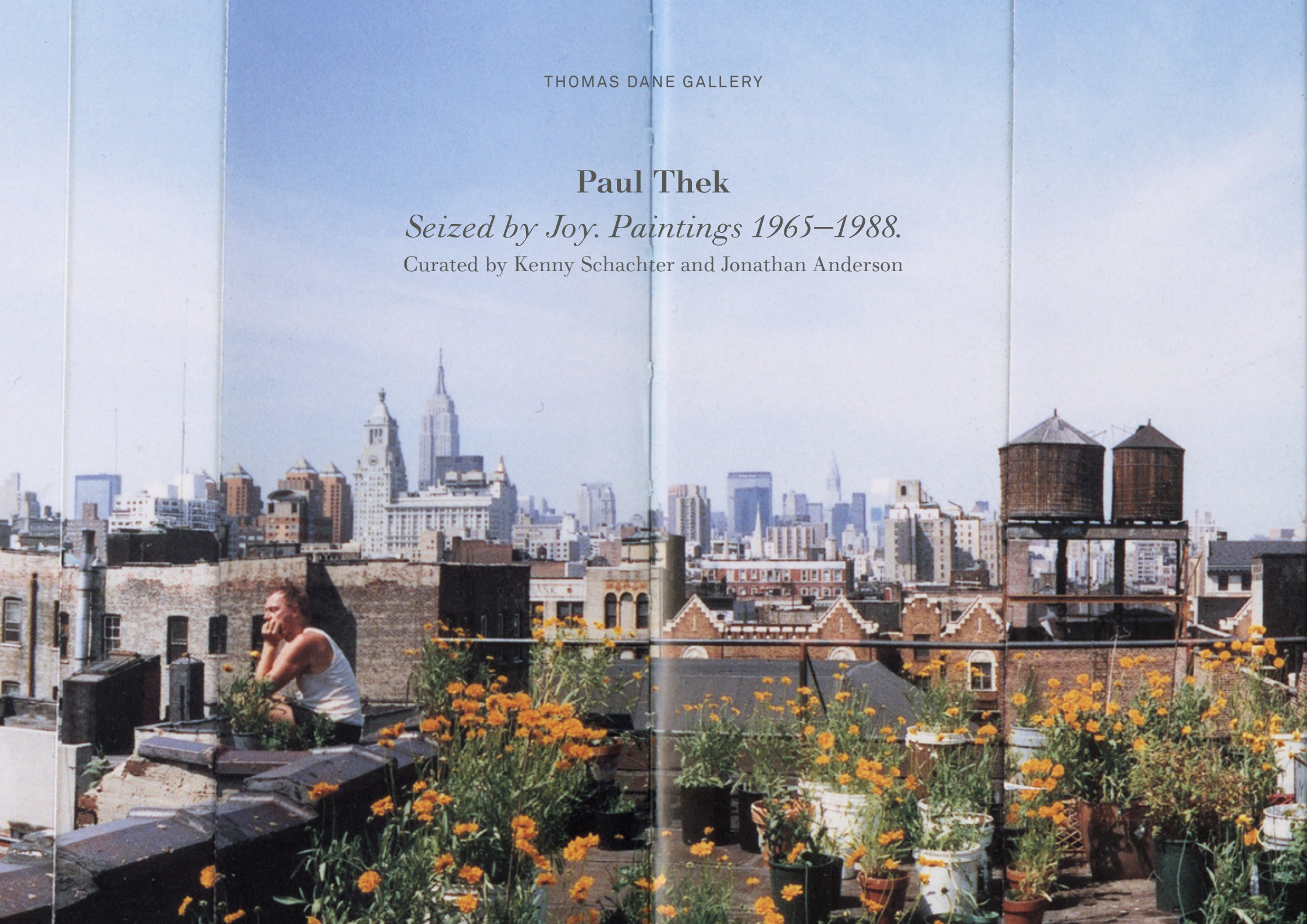


THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Paul Thek

*Seized by Joy. Paintings 1965–1988.*

Curated by Kenny Schachter and Jonathan Anderson





**Paul Thek: Seized by Joy. Paintings 1965–1988.**

Private view: Wednesday 28 May, 6–8pm

Exhibition dates: 29 May–2 August 2025

Thomas Dane Gallery

11 Duke Street, St James's, London SW1

Thomas Dane Gallery will present an exhibition of American artist Paul Thek (b. 1933, Brooklyn, New York, d. 1988, Manhattan, New York) curated by Kenny Schachter and Jonathan Anderson, featuring paintings, works on paper and a previously unseen notebook of sketches and writings. Spanning three decades of the artist's career, this will be the first exhibition of Thek's work in the UK for over a decade, and the first in the UK to focus on the artist's painting practice.

Paul Thek sketched and painted throughout his life, portraying friends and loved ones, documenting his surroundings and giving form to conscious and unconscious thoughts and desires. Painting and drawing seized the artist with joy, and beyond, provided a form of idiomatic religious fervour. Unlike his sculptural works, which often confront the viewer with their visceral physicality, Thek's paintings offer a quieter, more delicate meditation on life and experience. Using watercolour, gouache and ink, Thek created dreamlike compositions, often featuring poetic sentences or brief texts infused with spiritual and existential undertones. Transient by nature, the sheets of newsprint on which Thek frequently painted become themselves a profound metaphor, reflecting the fleeting moments of thought and emotion that the artist sought to capture. From Thek's early technical drawings to his sublime landscapes of Ponza and the Mediterranean coastline, and finally his iconic New York cityscapes and abstract compositions combining text and symbols, the exhibition will offer a window onto the more intimate and personal realms of Thek's visual universe.



