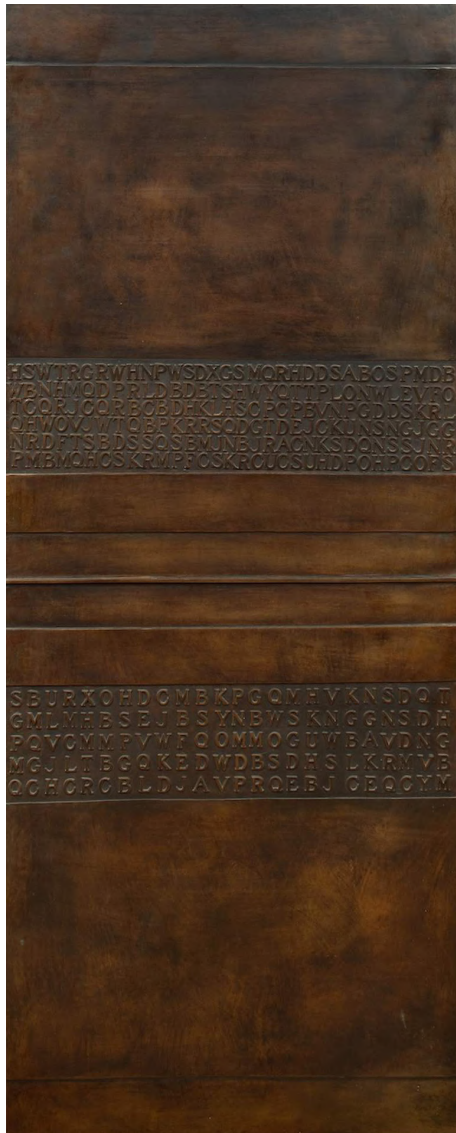
Chryssa

Red "*Hamburger Heaven/Ice Cream Parlour*" (PA), 2009 – 2010

painted aluminium, neon tube

93 x 90 x 31 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-13



Chryssa

Bronze Tablet: Homage to the Seagram building, 1957

bronze

145.8 x 57.2 cm

Inv.-Nr. 253-1

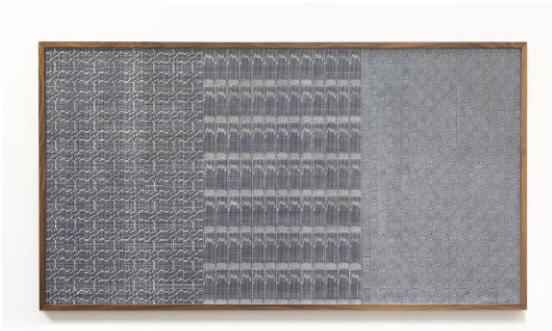
Bronze Tablet: Homage to the Seagram Building (1957) is one of Chryssa's earliest bronze works, combining modernist abstraction with a medium rooted in classical sculpture and ancient inscriptions. The piece pays homage to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building, completed in 1958 on New York's Park Avenue. Chryssa's focus on modularity and form reflects her broader exploration of language, signs, and architecture, influenced by her fascination with the urban aesthetics of New York, a city that continuously inspired her work.



