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MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

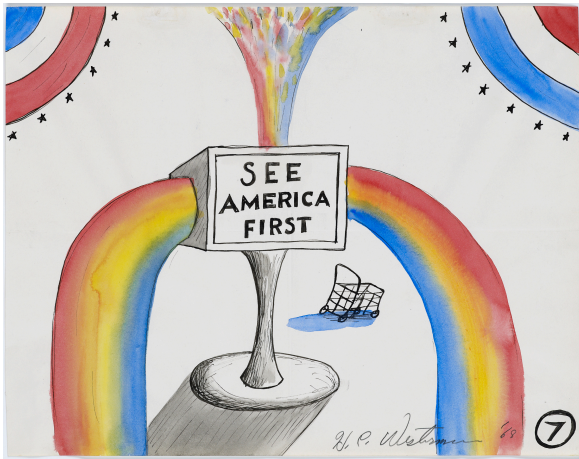
H.C. Westermann | *See America First*

November 2 – December 19, 2015

Opening Reception: Monday, November 2, 6 – 8pm

Venus

980 Madison Ave
New York, NY 10075



(New York) November 2, 2015 — **Venus** is pleased to present *See America First*, an exhibition of sculptures and works on paper by American artist, H.C. Westermann (b. Los Angeles, 1922–1981).

Westermann was an influential post-war artist, though his work historically existed outside the popular mainstream. Audiences and critics have often attempted to situate Westermann's works within various art historical movements ranging from Surrealism and Minimalism to Neo Dada. Though Westermann incorporated elements from these movements into his work, his oeuvre resists definition; Westermann stands alone as an eccentric art world maverick.

Much of Westermann's work speaks to his own personal history, specifically his time serving in the U.S. Marine Corps during both World War II and the Korean War. Westermann's view of America was both nostalgic and romantic, and his work reflects his yearning for an era that favored traditional values. The America that emerged after World War II stood as a global super power that thrived on growth and abundance, spawning a new culture in a changed nation. Pop artists at this time, such as Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, were influenced by the proliferation of new media and mass culture. Westermann chose to use his skills as a carpenter to confront the brutal realities of his time at war and the general post-war psyche. Often with notes of humor and irony, Westermann's sculptures engage with a sense of loss both in his own life and of the values of pre-World War II America. *See America First* takes its name from a series of prints and unique works on paper made by Westermann in 1968. The series was inspired by a road trip taken across the country in 1964. It also refers to the importance of nationhood in Westermann's overall body of work. The exhibition will include roughly 100 works by Westermann, including sculptures, works on paper, and a series of 19 illustrated letters written to the artist's longtime dealer Allan Frumkin.

H.C. Westermann was born in Los Angeles, California in 1922. He attended Los Angeles City College for two years beginning in 1940 before enlisting in the U.S. Marine Corps, from which he went on to fight against Japan in the Pacific Theater aboard the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. Following the war, Westermann enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago where he studied painting. From 1951 to 1952, Westermann served a tour of duty in Korea. In 1958, he was given his first solo exhibition at the Allan Frumkin Gallery in Chicago, entitled *H.C. Westermann: Recent Work*. Frumkin would continue to represent Westermann for the next twenty years. Westermann was selected for inclusion in the show *New Images of Man* at MoMA in 1959. He has had retrospectives at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1968, at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1978, and at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 2003.