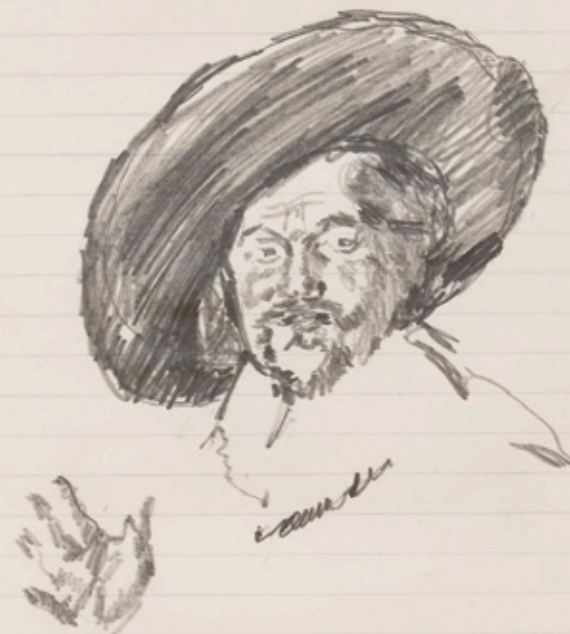
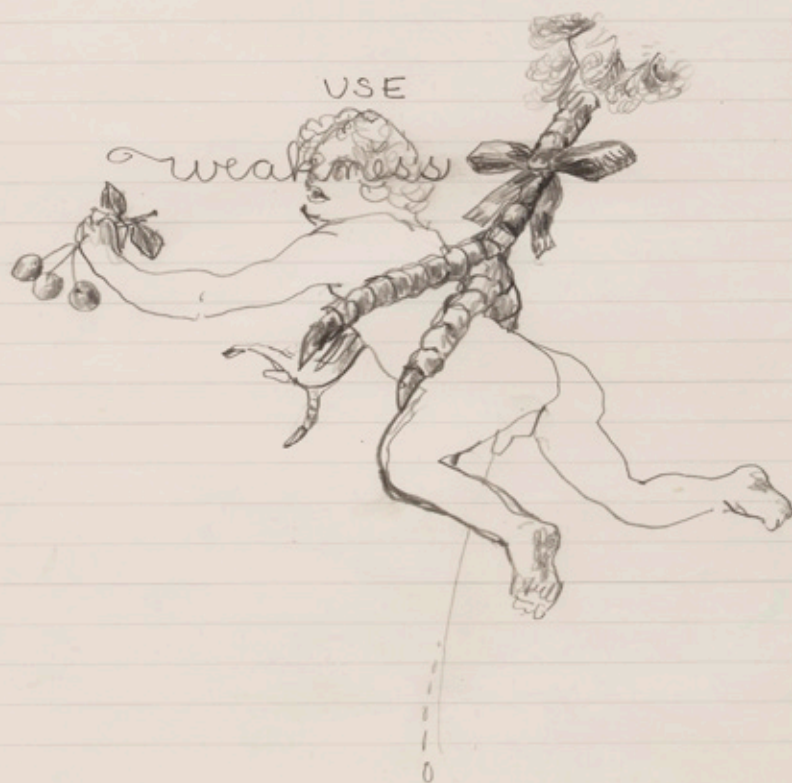
Peter Hujar, *Paul Thek (IV)*, 1975

*I have started painting  
again, after five years ... It  
feels really fine. The whole  
fall season seems to have  
been beautifully psychic,  
the same inner things  
happening to many people  
far apart. I think now  
perhaps we're all part of  
one big creature, like coral,  
separate consciousnesses,  
parts of a great big one.  
Just a theory so far.*

Paul Thek, letter to Eva Hesse, 1969



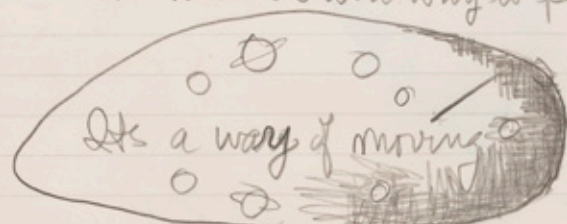
A FULLER LIFE  
RICHER, MORE REWARDING  
FRIENDS.





# SAVE STRENGTH!

Use weakness as a way to people, not strength.



The trouble with trucks is after.

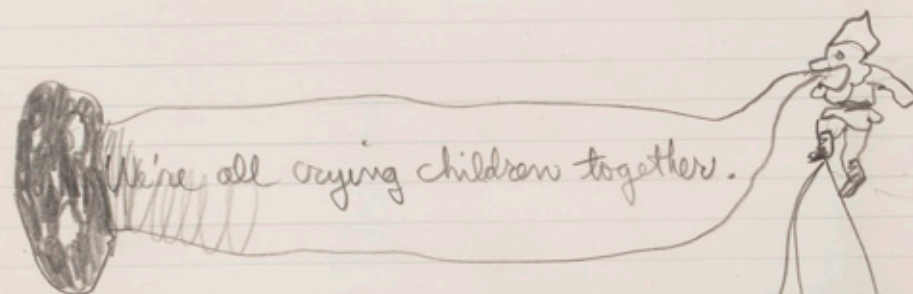
I feel lonely and full.

Learn how to break the ice.

① LONG TIME  
Chinese Grace

COMING AND GOING

IT'S NO ROSE GARDEN, IT'S A ROSE.  
I want to cry, but keep laughing.



I'm not interested in efficiency!



DADA

SUPERDADA

Fall in love  
with your life.

SHOW OFF.



CHICKEN  
LITTLE



Installation view, *Paul Thek: Seized by Joy. Paintings 1965–1988*, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, 2025





*Untitled (cityscape)*, 1972. Acrylic on canvas, 166 x 142 cm. (65 1/4 x 56 in.)









Installation view, *Paul Thek: Seized by Joy. Paintings 1965–1988*, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, 2025



*Window with Figure*, 1987  
 acrylic on canvas board  
 30.5 x 23 cm.  
 12 x 9 in.

