

PETER THE GREAT

BEFORE HE WAS ONE OF INDIA'S LEADING GALLERISTS, PETER NAGY WAS AN ARTIST WORKING IN MANHATTAN'S EAST VILLAGE. A NEW SHOW AT UBER GALLERY JEFFREY DEITCH CELEBRATES HIS PREVIOUS LIFE

In the 1980s, when Nature Morte—Peter Nagy's legendary East Village, New York gallery—was championing a new kind of neo-conceptual-meets-pop art, its founder and gallerist was also, in parallel, working as an artist. His work during this period reflects the spirit of the city back then.

This month, a new exhibition focuses on that work, which Nagy produced between 1982 and 1992. Titled 'Entertainment Erases History', the exhibition features black-and-white works that use seriality and repetition to build a clever criticism of traditional methods of representation. This includes his anti-commodity 'Xerox' works of the early 80s, his 'Cancer Painting' series, and later architectural paintings, museum floor plans and tongue-in-cheek timelines of contemporary art history.

For the 'Xerox' series, Nagy photocopied multiple collages made from advertisements, logos and found images. Visitors to Nature Morte back then fondly recall the bin in the back of the gallery with works-on-paper for sale, which included his "Xeroxes". The process of "xeroxing" transformed the collages into physical objects while ensuring their unlimited reproduction. In the exhibition at Jeffrey Deitch, they are presented in their traditional format, as well as enlarged on vinyls to take on the mantle of "important works".

This collection of Nagy's work takes off from the agitprop of artists such as Barbara Kruger and Louise Lawler, reflecting the dominant trends of the decade: from the beginnings of a digitized information culture to the infatuation with logos and branding; the obsession with photo-mechanical reproduction techniques and the degradation of information; the development of a hyper-inflated art star system; the rise of institutional critique; and finally even the juggernaut of globalization on the distant horizons. Many of the works are being shown only for the second time, having premiered in galleries and museums in the 1980s and rarely seen since. ▲ *'Entertainment Erases History' will be on at Jeffrey Deitch, 18 Wooster Street, New York, from 6 March to 25 April 2020.*



TEXT: DIVYA MISHRA. PHOTO COURTESY OF PETER NAGY AND MAGENTA PLAINS.