

Dan Basen

Opening: February 12, 2026

595 Madison Avenue
6 Floor
New York



Dan Basen, *Hershey's*, 1963

Dan Murray Basen (b. 1939 – d. 1970) is a mercurial, enigmatic, and captivating figure who trafficked in the avant-garde Manhattan artworld of the 1960s. Basen introduced the Happenings performance art movement to Baltimore in 1962 and performed with Beat poets like Allen Ginsberg. He orchestrated intermedia events in Manhattan and West Hartford, Connecticut during the mid-1960s. Basen rubbed shoulders with Fluxus artists like Al Hansen and American Modernists like Ed Giobbi. He also co-directed the Flame Gallery—an early underground venue that exhibited nascent artists like Les Levine, Walter De Maria and Bryce Marden before they became household names. Alongside Salvador Dalí, Basen helped narrate Charles Henri Ford's experimental queer film classic, *Johnny Minotaur* (1971). He also exhibited his towering installations, wooden sculptures, motley paintings, and fantastical box constructions at Betty Parsons and the Allan Stone Gallery, which represented Basen throughout the decade.

Basen's work was prominently shown in important museums including the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston, MA), the Wadsworth Atheneum, and the San Francisco Museum of Art, amongst many others. He participated in some of the era's most important and genre-defying group shows such as the Byron Gallery's "The Box Show" (1965), showing alongside Arman, Arakawa, Andy Warhol, Sol LeWitt, and Louise Nevelson, amongst many others. In spring 1965, Allan Stone gave the twenty-year-old Basen a two-person show, pairing him with the Swiss assemblage artist Daniel Spoerri. Basen was collected and patronized by prominent collectors ranging from his long-time mentor and lover, Samuel J. Wagstaff, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's director, Thomas P.F. Hoving, to the American folk art collector duo, Howard and Jean Lipman, as well as Pop Art bastion Emily Tremaine Hall, the maverick Eugene Schwartz, and the ecumenical collector-politician, Nelson Rockefeller. Despite Basen's temperamental nature, all were quite fond of Basen.

However, due to his tragic death at the age of 30, Basen was quickly eclipsed by art history. This was compounded by his refusal to remain satisfied with the restrictions of any one mode as Basen, lauded as a Pop artist during his early career, moved with ease from performance art to *nouveau réalisme* and *objet trouvé* assemblages to folk painting. This exhibition, the first major retrospective of Basen's work, is thus a comprehensive and thoroughly researched endeavor. It is paired with an accompanying monograph published by Skira, *Dan Basen's Antiestablishment Expressionism*.

Dan Murray Basen (1939-1970) was a captivating and largely overlooked artist of the 1960s downtown Manhattan scene. Though long neglected by art history, he left a lasting impression on those who knew him, friends, lovers, and fellow artists alike. He helped introduce Allan Kaprow's Happenings to Baltimore, blurred the line between Pop art and Nouveau Réalisme, and exhibited alongside icons like Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Robert Rauschenberg. Yet he resisted easy classification, critiquing commercial Pop, dabbling in folk art, surrealist film, performance, and assemblage.

In September 2025, Editions Skira Paris published an art historical monograph on Dan Basen written by Ekin Erkan and featuring an introduction by Jonathan Katz.

Galerie Gmurzynska is an international art gallery with locations in Zurich and New York. The gallery was founded in 1965 in Cologne, Germany by the Polish born Antonina Gmurzynska and specialises in 20th century Modern and Contemporary Classics. Forty years after its establishment, Krystyna Gmurzynska and Mathias Rastorfer relocated the gallery from Cologne to its new flagship location in Zurich. From the beginning, the gallery was interested in organizing exhibitions that had a documentary character both through the choice of themes and through its publications.

Known for its museum quality and uniquely curated exhibitions, Galerie Gmurzynska has hosted well over 200 shows in its various premises and published over 300 art historical catalogues and catalogue raisonné in close collaboration with experts worldwide. Moreover, the gallery has represented the estates of some of the world's greatest artists such as Yves Klein, Louise Nevelson, Wifredo Lam and Roberto Matta, in some cases for several generations. Furthermore, the gallery represents contemporary artists Robert Indiana, Christo and Ronnie Cutrone among many others.