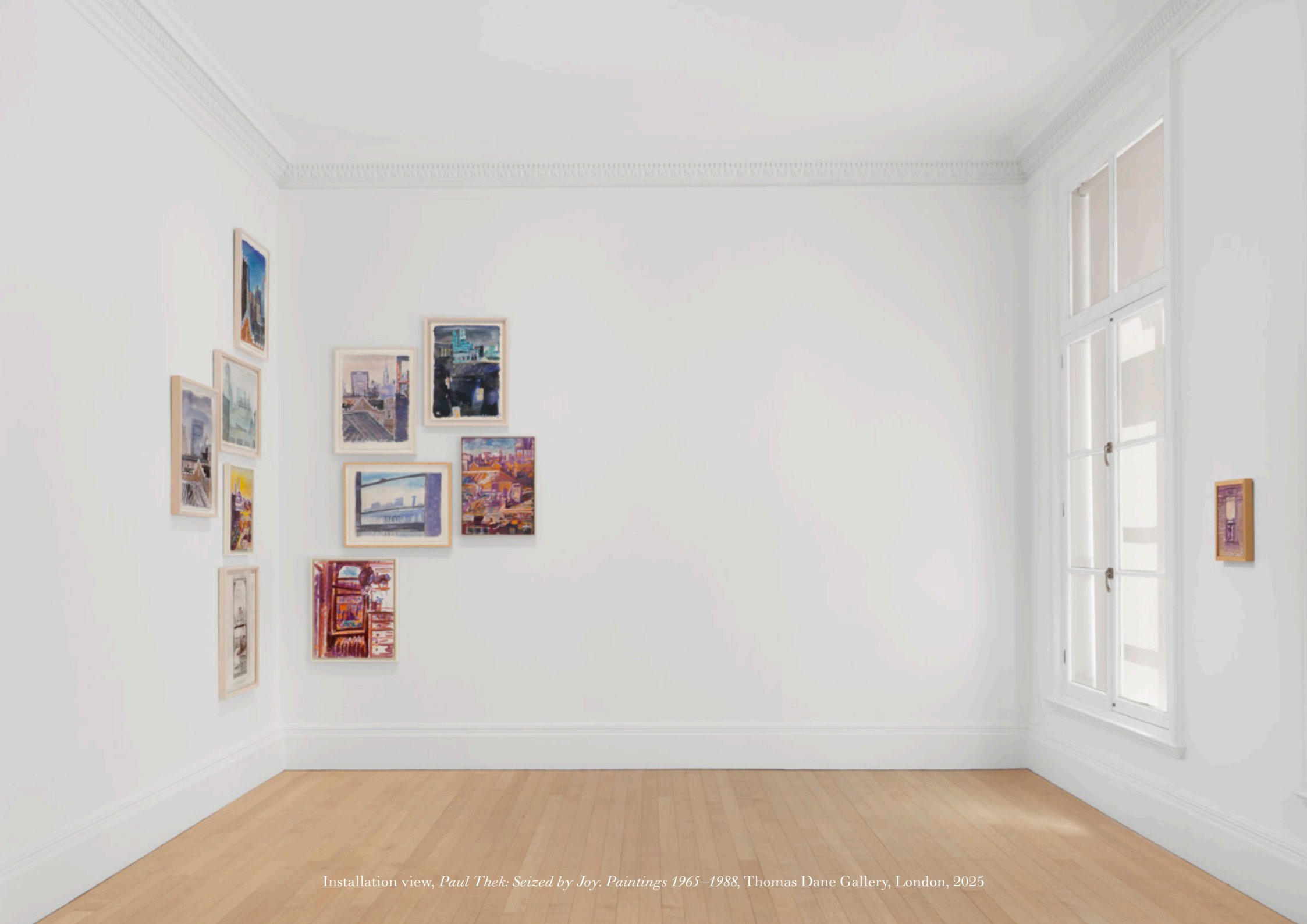


*Windowscape*, 1987  
 acrylic on canvas  
 23 x 30.5 cm.  
 9 x 12 in.





Lou Zeldis, *Portrait of Paul Thek on his rooftop*, June 1988



Installation view, *Paul Thek: Seized by Joy. Paintings 1965–1988*, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, 2025





*Indoor Window*, 1983-84  
acrylic on canvas board  
61 x 50.5 cm.  
24 x 20 in.

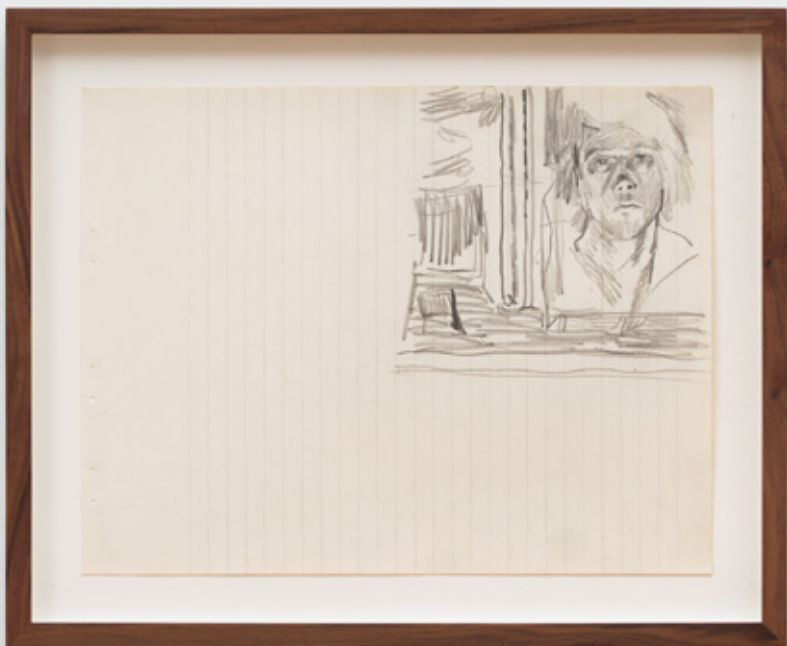


*Untitled (Rooftop water tower)*, 1983-84. Watercolour, chalk on paper, 46 x 61 cm. (18 x 24 in.)



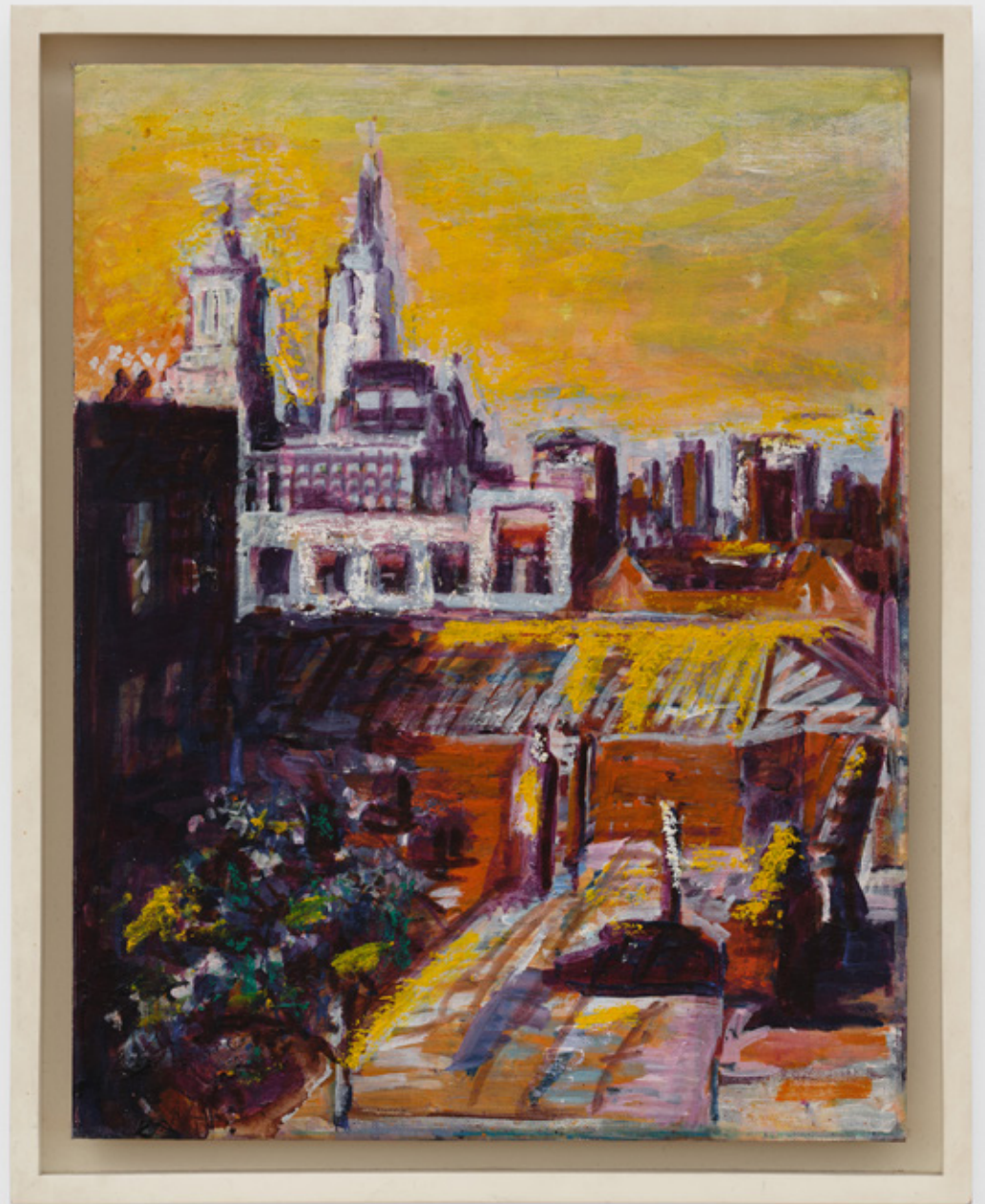


Installation view, *Paul Thek: Seized by Joy. Paintings 1965–1988*, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, 2025



*Untitled*, 1969–70  
pencil on paper  
27 x 21 cm. each  
10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.