Chapman

BLUE VELVET

FULL WORKLIST



Chryssa

The Magic Carpet (Newspaper), 1962

oil with stamp prints on canvas

123 x 227 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-15



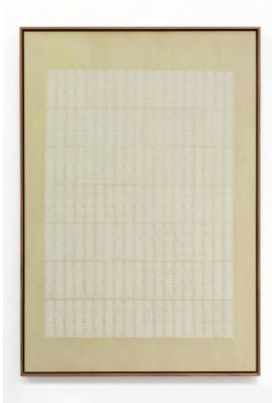
Chryssa

Money Market Mutual Funds, 1962 - 1963

oil with stamp prints on canvas

103 x 79.5 x 7 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-1



Chryssa

Newspaper painting, 1970 - 1973

oil on canvas

129.5 x 88 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-129



Chryssa

Untitled (Diptych, Grey newspaper stock exchange stamps "Industrials"), 1960s

oil and watercolour on canvas

53.5 x 51.5 cm each

Inv.-Nr. 235-58

BLUE VELVET

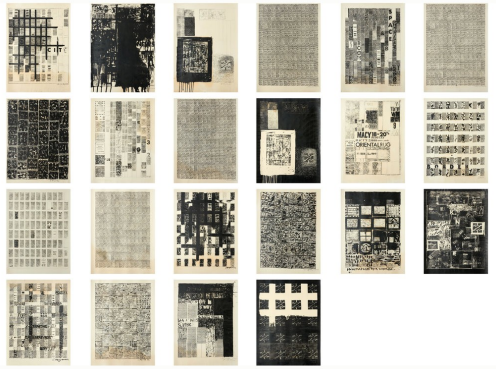


Chryssa

Untitled (Grey newspaper stock exchange stamps), 1960s

oil and graphite with stamp prints on canvas
56 x 50.7 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-62

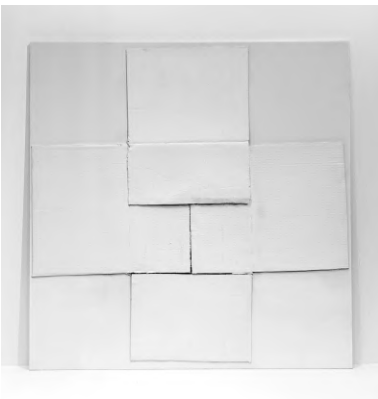


Chryssa

Newspaper Book (Full Portfolio), 1962

Set of 22 offset photolithographs
approx 87.4 x 63.6 cm each

Inv.-Nr. 235-188

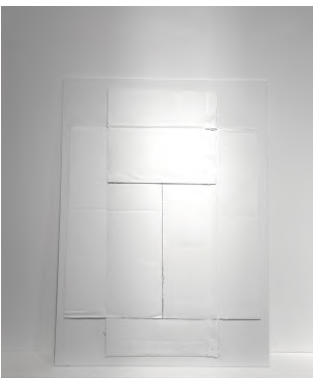


Chryssa

Cycladic Book (Cardboard Installation), 1957 - 1962

plaster, card box, plexiglass and wood
102 x 101.5 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-130



Chryssa

Cycladic Book (cardboard Installation), 1957 - 1962

plaster, cardboard, plexiglass
99 x 72 x 4 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-9

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
Cycladic Book, 1957 - 1962
plaster
28 x 14 x 3 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-171



Chryssa
Cycladic Book, 1957 - 1962
plaster
28 x 14 x 3 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-171



Chryssa
Cycladic Book (S), 1957 - 1962
plaster, paint
30 x 20 x 7 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-8



Chryssa
Jazz, undated (late 1960's)
neon light, plexiglass
70 x 51 x 31 cm

Inv.-Nr. 237-1

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
Plaster N's I, 1970
mixed media
116.8 x 78.7 x 22.8 cm

Inv.-Nr. 8-28



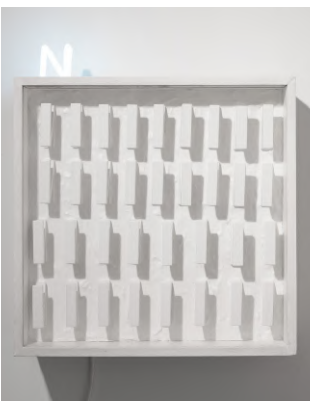
Chryssa
Untitled, 1973
neon light, plexiglass
98 x 68 x 25.5 cm

Inv.-Nr. 243-1



Chryssa
New York Cityscape, 1974
neon light, plexiglass
92 x 70 x 25 cm

Inv.-Nr. 209-33



Chryssa
White Plaster with neon N's, 1975 - 1976
plaster, wood and neon light
49 x 49 x 15 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-16

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
Bach, 1956
wood, plaster
28.6 x 28.6 x 10.2 cm

Inv.-Nr. 253-2



Chryssa
Blue "Hamburger Heaven/Ice Cream Parlour"
(BUR), 2009 - 2010
painted aluminium, neon tube
118 x 92 x 40 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-12



Chryssa
Red "Hamburger Heaven/Ice Cream Parlour"
(PA), 2009 - 2010
painted aluminium, neon tube
93 x 90 x 31 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-13



Chryssa
Krispy Kreme, 2009 - 2010
metal paint with neon tube
84 x 94 x 40.5 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-22

