

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**VERTIGO**

An exhibition of works by  
**Bontecou Duchamp Hesse Johns**  
**Morris Nauman Ruff**  
**Starns Stella**

at

**Leo Castelli Gallery**  
**59 East 79<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**New York, NY 10021**

**April 26 through June 7, 2002**

This concept for the Vertigo show was inspired by Marcel Duchamp's 1935 kinetic-art *Rotoreliefs*. Many contemporary artists seem to have been influenced by the work of Marcel Duchamp, and much of the art made in the 60's and 70's that can be traced back, directly or indirectly, to the *Rotoreliefs*. Reality changed after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001; the whole world experienced a collective Vertigo: the disordered condition in which individuals feel that their immediate environment is whirling about, dizziness, a confusion. An art exhibition organized around the theme of vertigo seemed especially appropriate. The main criteria for the selection of the works in the resulting show is that they contain some sort of relationship (visually, physically, psychologically) that is analogous to the characteristics of Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs*: spinning, spiraling, circling.

**BONTECOU:** Her organic sculptures are constructed from a variety of industrial materials (steel, canvas, copper wire.) The obsessive topography of the surface skin of *Construction*, 1960 and *Untitled*, 1960 creates a radiating topology of *spiraling*, web structures whose nest-like forms are almost oral in nature.

**DUCHAMP:** Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs* are a series of 12 cardboard disks printed with spiral or eccentric circle motifs that create optical illusions when revolving. The *Rotoreliefs* were first shown in October 1935 at a fair displaying amateur inventions and gadgets in Paris. These optical experiments were motivated by his "desire to escape from traditional means of expression," and provide examples of "playful physics." The circle

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is a shape that characterized much of Duchamp's works and readymades. His circular motifs "symbolize the creative impulse as the rotary movement in the upward spiral of evolution," (Arturo Schwartz)

**HESSE:** In *Untitled (Vertical Abstraction)*, 1960, the concentric circles drawn with a compass are cropped at the left and right edges. Nevertheless, the suggestion of spinning effect is not diminished.

**JOHNS:** Johns made an important use of the circle at the beginning of his career with his iconic "targets." Painted with complimentary colors the targets stimulate the perception of the viewer. *White Target*, 1968, is a monochromatic example that achieves the same result.

In the 90's the image of a spiral galaxy started to appear in Johns' work, like in *Untitled*, 1997.

**MORRIS:** The mirrors facing each other in *Pharmacy*, 1962, constitute an enclosed system resulting in an infinite series of cross-reflections.

**NAUMAN:** The black and white lithograph *Human Companionship, Human Drain* 1981 is a symbolic downward spiral, and a psychological comment on the vertigo of human relationships. The circular movement in the photo-collage *Untitled (New York City, American Music Festival)* 1987, is suggested by snapshots of the feet of a dancer and a fragment of mice.

**RUFF:** The stars in the photograph *Stern 11h 16m/-40*, 1990, relate to a galaxy. The camera lens reveals infinitely more stars than are normally visible to the naked eye: this is the vertigo of looking into the infinity of space (and time.)

**STARNS:** *Structure of Thought #6* suggests a circular movement similar to the Thomas Ruff piece: if you lie on the ground and look at the sky, the feeling of the vertigo of heights you experience is in reverse.

**STELLA:** In *Jill*, 1959 Frank Stella used concentric diamonds of silver burglar alarm tape to create a work which, without using a circular shape, nevertheless contains the circling elements that characterize the show. In a certain way the painting seems to relate to the shape of the stars in the Ruff photo.