*Rooftops*, 1983  
acrylic on canvas board  
35.5 x 45.7 cm.  
14 x 18 in.



*In Ponza, Paul Thek the mystical artist had touched eternity and perhaps, if it can exist, a form of absolute creation, a golden age of painting that he was never to find again.*

*This nostalgia for the island and the years spent living freely there and painting as he wished highlight the paradoxes inherent to his personality: the yearning to be in Italy when he was in New York or vice versa, to enjoy artistic recognition in his country and at the same time to escape it, to participate in a social life but also to withdraw from it, to desire for emotional stability while wanting to be free, and to be Catholic while not respecting its precepts at that time.*

Valérie Da Costa, *Paul Thek in Italy (1962-1976)*,  
Paris: Les presses du réel, 2022, p. 284





Installation view, *Paul Thek: Seized by Joy. Paintings 1965–1988*, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, 2025



*Untitled (Path through trees)*, 1987. Watercolour on paper, 45.7 x 61 cm. (18 x 24 in.)





*Untitled (Birds on the shore)*, 1987. Watercolour, pencil on paper, 45.7 x 61 cm. (18 x 24 in.)



*Untitled (Seascape with figures)*, 1970. Acrylic on canvas mounted on linen, 20 x 25 cm. (7 3/4 x 9 3/4 in.)





*Untitled (Seashore)*, 1987. Watercolour, pencil on paper, 47 x 60 cm. (18 1/2 x 23 1/2 in.)



*Untitled (Sailboat)*, 1982. Watercolour, pencil on paper, 45.7 x 61 cm. (18 x 24 in.)





Installation view, *Paul Thek: Seized by Joy. Paintings 1965–1988*, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, 2025



*Untitled (beach with figures)*, 1986. Watercolour, graphite on paper, 46 x 61 cm. (18 x 24 in.)





*Untitled (Figure on Shore)*, 1987. Watercolour on paper, 45.7 x 61 cm. (18 x 24 in.)



*Untitled (Figure running on the beach)*, 1987. Watercolour on paper, 45.7 x 61 cm. (18 x 24 in.)





Installation view, *Paul Thek: Seized by Joy. Paintings 1965–1988*, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, 2025



*Untitled (Sun through window)*, 1987  
watercolour on paper  
61 x 45.7 cm.  
24 x 18 in.





*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. each (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)



*Untitled (Grapes)*, 1974. Enamel on newspaper, 58 x 84 cm. (22 3/4 x 33 in.)





*The newspaper works of Paul Thek, which began in earnest in the late 1960s and continued unabated until his death in 1988, had a narrative arc that was at first denied by an idiosyncratic expression of hope and beauty, then ended in a more ambiguous state of disillusionment. They are narrative parables sharing as much with literature, history, and religion as they do with the history of art. The early newspaper works at times resemble visceral-level children's illustrations, depicting Thek's inimitable ideals of happiness and love, and possessing an eternal quality above and apart from the material world. Though he exhorted "Fall in love with your life" in note-pad musings, on the same page together with unbridled optimism were indications of tragedy and torment. "We're all crying children together," he wrote.*

Kenny Schachter, 'Nothing but Time: The Newspaper Works of Paul Thek' in *Paul Thek: Artist's Artist*, Karlsruhe: ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, 2008, p. 121

*[Thek] did in painting  
what he had already done  
in the field of faith: he  
operated like someone who  
doubts the continuation and  
soundness of the whole,  
who seeks renewal and  
gathers his forces.*

Margrit Brehm, Axel Heil and Roberto Ohrt, *Paul  
Thek: Tales the Tortoise Taught Us*, Cologne: Verlag der  
Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008, p. 58







*Untitled (Birds and Mushroom)*, 1969  
gouache, collage on newspaper  
58.5 x 43 cm.  
23 x 17 in.



*Untitled (Hammer and Sickle)*, 1975  
 crayon on newspaper  
 58 x 85 cm.  
 22 3/4 x 33 1/2 in.



*Untitled (Hammer and Sickle)*, 1975  
 crayon on newspaper  
 58 x 85 cm.  
 22 3/4 x 33 1/2 in.





*NOW + THEN it occurs to me  
that I really LIKE my life, my  
life as BAD EXAMPLE, all  
its fears, doubts, trepidations,  
neuroses and/or manic-hysterical  
hebephrenic schizophrenic  
depressions were REALLY just  
a kind of me-lobster, me-ant,  
cleaning of my antennae, but  
that my life itself, the fact that is  
of a 'lost man,' I find that very  
exciting, very thrilling, exalting,  
exalting like Nietzsche-fool,  
exalting like Rimbaud-Nikinsky-  
fool. Etc. etc. We do gracefully  
what we like to do.*

Paul Thek, notebook, 1979





*Untitled (Five Dragons)*, 1971. Acrylic on newspaper, 57.5 x 84 cm. (22 3/4 x 33 in.)





*Untitled (Bunnies on stairs)*, 1984  
 acrylic on canvas board  
 91.5 x 61 cm.  
 36 x 24 in.

