

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Stuart Regen Gallery
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ON KAWARA EXHIBITION

March 19 - April 16, 1991
Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10:00 - 6:00

The Stuart Regen Gallery is pleased to present recent "Date Paintings" by one of the foremost Conceptual artists, **On Kawara**. On view in the main gallery will be several of **Kawara's** "Date Paintings," varying in size and painted on monochromatic, blue-gray backgrounds.

Beginning in the 1960s Conceptual art set out to challenge the notion of the material art object. When **Kawara** painted his first "Date Painting" on January 4, 1966, he inaugurated the "Today Series," an ongoing body of work now numbering more than 1500 canvases. In contrast to the other series which form part of **Kawara's** oeuvre-- "I Went," "I Read," "I Met," postcards saying "I Got Up At...," telegrams announcing "I Am Still Alive," as well as the 100 Years Calendar, and the One Million Years - Past and One Million Years - Future volumes--the "Today Series" takes the form of traditional paintings.

By its designation of the date on which the work was created each painting in the "Today Series" represents a single day. Letters, numerals and punctuation marks, scaled to a pre-determined sized canvas, are hand-painted horizontally across its center. The monochromatic canvases range from cerulean blue, to blue-gray, to red. Each painting is accompanied by a subtitle and also a hand-made box that contains part of a newspaper from the day and the city where the work was painted. The subtitles range in content from long quotes to short phrases, from a notation of a personal thought to an international event. The box affirms the painting's definition as an object while the subtitles and newspaper anchor and juxtapose the work of art to existing, daily reality.

Kawara has exhibited extensively throughout the United States as well as abroad. His oeuvre has also been the subject of numerous books, catalogues, and essays.

For further information please contact Stuart Regen or Shaun Caley at the gallery.

The Today Series reflects Kawara's understanding of the critical issues of painting confronting the artists immediately preceding him. In the wake of Abstract Expressionism, Kawara sought to revitalize painting, having found that the expressive brushwork and gestural handling of paint characteristic of that decade had been drained of their original power. This led to an investigation of the meaning of the painted surface in its relation to external reality. In the years just before the date painting, the question of how to make painting its own, separate, non-referential reality may be the most crucial consideration. Stella's quote "what you see is what you see" succinctly summarizes Kawara's desire to eliminate personal reference and illusionism from his painting.

Works in the Today Series dispense with all manner of illusionism. The letters and numbers of the day's date replace traditional imagery and composition. Instead, the configuration of abstract symbols engenders figuration while the conventions of composition yield to the demands of "composing the date". Kawara's paintings are self-sufficient statements. The designators of the given date serve as the curvilinear and linear parts of a coherent visual whole. In the sense that one cannot actually "see" a date, they offer no information about their relationship to external reality. Within the confines of the painted canvas, the date—otherwise a mere abstraction—assumes concrete form and shapes. The Today Series incorporates the idea of painting as an independent presence into the content of the work. By the very fact of its existence, each painting by Kawara, paradoxically, asserts that it is "present" while its date refers to a time already past.