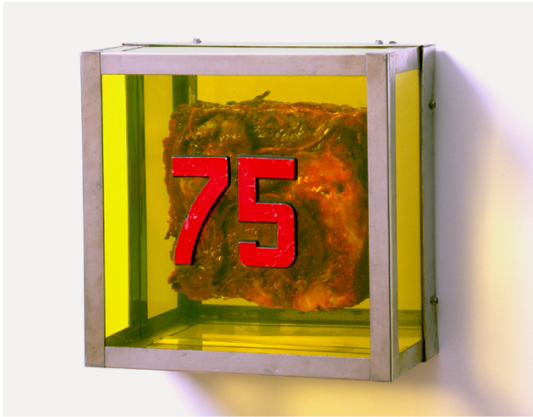


Paul Thek: Dream of Vanishing

May 15 – August 14, 2026
540 West 25th Street
New York



Paul Thek, *Untitled (75)*, 1964 © The Estate of Paul Thek, courtesy Pace Gallery and the Watermill Center

New York — Pace will present *Dream of Vanishing*, an exhibition of more than fifty works of painting, sculpture, and drawing by Paul Thek, one of the most mysterious, provocative, and quietly influential figures in the history of post-1960s art. On view at 540 West 25th Street from May 15 through August 14, the exhibition will center on a suite of never-before-seen works by Thek, presented to the public for the first time in dialogue with some of the artist's most celebrated and best-known works.

Curated by Pace Founder and Chairman Arne Glimcher and Noah Khoshbin, director of the Paul Thek Foundation and curator of The Watermill Center, with Oliver Shultz, Chief Curator at Pace, the exhibition will run in parallel with a solo presentation of Thek's work at Galerie Buchholz in New York. Organized in close collaboration with the Paul Thek Foundation and The Watermill Center, *Dream of Vanishing* will precede The Watermill Center's upcoming exhibition *The Disappearance of Landscape: Oakleyville, 1964–2022* (August 29, 2026 – March 20, 2027), investigating the practices of a group of artists in Paul Thek's circle who lived and worked between New York City and the sparsely populated Fire Island community of Oakleyville from the mid-1960s to present day.

Pace's exhibition marks the first major presentation in New York to survey a wide breadth of Thek's work since the 2010 retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The show takes its title from a line in one of the artist's notebooks, in which he jotted down the words "dream of vanishing." The phrase suggests both reverie and provocation and underscores Thek's lifelong preoccupation with disappearance, erasure, and the ephemeral, which was reflected in his materials and methods. It also suggests an admonition: to actively dream of vanishing as a way of meditating on time, desire, and the body—ideas that cut to the heart of Thek's idiosyncratic yet deeply philosophical engagement with the tragedies and ecstasies of life. Compendia of his correspondences, watercolors, diary entries, poetry, and more, a group of Thek's notebooks—which he considered to be artworks unto themselves—will be included in *Dream of Vanishing*. A new facsimile edition by Pace Publishing of Thek's *Notebook #41* from 1977 will also be released to coincide with the exhibition.

As much myth as historical figure, Thek has often been called the quintessential "artist's artist." By the time of his death in 1988, he had attained the status of legend among other artists but has long been absent from art history textbooks and unknown to the wider public. Deeply fugitive, Thek's periods of willful concealment—such as his abrupt disappearance from the New York art world in 1967, followed by nearly a decade of residing primarily on the small and remote Italian island of Ponza—were always followed by moments of re-emergence in the New York art world, though with increasing degrees of obscurity. In many ways, his efforts at self-erasure reflect his unique philosophy of artmaking, imagining his work not as fixed historical object in time but as a body capable of rebirth, disappearing and reappearing again in some later moment with renewed meaning.

Despite this fugitivity, Thek's work haunts the imagination of successive generations of artists. He remains infamous today for his Technological Reliquaries, the so-called "meat pieces" made between 1964 and 1967, several of which will feature at the center of Pace's presentation. Mixing Catholic religiosity with posthuman technological critique, Thek produced these shockingly lifelike representations of human flesh by carefully sculpting and painting wax. He sectioned his ersatz meat into grotesquely geometric sections and encased it inside transparent vitrines, offering acerbic commentary on the aesthetics of Minimalism and Pop.

While Thek remains best known for his meat pieces, he always defined himself first and foremost as a painter. *Dream of Vanishing* foregrounds Thek's painting practice, examining the full arc of his mature work from canvases he made in Italy in the early 1960s to the "picture light" series of the 1970s and the small, colorful "bad paintings" he produced during the 1980s. These paintings provide a powerful and important context for Thek's better-known sculptural practice. The exhibition will also include several deeply elegiac works from the final two years of the artist's life, a period in which he deals directly with questions of mortality and transience in the face of his AIDS diagnosis.

