

THE TRANSFORMATION OF GEOMETRY SIEGFRIED GRAUWINKEL COLLECTION, BERLIN MIROSLAV VELFL COLLECTION, PRAGUE

28 November 2018 – 31 March 2019

Prague City Gallery

Municipal Library, 2nd floor

Mariánské Square 1, Prague 1

Open daily except for Monday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., on Thursday to 8 p.m.

Exhibition Curators: Ljuba Beránková, Hana Larvová

die kunst kann das denken vermitteln in einer weise, dass der gedanke direkt wahrnehmbare information ist...

art can convey thinking in a way that the thought is directly perceptible information...

max bill

***The Transformation of Geometry* is an exhibition of systematic trends in contemporary art, which presents outstanding works by prominent Czech and foreign artists developing reductive geometric and structural concepts, as featured in two important private collections – Siegfried Grauwinkel Collection, Berlin and Miroslav Velfl Collection, Prague. For the first time in this scope, the viewers can witness a dialogue of two collector strategies within the same theme.**

Reductive tendencies that lead to the realization of simple geometric systems and structures in paintings, objects, drawings, and prints give rise primarily to the impression of an impersonal artistic approach. However, in reality they are often the result of the focused thinking of their makers. Art based on reductive tendencies stems primarily from the development of dynamics that manifests itself as a physical phenomenon by the movement of space and the vibration of color. Rational and structural strategies can also be understood as relationships on different structural levels. By transforming and organizing the energy of this artistic expression, perception and understanding are concentrated in the consciousness.

Thanks to the thoughtful strategies of both collectors, who have created representative collections of contemporary Geometric Concrete Art, it is possible to introduce some of the most important representatives of these trends within the framework of *The Transformation of Geometry* project. The exhibition includes paintings, sculptures, objects and drawings by Horst Bartnig, Max Bill, Max Cole, Piero Dorazio, Rita Ernst, Günther Förg, Günter Fruhtrunk, Johannes Gecceli, Camille Graeser, Milan Grygar, Kuno Gonschior, Marcia Hafif, Callum Innes, Imi Knoebel, Radek Kratina, Jan Kubiček, František Kyncl, Karel Malich, Kenneth Martin, Manfred Mohr, François Morellet, Jan van Munster, Zdeněk Sýkora, Günther Uecker, Karel Valenta, Victor Vasarely; and graphic art by many other artists.

The historical context of the selected theme of the exhibition, which refers to the tradition of the prewar aesthetics of Bauhaus in Weimar, De Stijl, Cercle et carré and Abstraction-Création, and to the pioneer of Concrete Art, Theo van Doesburg, provides a collection of prints from the portfolios of both collections in the opening corridor of the exhibition. One of them is the graphic “album” *Exacta*, featuring works by 27 artists across generations, such as the legendary protagonists Henryk

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Stażewski, Victor Vasarely and Max Bill, to the younger generation represented by Jeffrey Steele and other artists. A special part of the introductory section is devoted to two Czech artists: Jiří Kolář with a set of his 30 poems of visually evident poetry – *Signboard for Gersaint*, 1959–1961 (published in 1966); and Josef Hiršal and his first attempt to explore the so-called artificial poetry – *JOB-BOJ*, 1962 (published in 1968), which can be considered an important source of the aesthetics of Concrete Art.

The layout of the gallery's exhibition halls allows for the presentation of four central sets of works of art based on a defining concept. The first hall focuses on the mathematical rationalization of aesthetic projects in the works of Zdeněk Sýkora, Manfred Mohr, Kenneth Martin, Horst Bartnig, Rita Ernst and Jan Kubíček. The second hall features the structural aesthetic strategies of Günter Fruhtrunk, Camille Graeser, Aurelie Nemours, Max Cole, Frank Badur, Alfred Hückler and Renaud Jacquier Stajnowicz. The theme of the third hall is the thematization of color in painting and fundamental painting, represented in the works of Johannes Gecceli, Marcia Hafif, Callum Innes, Rolf Rose, Kuno Gonschior and Kenneth Noland. The fourth hall features the gradual transformation of the rational imaging method into a conceptual position, as shown in works of François Morellet, Milan Grygar, František Kyncl, Imi Knoebel, Günther Förg and Heimo Zobernig. The intimate scale of side cabinets makes it possible to exhibit works that, due to their nature, require a special architectural solution. This mainly concerns objects by Karel Malich, Radoslav Kratina, Karel Valenta, Jan van Munster and Manfred Mohr.