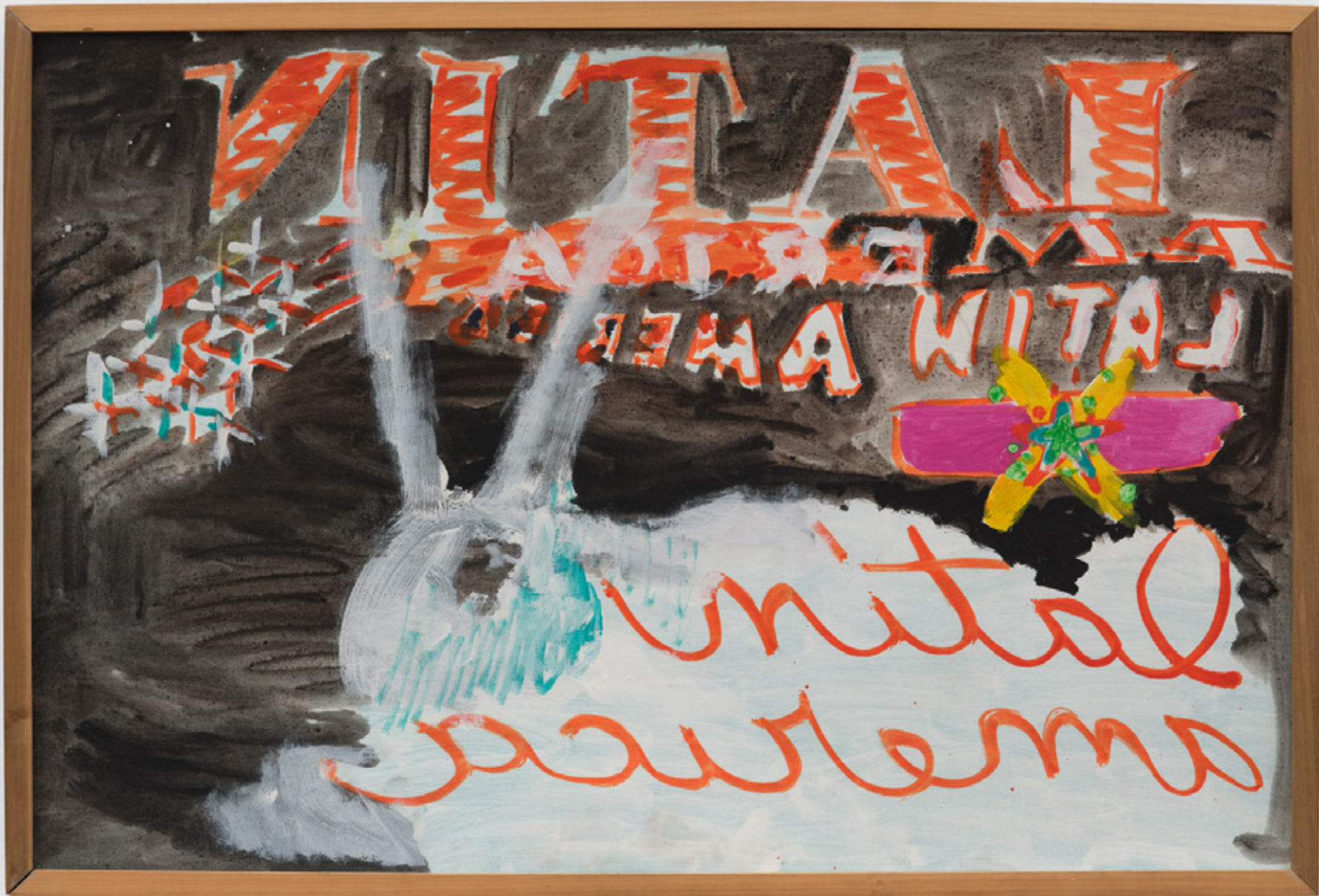


*Untitled (South America)*, 1984  
 acrylic on canvas board  
 61 x 46 cm.  
 24 x 18 in.



Installation view, *Paul Thek*, Camden Art Centre, London, England, 1999–2000





*Untitled (Latin America)*, 1984. Oil on canvas, 61 x 91.5 cm. (24 x 36 in.)



*Untitled (Hands)*, 1988  
 acrylic on canvas board  
 30.5 x 40.6 cm.  
 12 x 16 in.



*Untitled (Ribbon)*, 1988  
 acrylic on canvas board  
 30.5 x 40.6 cm.  
 12 x 16 in.





*Abstraction Pattern on a Cave Wall*, 1980. Oil on canvas, 30.5 x 40.5 cm. (12 x 16 in.)





Installation view, *Paul Thek: Diver, A Retrospective*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY, 2009–2010



*I am doing newspaper ptgs,  
interesting, mind stopping,  
and super BRAT, but still  
I miss the good painting of  
Ponza, the eternal painting,  
while here in 'civilization'  
I want only to do BAD  
painting, to shock and hurt  
them, I don't want to console  
them etc etc but it hurts MY  
spirit ALWAYS to do the bad  
painting, so I miss Ponza  
and eternity.*

Paul Thek, letter to Franz Deckwitz, 15 July 1981, New York



Paul Thek in East Village, New York, 1985



*Untitled (Green Landscape)*, 1969  
 acrylic on newspaper  
 42 x 58 cm.  
 16 1/2 x 22 3/4 in.



*Untitled (Landscape)*, 1969  
 acrylic on newspaper  
 42 x 58 cm.  
 16 1/2 x 22 3/4 in.



*I am now here in Ponza, where I wanted to be all along  
— all's perfect ...*

Paul Thek, letter to Franz Deckwitz, 14 July 1969



Paul Thek's photograph of Ponza, Italy, *circa* 1970





*Untitled (Five Pencil studies)*, 1970. Graphite on paper, 29.5 x 40 cm. (11 1/2 x 15 3/4 in.)





*Untitled (Sketch of shrubs and water)*, 1970. Graphite on paper, 30 x 39.5 cm. (11 3/4 x 15 1/2 in.)



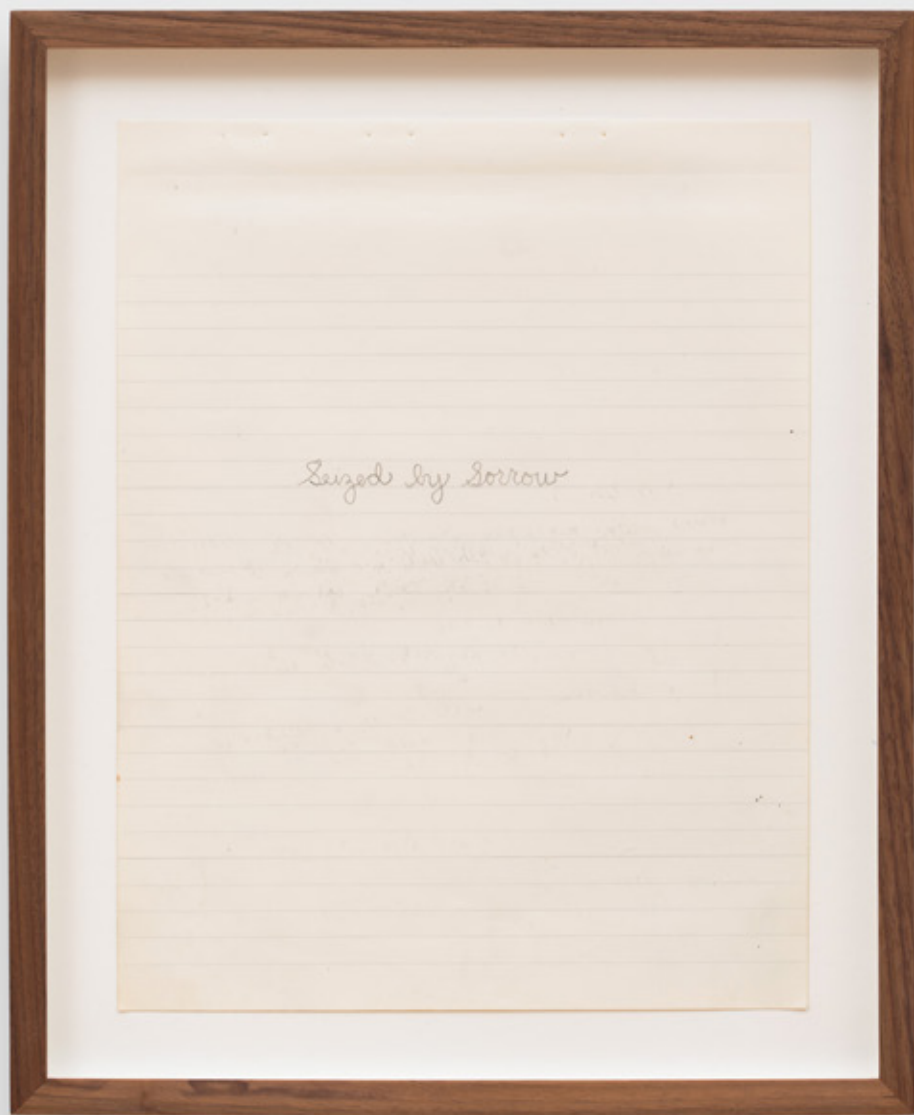
*Untitled (4 Ponza Landscapes)*, 1970. Ink on paper, 30 x 41 cm. (11 3/4 x 16 1/4 in.)





