

PRESS RELEASE

INTO THE THIRD DIMENSION: SPATIAL CONCEPTS ON PAPER FROM THE BAUHAUS TO THE PRESENT

15 FEBRUARY TO 14 MAY 2017

Press preview: Tuesday, 14 February 2017, 11 am

Städel Museum, Exhibition Hall of the Department of Prints and Drawings

Frankfurt, 27 January 2017. The Städel Museum's programme for 2017 kicks off with an exhibition looking at the representation of spatial concepts in drawing and printmaking. From 15 February to 14 May, *Into the Third Dimension: Spatial Concepts on Paper from the Bauhaus to the Present* will be shown in the Exhibition Hall of the museum's Department of Prints and Drawings. The show examines how such things as delineation, form, and volume, 'inside' and 'outside' – characteristics that define space and aid orientation – are represented in drawing and printmaking, in essence on flat, two-dimensional surfaces. The exhibition takes visitors on a tour beginning with the geometric compositions created in 1923 by El Lissitzky and László Moholy-Nagy, through to examples of printmaking in contemporary conceptual art. It encompasses works by a total of 13 artists, including Lucio Fontana, Eduardo Chillida, Sol LeWitt, Blinky Palermo, James Turrell, and Michael Riedel. Lithographs depicting Constructivist perspectival representations are displayed alongside embossed prints that emerge out of two-dimensional flatness. Slits revealing imaginary spaces are juxtaposed with designs for wall pieces. Prints evoking three-dimensionality, created by figures of Minimal Art, space art, and light art, can be seen alongside chalk drawings, foldings, and collages by 20th century sculptors. The exhibition does not feature preliminary sketches or documents written in the wake of the artworks themselves. Rather, it features independent works in which artists have executed their spatial concepts within the formal parameters of techniques employed in printmaking and drawing. The exhibition brings together important sheets from the Städel Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings, selected works from the Deutsche Bank Collection at the Städel Museum, long-term loans from the Commerzbank AG, and loans from a private collection.

"Many important artists have used the two-dimensional medium of paper to explore the theme of space and three-dimensionality. The fact that our own collection has provided almost the entire content of the exhibition is testament to the high-calibre quality it encompasses," said the director of the Städel, Dr. Philipp Demandt.

"A close examination of the drawers of our Department of Prints and Drawings reveals that it also includes a number of sculptures," said exhibition curator, Jenny Graser. "During the 20th century, many artists set about challenging the boundaries

Städelsches Kunstinstitut
und Städtische Galerie

Dürerstrasse 2
60596 Frankfurt am Main
Telephone +49(0)69-605098-170
Fax +49(0)69-605098-111
presse@staedelmuseum.de
www.staedelmuseum.de

PRESS DOWNLOADS UNDER
www.staedelmuseum.de

PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
Axel Braun, head
presse@staedelmuseum.de

Alexandra Hahn, deputy head
Telephone +49(0)69-605098-234
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
hahn@staedelmuseum.de

between the artistic media. The differences between sculpture, drawing, and printmaking consequently became less pronounced.” Over seven chapters, the special exhibition presents a wide variety of approaches to the representation of space on paper, in turn highlighting both differences as well as links underscoring works that span decades.

The start of the exhibition invites visitors to ponder a question taken from *Art and Space* (1969) by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). This work undertakes to determine what distinguishes an artistic investigation of space from one predicated upon mathematical and physical laws. The first chapter of the exhibition immediately breaks down established preconceptions of space. Serving as a prelude to the exhibition are two portfolio works outlining utopian spatial concepts, created respectively by El Lissitzky (1890–1941), a Russian avant-garde artist, and László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), a Hungarian artist and professor at the Bauhaus. Over the course of the 1920s, Lissitzky developed a model for an idealized and universal space based upon notions of measurability grounded in the laws of mathematics. Exhibiting no boundaries, this space is open, undefined. The characteristic features of this spatial structure can be observed in Lissitzky’s portfolio of graphic art, *Proun* (1923). During the same period, Moholy-Nagy was also working on a portfolio of prints, although his focus was upon the phenomenon of light. His investigations into the multifaceted nature of the visual effects engendered by transparency are captured in a portfolio of six lithographs, entitled *Constellations* (1923). The medium of lithography, notable for its wealth of shades and subtle differentiation of tone, enabled the painter to pursue his investigations of transparency by employing what was for him an entirely new technique.

The exhibition’s second chapter looks at the work of artist Hermann Glöckner (1889–1987), a native of Cotta near Dresden. One seemingly simple act of construction, the process of folding, effectively describes the artistic practices that defined his entire body of work. In his *3 Phases* series (1980), he repeatedly folded a sheet to create forms and coloured the resulting surfaces with paint. Glöckner’s investigation of three-dimensional structures formed out of flat surfaces was not limited to paper and canvas, but also employed plastics, as is evident from the work entitled *Pair of Symmetrical Bodies Made from Folded Elements* (1968).