Prague City Gallery, which systematically deals with the presentation of important themes from the field of German fine art, has in the past organized a number of successful projects linking Czech and German art spaces. This exhibition builds upon these efforts. It is also a unique opportunity to acquaint the Czech public within a joint project with extraordinary works of art from two different collections which, through works by prominent artists, reflects the most diverse aspects of abstract, predominantly geometric Constructivist Art in its various transformations.

Ljuba Beránková and Hana Larvová

Exhibition Curators: Ljuba Beránková, Hana Larvová

Architect: Jan Smejkal

Graphic Design: Petr Babák

The exhibition has been supported by the Czech-German Fund for the Future.

Media Partners: Art&Antiques, Art for Good, ArtMap, Artikl, EXPRES.FM, Flash Art, protisedi.cz, Radio 1, XANTYPA

Entrance Fee: CZK 120 full (adults) / CZK 60 reduced (students) / CZK 30 (senior citizens)

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Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, which in its exhibition activity focuses in particular on modern and contemporary art. It collects, protects and professionally processes art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the Prague City Gallery exhibits at seven venues: The Stone Bell House, Municipal Library – 2nd floor, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, The House of Photography, Villa Bilek, Troja Château and František Bilek's House in Chýnov.

Accompanying Program

Guided tours with the exhibition curators Ljuba Beránková and Hana Larvová

Thursday, 13 December 2018, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, 5 February 2019, 6 p.m.

Saturday Art Workshops

Saturday, 15 December 2018, 1 – 6 p.m., The Possibilities of Geometry, Municipal Library, 2nd floor

Saturday, 9 March 2019, 1 – 6 p.m., Image and Lettering, Municipal Library, 2nd floor

During the programs we will focus on mediating the essence of geometric abstraction. In an entertaining way, we will use a large building kit consisting of selected geometric shapes. 2D geometric shapes of various colors and sizes will be available for large-scale compositions. We will also employ a timeline to show the development and possibilities of the transformation of geometry. Within some workshops we will touch on experimental poetry and lettrism. We will get our inspiration from Jiří Kolář's visual poetry, especially his inspiring *Signboard for Gersaint*, in which he represented brushworks, styles and approaches of well-known famous artists (painters, sculptors, musicians and writers) in interesting compositions and constellations. We will also seek our inspiration in Concrete poetry from the collection *JOB-BOJ* by Josef Hiršal and Bohumila Grögerová. We will also create large-scale lettristic compositions using letter templates and their fragments, based, for example, on the art of Heinz Gappmayer. Next, we will focus on the phenomenon of art collecting as such and the possibilities of the human mind to interpret reality. We will compile collections from small reproductions of works. The participants will set the selection criteria based on their own ideas of art. The key notions will be *plane, intersection, vertical, horizontal, curve, parabola, surface, space, color and contrast*. We will place the individual works of the collection in the prepared Xerox copies of various interiors so that it interacts with the surrounding space and with each other, creating a new artistic whole.

Saturday workshops are intended for children, families with children and other interested parties of all ages, including the elderly and disadvantaged. The arrival and departure is optional – i.e., whenever within the scheduled time.

Art Workshop for Adults and Senior Citizens

Friday, 14 December 2018, 3 – 6 p.m., Principles of Geometry in Object I, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sunday, 16 December 2018, 3 – 6 p.m., Principles of Geometry in Object II, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Friday, 11 January 2019, 3 – 6 p.m., Color and Visual Composition I, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sunday, 13 January 2019, 3 – 6 p.m., Color and Visual Composition II, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

The interactive workshops will reflect works by prominent Czech and foreign artists representing Geometric and Constructivist art. We will deal with mathematical rationalization, structural forms and relationships as well as the interaction of colors. During the first series of art workshops, we will focus on creative transformations of the material. Within the experiments with forms, we will move from relief sculptures up to the transformation into spatial objects. In the second series of workshops, we will focus on simple geometric systems, color contrasts, harmony or minimalism in the painting. The basis for acrylic painting will be square formats, which for the participants will also represent a space between the painting and the object.

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Interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools and other age and interest groups with the possibility of subsequent creative response in the form of their own work. We adapt the events in terms of time, theme and performance levels according to the specific requirements of each school.

Reservation required

Price: Children under 10, students of art schools, teachers – CZK 5; children over 10 years CZK 20

In addition to the above-mentioned events, there will be other educational activities for other target groups, such as the disadvantaged visitors and parents on maternity and/or parental leave and their children.

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