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa

Bronze Tablet: Homage to the Seagram building,
1957

bronze

145.8 x 57.2 cm

Inv.-Nr. 253-1



Chryssa

Bouzouki Capital, 1957 - 1960

bronze, brass and ivory

39 x 37 x 37 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-170



Chryssa

Two Forms For The Gate, 1963

charcoal and ink on paper

73 x 62 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-142



Chryssa

Cityscapes, 2003

painted aluminium

55 x 43 x 9 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-14

BLUE VELVET



Chryssa
Classifieds I, 1959
oil with stamp prints on paper
42 x 34.5 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-18



Chryssa
Untitled, 1959
oil with stamp prints on paper
61 x 46 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-77



Chryssa
"Florida \$89", 1959
oil with stamp prints on paper
56 x 56 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-64



Chryssa
Untitled, 1959
oil with stamp prints on paper
56 x 56 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-66

BLUE VELVET



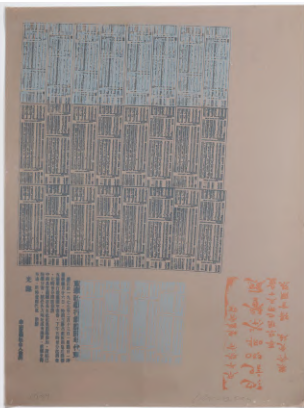
Chryssa

Untitled (Study for Newspaper), Early 1960s

gouache with stamp prints on paper

56 x 76 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-85



Chryssa

Untitled (stock market stamps & sienna chinese characters), 1959

oil with stamp prints on paper

59 x 45 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-6



Chryssa

Study for Plaster N's, ca. 1969

graphite and crayon on transparent paper

44.5 x 45 cm

Inv.-Nr. 235-172



Chryssa

Clytemnestra, 1971

gouache on wove paper

38.5 x 29.5 cm

Inv.-Nr. 8-33

BLUE VELVET

CHRYSSA (ATHENS, 1933 – ATHENS, 2013)

Chryssa (Chryssa Vardea-Mavromichali) was an American artist, born in Greece, who is best known for her monumental assemblages of neon tubes and large-scale minimalist paintings on canvas. Her work refers to early characteristics of Pop Art, Minimalism and Conceptual Art. Today, Chryssa is considered an important representative of these artistic movements and an early pioneer in light art. After studying at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris and the California School of Fine Arts, she moved to New York in 1958. Her first solo exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery in 1961 quickly led to a major show at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Throughout her career, Chryssa was represented by prestigious galleries such as Leo Castelli, Pace, and Denise René. Her work was showcased at renowned institutions, including MoMA, Guggenheim, the Whitney Museum, Tate Modern, Documenta, and the Venice Biennial. Chryssa passed away in Athens in 2013.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND BIENNIALS

2024 Blue Velvet, Zurich
2024 Wrightwood 659, Chicago
2023 Menil Collection, Houston
2023 Dia Foundation, New York
2022 MOMus-Museum Alex Mylona, Athens
2022 Blue Velvet, Zurich
2017 Documenta XVI, Kassel
2007 Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC
2005 Mihalarias Art Centre, Athens
1997 Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
1991 Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
1990 Mihalarias Art Center, Athens
1988 Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
1979 Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris
1977 Documenta VI, Kassel
1975 André Emmerich Gallery, Zurich
1974 Museum of Modern Art, Montreal
1973 Galerie Denis René, New York
1972 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
1972 Venice Biennial
1970/71 Whitney Annual (now Biennial), New York
1970 Galleria d'Arte Contemporanea, Torino
1969 Obelisk Gallery, Boston
1969 Galerie Rive Droite, Paris
1969 Galerie der Spiegel, Cologne
1968 Documenta IV, Kassel
1968 Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
1968 Harvard University, Cambridge
1966/68 Pace Gallery, New York
1966/67 Whitney Annual (now Biennial), New York
1965 Institute of Contemporary Art, Pennsylvania
1963 The Museum of Modern Art, New York
1963/69 Sao Paulo Biennial
1962 Cordier & Ekstrom, New York
1962 Whitney Annual (now Biennial), New York
1961 Guggenheim Museum, New York
1961 Betty Parsons, New York