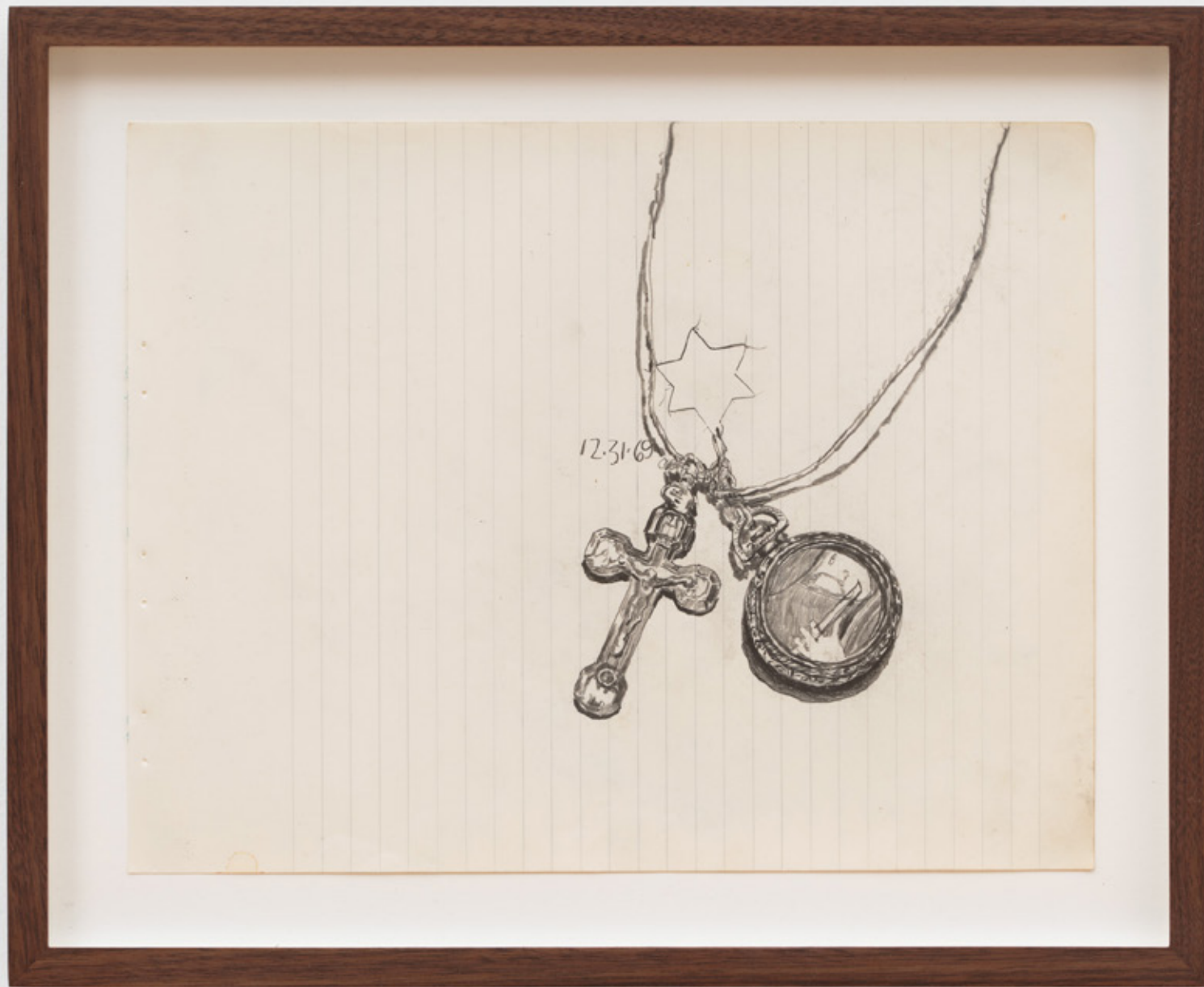
Thek's sketchbook in his studio in Prinsengracht, Amderstam, Netherlands, 1969





*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. each (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)





*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)



*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. each (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)





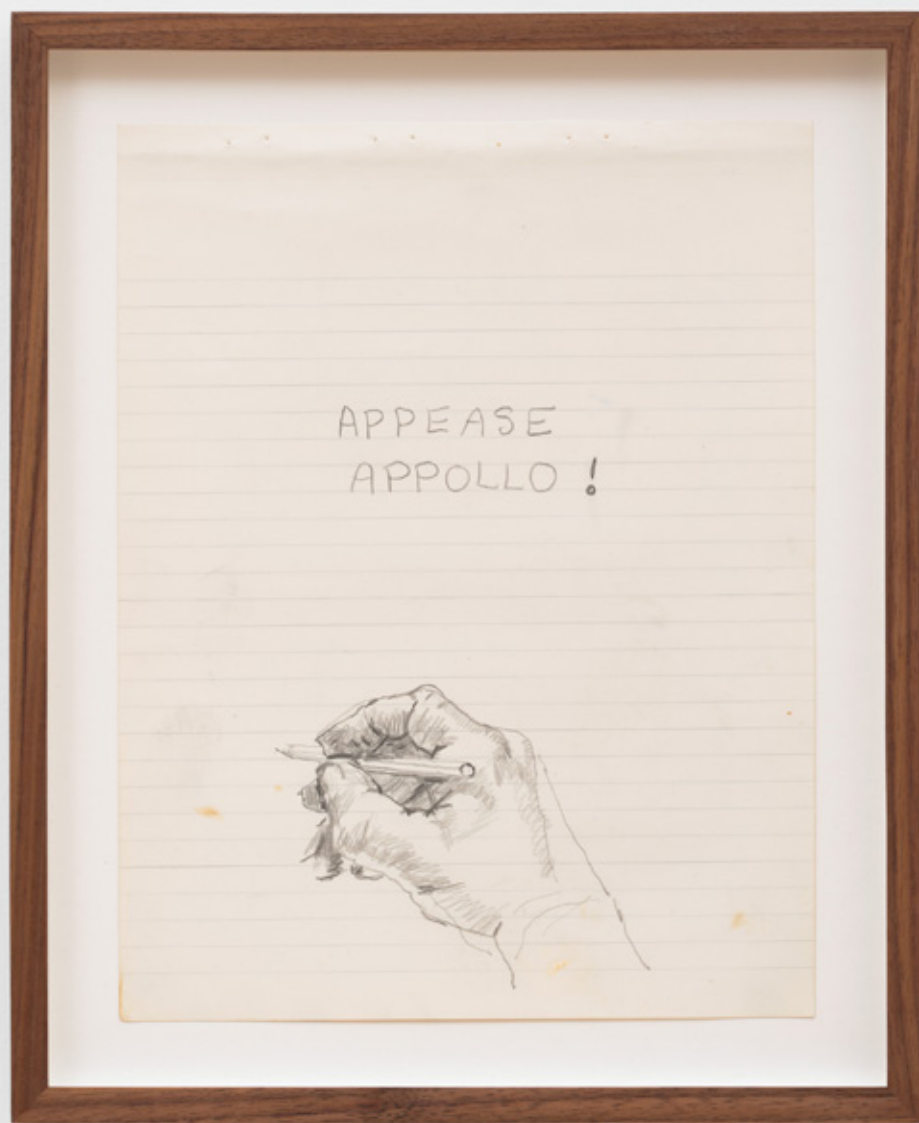
*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)