Among the exhibition's key revelations is a suite of large-scale "scrolls," works on paper that Thek produced in the 1970s and later gifted to his friend and collaborator Robert Wilson, an artist and dramaturg who became the executor of Thek's estate. These five scrolls, previously unseen, each measure ten feet in length. Unlike anything previously known in Thek's oeuvre, they testify to the artist's virtuosic powers of draftsmanship as well as his lyrical approach to mark-making. Entirely abstract, they evoke landscape with fields of black watercolor and ink that become coruscating currents, suggesting the movement of the tides or wind sweeping across expansive planes of grass. Thek's scrolls are inventories of marks, rhyming with abstractions he explored in works made in Italy a decade earlier, several of which are also included in the exhibition.

What emerges across these various bodies of work, which span the early 1960s until Thek's untimely death in 1988, is a vision of the artist's approach to painting as an activity that attests both to presence and absence. The exhibition celebrates the lasting mystery surrounding Thek as an extension of his enduring commitment to mythmaking.

The exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Robert Wilson.

A visionary painter, sculptor, and installation artist, **Paul Thek** (b. 1933, Brooklyn; d. 1988, New York) is lauded as one of the leading installation artists of the 1960s. His artistic career began in the early 1950s, pursuing studies in New York City at the Art Students League, the Pratt Institute, and Cooper Union School of Art, eventually leading him to Miami, where he found an artistic community that included set designer Peter Harvey, photographer Peter Hujar, and playwright Tennessee Williams. Important exhibitions of his work include Paul Thek: Diver, A Retrospective, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, which traveled to Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2010–11); Ponza and Roma, Alexander and Bonin, New York, which traveled to Mai 36 Galerie, Zürich (2015); Like Life: Sculpture, Color, and the Body, Met Breuer, New York (2018); Paul Thek: Interior / Landscape, The Watermill Center, Water Mill, New York (2021); Paul Thek: Italian Hours, La Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, Rome (2022); and Paul Thek, MAMCO Geneva, Switzerland (2024). Thek's work is held in numerous public collections worldwide, including those of the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others.

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential artists and estates of the 20th and 21st centuries, founded by Arne Glimcher in 1960. Holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko, Pace has a unique story that can be traced to its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist, Minimalist, Pop, and Light and Space movements. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery maintains enduring ties with its legacy artists and estates while also making long-term investments in the careers of contemporary artists, including rising painters Pam Evelyn, Li Hei Di, and Lauren Quin as well as established figures such as Loie Hollowell, Kylie Manning, Robert Nava, Adam Pendleton, Marina Perez Simão, and Anicka Yi.

Under the current leadership of CEO Marc Glimcher and President Samantha Rubell, Pace has established itself as a gallery of and for the future. It has played a key role in shaping and building major public and private collections across the globe since its founding. Pace highlights the shared lineages among its intergenerational artists through a robust global exhibition program encompassing 20th-century masterworks and contemporary art, as well as scholarly projects from Pace Publishing, one of the longest standing gallery imprints. Its artist-first ethos extends to public installations, philanthropic events, performances, and other interdisciplinary programming.

Pace also has a strong reputation for collaboration, and it shares representation of some artists with various small and midsize galleries around the world. In 2025, in this spirit of community, Pace became a partner in Pace Di Donna Schrader, a boutique gallery devoted to secondary market sales operating on a global scale. Pace continues its long history of collection-building with this venture, which charts a new path for its work in the secondary market and its stewardship of historic artworks.

Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide, including two galleries in New York—its eight-story headquarters at 540 West 25th Street and an adjacent 8,000-square-foot exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street in Chelsea—and 125 Newbury, an experimental project space in Tribeca named for the gallery's original address on Newbury Street in Boston. Through an exhibition program directed by Arne Glimcher, 125 Newbury mounts innovative shows by emerging artists as well as curated presentations focusing on specific aspects or periods of historical artists' practices. Pace's origin in New York dates to 1963, when it opened its first space in the city on East 57th Street.

Pace has also been active in California for some 60 years, opening its West Coast flagship in Los Angeles in 2022. It maintains European footholds in London, Geneva, and Berlin, where it established a gallery space in 2025. Pace was one of the first international galleries to have a major presence in Asia, where it has been active since 2008, the year it first opened in Beijing's vibrant 798 Art District. It now operates galleries in Seoul and Tokyo along with offices in Beijing and Hong Kong.

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