The Constructivist approaches outlined in the first two chapters of the exhibition lead on directly to the linear constructions created by the German sculptor Norbert Kricke (1922–1984) and the American artist Fred Sandback (1943–2003). Kricke used his drawings to investigate the free movement of the line in space. He took the line, typically associated with the medium of drawing, and made it a feature of sculptures created out of bent steel wire. In his quest for a sculptural body lacking solid mass or interior, Fred Sandback similarly found recourse in the line. For his first sculpture, created in 1967, he traced the outlines of a plastic body with steel wire and rubber cords, thus reducing the object to its graphic substance. In the same year, he expanded his sculptural work to incorporate walls and ceilings, stretching cords so that they formed a wide variety of u-shapes, diagonals, right angles, triangles, trapezoids, and polygons. In his portfolio *Twenty-Two Constructions from 1967*

(1986), the artist illustrates how he adopted the serial principle and a wide variety of modules.

The clear formal language of geometric figures and the serial principle beloved of Minimal Art continue into the next chapter of the exhibition, where visitors can see prints by Sol LeWitt (1928–2007) and James Turrell (born 1943), who recreate the appearance of three-dimensional bodies primarily through the use of colour and gradations of brightness. LeWitt undertook experiments with grid and spatial structures, and created nearly 300 printmaking projects. Since 1982, the artist has directed the bulk of his energies towards creating representations of three-dimensional forms, to which the linoleum cuts from his 2001 series entitled *Distorted Cubes (A–E)* are testament. The three-dimensional appearance of the distorted cube depicted in this work is due entirely to the visual effect elicited by its use of colour. Since the mid-1960s, the American artist James Turrell has used nothing but projected light to explore the illusionary three-dimensionality of geometric bodies. The aquatint series *Still Light* (1990–1991) grew out of Turrell's *Projection Pieces* (1966–1967), a work in which light was cast in the shape of geometric bodies against the corners of darkened rooms. Depending on the spectator's position relative to the artwork, this created the impression of a dazzlingly luminous object, which would either appear to be positioned on the floor or floating above it. Each of the four prints displayed in the exhibition respectively adopt one of the abstract forms featured in *Projection Pieces*: triangle, cube, trapezoid, and rectangular bars.

The capacity of light and colour to create the appearance of space is a theme that is followed up in the fifth chapter. Like Moholy-Nagy before him, Blinky Palermo (1943–1977) also set about investigating the appearance of space brought about by means of transparent, layered paint-forms. While Palermo's prints are laid upon delicate, permeable layers of colour, the abstract forms of the *Red Yellow Blue* series of screen prints by his friend Imi Knoebel (born 1940) are printed on thick, opaque layers of paint. The smooth painted surfaces adorn the paper to create a relief made up of concave and convex forms, superimposed on top of each other, and thus transplanting the three-dimensional layers of Knoebel's wall pieces to a flat surface.

The sculptural qualities of etching are lent their full expressive potential in the embossed prints created by the Italian sculptor Giò Pomodoro (1930–2002) and the Argentine-born artist Lucio Fontana (1899–1968). Lofty arches and deep furrows pervade Pomodoro's prints, which seem reminiscent of mountain ranges and rock formations. The reliefs that appear in Lucio Fontana's etchings from 1964 are characterized by thick layers of dried paint. These works on paper allow both artists to blur the clear distinctions between sculpture and the graphic arts by playing with volume, height, and depth. The embossed prints are juxtaposed with works by the artist Michael Riedel (born 1972 in Rüsselsheim), whose spatially-constructed works encompass nearly every medium, including drawings on tracing paper, fabric wall-hangings, and lettering that covers the surfaces of entire rooms.

The final chapter, and highlight of the exhibition, is dedicated to Spanish sculptor Eduardo Chillida (1924–2002) and his artistic/philosophical exchanges with Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). *Art and Space* (1969), a book of collages by Chillida illustrating a text written by Heidegger, achieved particular fame. These collages symbolized Chillida's spatial concept as formulated in the second and third dimension: spatial transgressions and reductions, the relationships between volume and form, fragmentation and dynamism, emptiness as a material with which to create space. Accompanying the book is a vinyl record containing a reading of Martin Heidegger's text. Visitors have the opportunity to listen to this recording at an audio-station in the exhibition.

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Information: www.staedelmuseum.de, info@staedelmuseum.de

Telephone: +49(0)69-605098-200, fax +49(0)69-605098-112

Visitor services: telephone +49(0)69-605098-232, besucherdienst@staedelmuseum.de

Location: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

Opening hours: Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun & public holidays: 10 am – 6 pm, Thu & Fri: 10 am – 9 pm, Mon: closed

Special opening hours: Fri, 14 April, 10 am – 6 pm; Sun, 16 April, 10 am – 6 pm; Mon, 17 April, 10 am – 6 pm; Mon, 1 May, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: 14 euros; concessions: 12 euros, family ticket: 24 euros; free entry for children under 12; groups of more than 10 regular-admission paying people: reduced per person rate. Groups must give notice of visit in advance by calling +49 (0)69-605098-200 or emailing info@staedelmuseum.de

Advance ticket sales online at: tickets.staedelmuseum.de

Introductory tours of the exhibition: Thu 6 pm and Sun 2 pm (price of tour included in admission).

Catalogue: A catalogue, written by Jenny Graser, is due for release from the Städel Museum, in German, 52 pages, priced 9.90 euros.

Social Media: The Städel Museum posts updates on the exhibition on social-media platforms using the hashtags #DritteDimension and #Staedel.