

mumok Museum moderner Kunst
Stiftung Ludwig Wien
Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien

Exhibition dates
November 30, 2018, to April 28, 2019

Press conference
Wednesday, November 28, 2018, 10 am

Opening
Thursday, November 29, 2018, 7 pm



Leon Polk Smith
Correspondence Orange Blue, 1965
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Press contact

Katja Kulidzhanova
T +43 1 52500-1450
katja.kulidzhanova@mumok.at

Katharina Murschetz
T +43 1 52500-1400
katharina.murschetz@mumok.at

Fax +43 1 52500-1300
press@mumok.at
www.mumok.at

Painting with Method Positions of the Neoavantgarde from the mumok Collection

The art of the 1960s and 1970s was characterized by radical breaks with tradition and redefinitions of form and artistic media. The emergence of media-based art and the link between the theory and practice of art also led to innovative forms of painting. The general tendency to abandon figurative or gestural-abstract forms of representation went hand in hand with focused, formal and configured work structures determined by an expanded and reflective understanding of painting.

Technique and Color as the Themes of Painting

Beginning in the 1950s, the liberation of painting from figurative and narrative depictions and from expressive signaturing or surreal magic was accompanied by a reflective process on the medium of painting itself. The motif of color, and its relationship to the medium and to perception came to the fore.

In America in the 1950s, the influential art critic Clement Greenberg took the lead in the reception of abstract expressionism and color field painting, linking these with theory in his texts and pamphlets. Beyond narrative and illusionist representations, the content of painting should be its own fundamental material precepts and frameworks. The properties of color, the nature of the application of color, and the effects of color and image on the viewer were thus the key basic principles. This testing of the fundamentals of painting as the theme of the work can be seen (among others) in works by Josef Albers, Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, Ellsworth Kelly, Ad Reinhardt, and Jules Olitski. They experimented in very different ways with dynamic and diffuse color traces, with subtly nuanced autonomous color fields, and with sharply edged geometrical color fields, in which the physical properties of the colors become recognizable.

Minimal and Concept Art as Context – the Significance of Space and Perception

Painting gained key impulses from minimal art and the conceptual art movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Their sober principles, based on rationality and calculated methodology, were expressed in abstract geometrical painting, in formally reduced compositions, and in the rejection of illusionist effects in favor of the appearance of the work as an object. At the same time this painting reassessed its own relationship to space and to perception. Artists like Alan Charlton, Frank Stella, Robert Mangold, Kenneth Noland, Joe Baer, Agnes Martin, and John Baldessari brought viewers into the pictorial space and thereby dissolved the classical dichotomy between work and observer.

Contemporary discourses on images and painting in Austria also reflected these international developments and led to independent contributions. Artists like Richard Kriesche, Marc Adrian, Hermann Painitz, Jorrit Tornquist, Helga Philipp, Roland Goeschl, and others operated clearly beyond the locally typical traditions of the expressive and fantastic and surreal.

Reception of Constructivism and Conceptual Art as an Inspiration in Eastern European Countries

In the course of post-Stalinist "liberalization," Eastern European art from the 1960s witnessed an increased reception of constructivist modernism and the influence of conceptual art. Denounced by those holding political power as a trivialization of modern utopias or as the lackey of Western abstraction, geometrical abstraction served artists like Karel Malich, Zdenek Sykora, Roman Opalka, Julius Koller, Henryk Stazewsky, Constantin Flondor, Dora Maurer, and others, as a very conscious alternative to the propaganda art of socialist realism, and as a point of reference to the enlightenment and democratic potential of modernism.

With their interest in work analysis and perception, the painters of the neoavantgarde drew on ideas from modernism, making these contemporary for their own times and places, and thereby creating the basis for a younger generation of artists interested in media and theory.

Curated by Rainer Fuchs

List of artists

Marc Adrian, Josef Albers, Jo Baer , John Baldessari, Joseph Binder, Ernst Caramelle, Alan Charlton, Marc Devade, Jim Dine, Dan Flavin, Constantin Flondor, Helen Frankenthaler, Roland Goeschl, Rudolf Goessl, Tamás Hencze, Kurt Ingerl, Adam Jankowsky, Raimer Jochims, Hildegard Joos, Georg Jung, Ellsworth Kelly, Yves Klein, Július Koller, Stanislav Kolíbal, Richard Kriesche, Richard Paul Lohse, Morris Louis, Karel Malich, Robert Mangold, Piero Manzoni, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Dóra Maurer, Gerhard Merz, Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Kenneth Noland, Oswald Oberhuber, Jules Olitski, Roman Opalka, Hermann Painitz, Pino Pascali, Helga Philipp, Larry Poons, Oskar Putz, Arnulf Rainer, Ad Reinhardt, Gerhard Richter, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, Leon Polk Smith, Henryk Stażewski, Frank Stella, Zdeněk Sýkora, Jorrit Tornquist, James Turrell, Cy Twombly