

Blinky Palermo

Aptly sited in the naturally lit galleries of Dia:Beacon, *Times of the Day* (1974–76) is a seminal series in the oeuvre of Blinky Palermo, yet one that is rarely seen in its entirety. Conceived by the artist after his relocation to New York City from Düsseldorf in 1973, *Times of the Day* comprises six four-part works and originates Palermo's serialized, multipart *Metal Pictures* (or *Metallbilder*, in German), the last body of work in his short, yet pronounced, career.

The *Metal Pictures* series, which also includes the renowned *To the People of New York City* (1976), was a departure from the site-specific wall pieces and paintings, as well as the *Objects and Cloth Pictures* (*Stoffbilder*), which comprised Palermo's practice from 1964 to 1973. Featured in the fore gallery leading into *Times of the Day*, Palermo's *Winkel Rot-Weiß* (*Angle Red-White*, 1965) is a significant example of his early experimentation with spatial relationships of form and color. In *Winkel Rot-Weiß*, wood stretcher bars act as a sculptural vehicle for painted surfaces. Altering the shape of the conventional canvas and moving the painting surface to its margins, this "pictorial object" addresses the possibility of painting while remaining at the verge of three-dimensionality.

For *Times of the Day*, Palermo composed and sketched the six sequences on paper before executing the contrasting pairs of horizontal bands with acrylic paint on thin aluminum panels. This specific application continued his intense inquiry into the display of color on alternative surfaces. On each panel, Palermo layered several coats of different colors to create dense surfaces of varying hues. Each work may be read from left to right across the wall, from light to dark panels, a development that alludes to a day's progression from sunrise to noon and from sunset to dusk. However, an effect of simultaneity, even dialogue, seems unavoidable when contemplating the installation in its entirety.

Speaking on the *Metal Pictures*, Palermo shared: "The finished work usually consists of a sequence of colors or tones which I was unable to invent or envisage when I started it." Thus *Times of the Day*'s twenty-four individual panels intrinsically

embody a horizon of chromatic invention. The sense of succession is articulated in the space between each panel, generating resting spaces for the eye that repeat throughout the room. Each panel is also minimally projected from the wall by hidden fasteners, lifting the color off the wall and suspending it in space.

With the *Metal Pictures*, Palermo decisively turned his focus away from the production of singular works that had occupied him in the preceding years. As evidenced in *Times of the Day*, he began, instead, to compose serialized groups of paintings on metal, using color and formal patterns to focus on a specific experience of perception. On the one hand, *Times of the Day*'s clean, demarcated bands of color read as striking, didactic signs. Yet, unlike the porosity of canvas, the smooth metal plates provide a flat surface that allows the brush to reveal slight striations and irregularities. This slightest facture attests to the manual activity of painting and lends the work a warmth and personal affect. The *Metal Pictures* succeeded in broadening the parameters of his painting, for as Palermo once suggested: "If I were to work with canvas and stretcher, the whole image of the pictures would be a completely different one."

Blinky Palermo

Blinky Palermo was born Peter Schwarze in Leipzig in 1943. He and his twin brother, Michael, grew up as adopted children under the name Heisterkamp. In 1962 he entered the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, where he studied with Bruno Goller and then with Joseph Beuys. In 1964 he adopted the name Blinky Palermo, which he appropriated from the American boxing promoter-cum-mafioso Frank “Blinky” Palermo, who was famous for being the manager of heavyweight champion Sonny Liston. In 1968 Palermo showed his wall drawings at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich. After visiting New York with Gerhard Richter in 1970, he established a studio there in 1973. Palermo died in 1977 while traveling in the Maldives. The *Times of the Day* series (1974–76) was first shown at the Heiner Friedrich Gallery, New York, in summer 1978. Before his death, Palermo participated in more than seventy exhibitions and represented Germany at the São Paulo Biennial in 1975. He has had posthumous retrospectives at the Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland (1984); the Kunstmuseum Bonn (1993); Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (2002–03); the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (2007–08); and Dia:Beacon, Beacon, New York, and the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2011).

1. *Winkel Rot-Weiß (Angle Red-White)*, 1965
Oil, canvas, and wood
Dia Art Foundation

2. *Grünes Viereck (Green Quadrangle)*, 1967
Casein, cotton, and pressboard
Private collection

3. *Ohne Titel (für Thordes) Untitled (for Thordes)*, 1966
Casein and muslin on wood
Private collection

4. *Times of the Day I*, 1974–75
Acrylic on aluminum
Dia Art Foundation

5. *Times of the Day II*, 1975
Acrylic on aluminum
Dia Art Foundation

6. *Times of the Day III*, 1975
Acrylic on aluminum
Private collection

7. *Times of the Day IV*, 1976
Acrylic on aluminum
Private collection

8. *Times of the Day V*, 1976
Acrylic on aluminum
Private collection

9. *Times of the Day VI*, 1976
Acrylic on aluminum
Private collection