BLUE VELVET

SELECTED INSTITUTIONAL AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, New York
Boca Raton Museum of Art, Boca Raton FL
Brooklyn Museum, New York
Collection Irene Panagopoulos, Athens
Collection Milly and Arne Glimcher, New York
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC
D. Daskalopoulos Collection, Athens
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis
Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki
Menil Collection, Houston
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Metternich Collection, Düsseldorf
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Nationalgalerie, Berlin
National Gallery of Athens, Athens
National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens
Nelson A. Rockefeller Art Collection, New York
San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Tate Gallery, London
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

SELECTED LITERATURE

Megan Holly Witko: Chryssa & New York, New York, 2023
Yannis Bolis: Chryssa – Light, Negative, Positive, Athens, 2023
Barbara Rose: Chryssa: Cycladic Books 1957-1962, Athens, 1997
Doumas Mavrotas Takis: Chryssa: Cinema Oasis, 1996
Douglas Schultz: Chryssa. Cityscapes, London, 1990
Douglas Schultz: Chryssa: Urban Icons, Buffalo, 1983
Jacques Lassaigue: Chryssa, Paris, 1979
Pierre Restany: Chryssa, New York, 1977
Sam Hunter: Chryssa, Stuttgart, 1974
Diane Waldman: Chryssa. Selected Works 1955–1967, New York, 1968

BLUE VELVET

EXHIBITION VIEWS



Exhibition views of Blue Velvet's solo booth by Chryssa, The Armory Show, New York, 2024

BLUE VELVET



Exhibition views of "Eccentric Abstraction", Blue Velvet, Zurich, 2022

BLUE VELVET



Exhibition views of "Chryssa & New York", Dia Chelsea, New York, 2023

BLUE VELVET



Exhibition views of "Chryssa & New York", The Menil Collection, Houston, 2024 (Photo by Paul Hester. Courtesy The Menil Collection)

BLUE VELVET



Exhibition view of "Chryssa", Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, 1991

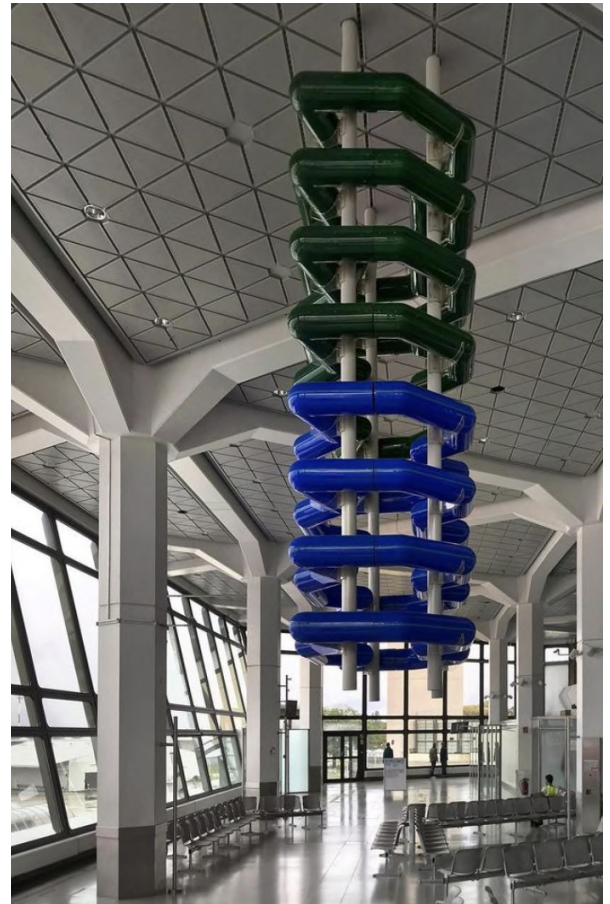


Exhibition view of "Americans 1963", Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1963

BLUE VELVET



Exhibition view, Documenta 14, Kassel, 2017



Chryssa, *Untitled Light Sculpture*, 1980. Installation view, lobby of 33 West Monroe Street, Chicago, 1981 (left). Chryssa, *Flug der Vögel*, 1976. Flughafen Tegel, Berlin (right)
Chryssa, *Flug der Vögel*, 1976. Flughafen Tegel Berlin, Nebelhalle, Warteraum B



BLUE VELVET

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