*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)



*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)

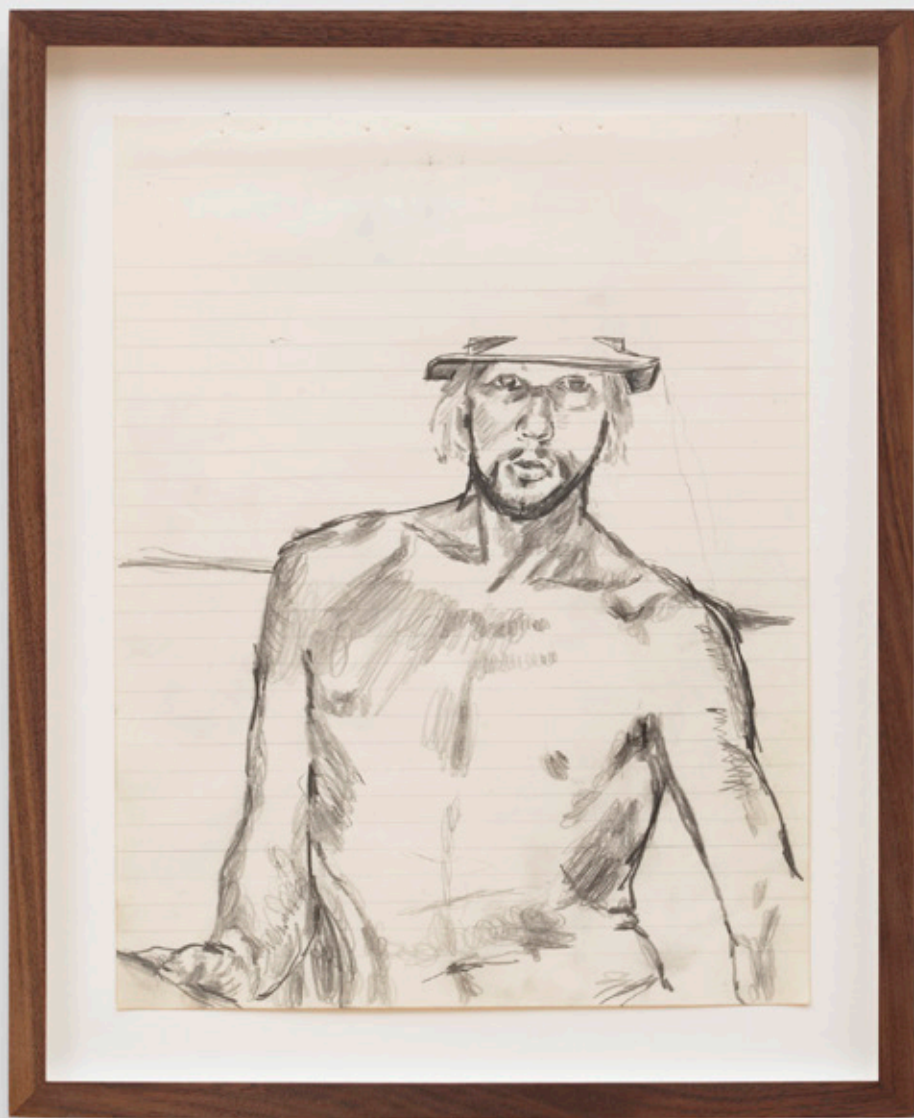


*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)





*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. each (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)



*Untitled*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper, 27 x 21 cm. each (10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)





*In the two years I have been in Europe, I have seen beautiful things happening that are now only slowly beginning to reach the other side of the ocean ... for example Arte Povera. That is, after all, the only possible answer to the technologization of American Art.*

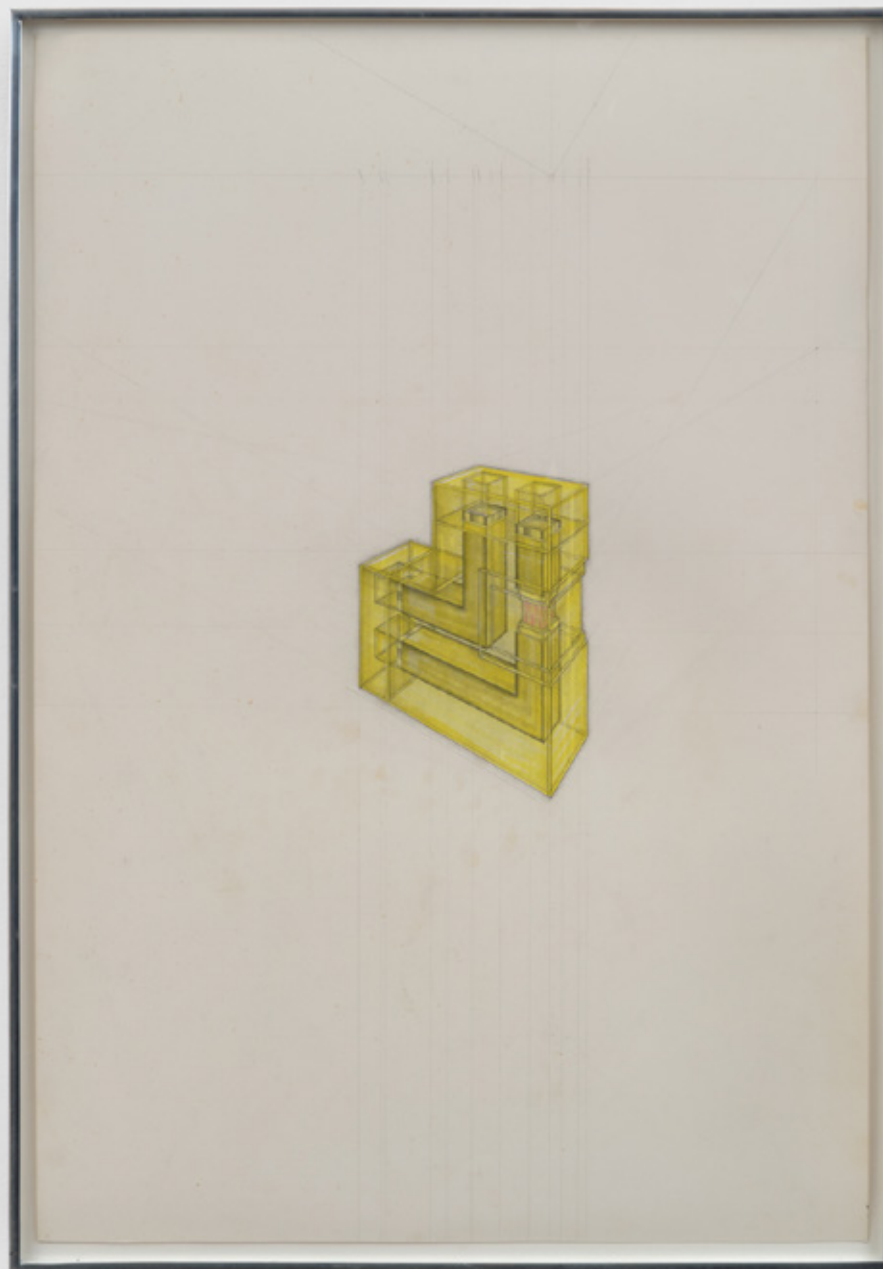
Paul Thek, letter to Franz Deckwitz, 26 April 1969

