

Jeffrey  
Deitch

**PETER NAGY**

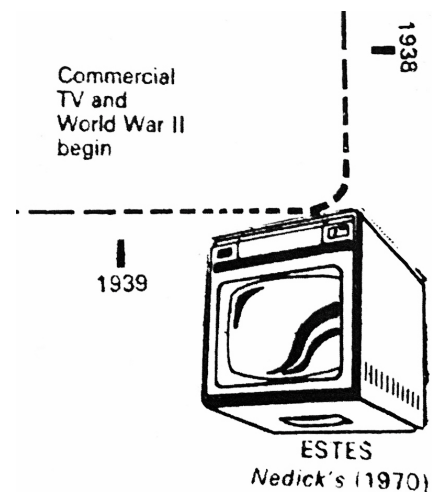
## **ENTERTAINMENT ERASES HISTORY**

**IN COLLABORATION WITH MAGENTA PLAINS**

**MARCH 6 - MAY 16, 2020**

**18 WOOSTER STREET**

It is rare for an artist to double as a gallerist successfully. Peter Nagy has accomplished this from the early stages of his career, beginning in New York and later in New Delhi, India. In the 1980s, his legendary East Village gallery Nature Morte championed a new kind of art: where neo-conceptualism fused with a rediscovered Pop sensibility. Nagy's activity as a gallerist mirrors his artistic explorations around the ways in which the context of art ultimately determines its value and meaning.



Jeffrey Deitch, in collaboration with Magenta Plains, presents *Entertainment Erases History*, a historical exhibition of works by Peter Nagy. *Entertainment Erases History* focuses on the iconic decade in Nagy's career in New York between 1982 and 1992. The works on view—entirely in black-and-white—critique traditional methods of representation by adopting a minimalist spirit of seriality and repetition. *Entertainment Erases History* includes Nagy's anti-commodity Xerox works of the early 1980s and progresses into the *Cancer Painting* series and later architectural paintings, museum floor plans and tongue-in-cheek timelines of contemporary art history.

Deeply self-conscious with a flair for wit and irony, Nagy's works reflect the spirit of New York in the 1980s. Connecting with the propaganda tactics of artists such as Barbara Kruger and Louise Lawler and artists in the Nature Morte community such as Gretchen Bender, Ross Bleckner, and Steven Parrino, Nagy's works reflect the trends of the decade. From the beginnings of a digitized information culture to the infatuation with logos and branding, his practice tackles the obsession with photo-mechanical reproduction, the degradation of information, the development of a hyper-inflated art star system, and the rise of institutional critique.

Upon entering the gallery, the visitor is greeted by Nagy's prophetic statement piece *Entertainment Erases History* (1983), which gives the title to the exhibition. This alternative timeline of 20th-Century art presents a visual representation of the progression of history in which keystone paintings, sculptures, and architecture are replaced by the era's technological innovations (albeit dated from today's vantage point).

Using the paste-up method, Nagy created collages made from advertisements, logos, and found images which were then Xeroxed and offered in unlimited editions. Visitors to Nature Morte in the East Village fondly recall the bin of works-on-paper which they could browse through, including Nagy's Xeroxes. The Xerox process transforms the images of logos and advertisements into physical objects, ready for sale at a modest price for visitors. In *Entertainment Erases History*, the Xeroxes are presented in their traditional paper format as well as enlarged on vinyls to take on the mantle of "important works."

In 1986, Nagy's *Cancer Paintings* debuted at International With Monument, the fabled East Village gallery that launched the careers of Peter Halley and Jeff Koons, among others. For these works, Nagy applied the pathology of cancer to the production of signs, creating "cells" by sandwiching logos and other graphic elements until defamiliarized and abstracted. Among the most widespread and feared diseases, cancer became a catalyst for the artist to expand on a powerful social and psychological metaphor of our time, its inner contradictions, and dysfunctionality.

As the 1990s approached, Nagy began a new series of works in which images of Baroque and Rococo architecture are transformed into psychedelic wallpaper-like patterns. A "cancerous" version of classical architecture, Baroque imagery offers the artist a vehicle to unveil the decadent behaviors of our culture, from consumerism to corporate power. In the coming years, Nagy's paintings would progressively incorporate a wide variety of references and become even more open-ended, leaving us with the impending question: how will our society adapt to the fast-moving digitalized culture and its globalized stage?

Peter Nagy (born Bridgeport, CT 1959) earned a degree in Communication Design, Art History, and Theory from Parsons School of Design, NY, in 1981. His work has been included in institutional exhibitions at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Tate Modern, London, UK; and Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR. In May 1982, Nagy founded Gallery Nature Morte in the East Village along with fellow artist Alan Belcher, starting one of the most influential artist-run galleries of the 1980s. Focusing on conceptually-oriented artists, Nature Morte organized impactful exhibitions of artists such as Sherrie Levine, Vito Acconci, and Richard Pettibone. Nagy has lived and worked in India since 1992 and reopened Nature Morte in New Delhi in 1997. In this new chapter, Nature Morte has brought a generation of Indian artists to international recognition and is the most prominent contemporary art gallery in India today.

Image: Detail of *Entertainment Erases History* (1983)

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**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT ALIA WILLIAMS AT (212) 343-7300, ALIA@DEITCH.COM  
OR OFFICE@DEITCH.COM**