

# VENUS OVER MANHATTAN

Press Release

## **Maryan S. Maryan: *Ecce Homo***

February 1 – March 9, 2024

Opening: Thursday, February 1, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

## **Venus Over Manhattan**

39 Great Jones Street

New York, NY 10012



(New York, NY) — Opening February 1, 2024, **Venus Over Manhattan** presents ***Ecce Homo***, a testimonial film written and performed by painter **Maryan**. Filmed in 1975, *Ecce Homo* recounts Maryan's harrowing experience as a young Jewish man during the Holocaust. The film is composed of Maryan's anecdotal narration interspersed with arresting images of human violence, from the Holocaust to the K.K.K to the Vietnam war. Grappling with his survival in a post-Holocaust world, Maryan questions what it means to be human, and laments the bitter suffering that exists across the globe. A selection of archival materials, used by the artist during the production of the film, will also be on view.

Maryan (née Pinkas Bursztyn) was born in 1927 to a working-class family in the south of Poland. He was only 12 years old when the Nazis invaded and imprisoned his family. After six years of

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inconceivable cruelty, Auschwitz was liberated, and Maryan was freed. He was the only member of his family to survive. Over the next decade, Maryan bounced from country to country, seeking identity and community in a world that had utterly failed him. He pursued painting, having shown great artistic promise as a child. Although he studied at both the Bezalel Art Academy in Jerusalem and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, it was in New York City where he produced his most prolific, and arguably greatest, body of work.

Maryan moved to New York City in 1960s, eventually taking up residence in the Chelsea Hotel. He turned his apartment into an alcove of artistic inspiration, covering his walls with paintings, African masks, and Polish ephemera. It was here that he would eventually film *Ecce Homo*, with the intricate assortment of art and objects as his backdrop. Maryan, who had felt unwanted and ostracized in Europe, felt a sense of belonging at the Chelsea Hotel. His neighbors were creatives and misfits alike, united under a shared sense of displacement.

The inspiration for the film came from an experience with a psychiatrist, who asked a struggling Maryan to process his life through drawing. Maryan, who had been suffering from increasingly difficult periods of mental and emotional anguish, found solace in this exercise and produced 478 ink drawings. These drawings catalogued stories, details, and memories from his life, focusing specifically on his childhood and his experience within the concentration camps. Once a man who was fiercely determined to shed the label of "Holocaust artist," Maryan recognized the vital importance of sharing his story. In 1975, with his friend and filmmaker Kenny Schneider, Maryan recorded the 90 minute, 16mm, black and white *Ecce Homo*.

The title *Ecce Homo* is taken from Catholic theology and is Latin for "behold the man." These are said to be the words that Pontius Pilate—the Roman governor who ordered for Jesus' execution—shouted as he beheld Christ hanging on the cross. Historically, these words have come to reference the Catholic veneration of Christ's martyrdom. Maryan, who often incorporated Catholic symbolism into his work, claimed that "the difference between the Jews who were murdered in concentration camps and Jesus is that Jesus was forewarned that his end would be bad and bitter, and he went to the cross in full consciousness. The Jews who were slaughtered did not know until the last moment that they were to be murdered."

### ABOUT MARYAN

Maryan was born Pinkas Bursztyn in 1928 in Nowy-Sącz, Poland. He attended the Bezalel School in Jerusalem, the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris, and studied with Fernand Léger. Maryan's work has been the subject of numerous international solo presentations, including exhibitions at the the Tel Aviv Museum of Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami; Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris; the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, Chicago; and the André Emmerich Gallery, New York. His work is frequently featured in important group exhibitions, including presentations at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Maryan's work is held in the permanent collections of numerous public institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Art Institute of

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Chicago, Chicago; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; and the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Maryan lived and worked in New York City until his death in 1977.

For additional information about the exhibition, please contact the gallery at [info@venusovermanhattan.com](mailto:info@venusovermanhattan.com)

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39 Great Jones Street &  
55 Great Jones Street  
New York, NY 10012

### **GALLERY HOURS**

Tuesday – Saturday  
11:00 am – 6:00 pm