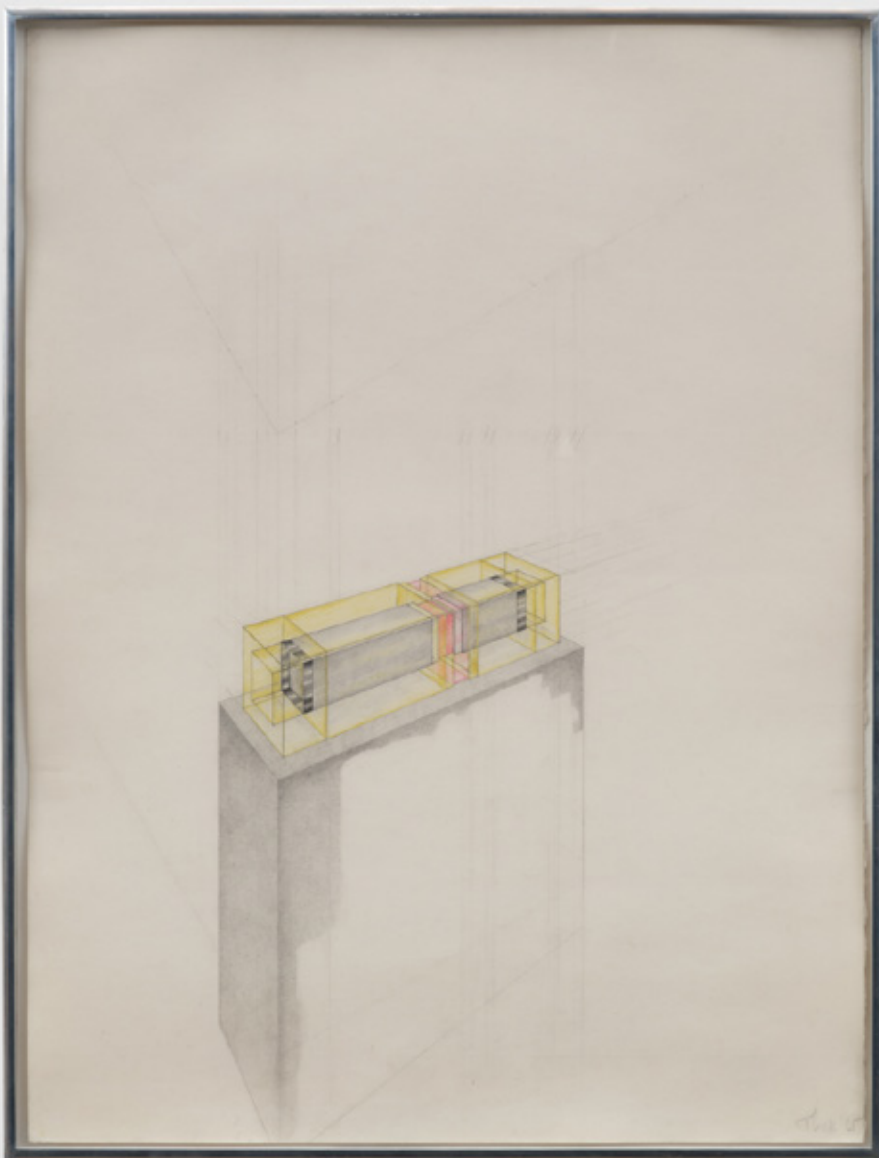


Installation view, *Paul Thek: Works in the Context of Contemporary Art*,  
Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg, Germany, 2008



*Study for L Column*, 1966  
coloured pencil on paper  
81 x 56 cm.  
32 x 22 in.





*Untitled (Column Study)*, 1965  
pencil, coloured pencil on paper  
66 x 49.5 cm.  
26 x 19 1/2 in.





Detail, Peter Hujar, *Paul Thek, Oakleyville, Fire Island*, 1967



**Paul Thek** was born in Brooklyn, New York, and emerged in the 1960s as a radical voice in contemporary art, challenging conventional aesthetics with formally and psychologically complex works. He is best known for his ‘meat pieces’, hyper realistic wax sculptures of flesh, and his immersive environments, such as *The Tomb* (1967), which explored themes of mortality, spirituality and the human condition. Thek’s work defies easy categorisation, blending elements of Pop Art, Minimalism and Conceptual Art while maintaining a deeply poetic and introspective quality. Institutional exhibitions include *Paul Thek* at MAMCO, Geneva, Switzerland (2024); *Paul Thek: Diver* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY (2010–2011), travelling to the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh PA (2011), and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles CA (2011); *Paul Thek: Works in the Context of Contemporary Art*, ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany (2007–2008), travelling to Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg, Germany (2008), and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain (2009). Thek’s work is held by institutions in the United States, England, Germany, France and The Netherlands.

**Kenny Schachter** is an artist, writer and lecturer. Schachter has written on Paul Thek for MIT Press, in addition to a book with Vito Acconci for Springer-Verlag. He has a regular column on Artnet News and co-authored *The NFT Book*, published by Rowman & Littlefield in 2023. He contributes to various international publications including *The Art Newspaper*, *New York Magazine* and *The Times Magazine* in the UK. In 2023–2024, Schachter had a mid-career survey of his work at the Francisco Carolinum Museum in Linz, Austria, accompanied by a publication, and in 2018 a retrospective at Joel Mesler’s Rental Gallery, New York. He is represented by Nagel Draxler Gallery in Germany and Jupiter Gallery in New York.

**Jonathan Anderson** is a designer with a curatorial approach to fashion making and brand building, renowned for his innovative and modern interpretation of both womenswear and menswear. Born in Northern Ireland in 1984, Anderson launched his eponymous label, JW Anderson in 2008, quickly gaining critical acclaim and commercial success. In 2013, he was appointed Creative Director of LOEWE, which he turned into a cultural brand with a prismatic identity weaving a vibrant interest for craft with a cerebral yet playful approach to design. In 2016 he founded the LOEWE FOUNDATION Craft Prize, the world’s first international award for contemporary craft, and a year later, curated the *Disobedient Bodies* exhibition at The Hepworth, Wakefield. Since 2019, he has been a Trustee to the Board of the V&A. For his work, Anderson has received numerous accolades, including International Designer of the Year Award by the CDFA and multiple British Fashion Awards, earning him a place in Time Magazine’s Most Influential People of 2024 in their Time100 list.

For sales and exhibition enquiries please contact **Pietro Pantalani** at [pietro@thomasdane.com](mailto:pietro@thomasdane.com)

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