

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
October 1985

CONTRASTS OF FORM: GEOMETRIC ABSTRACT ART 1910-1980

October 7, 1985 - January 7, 1986

The Museum of Modern Art opens CONTRASTS OF FORM: GEOMETRIC ABSTRACT ART 1910-1980, an international survey of constructivist and geometric art, on October 7, 1985. The exhibition and its accompanying publication present selections from the recent gift of 249 works of geometric abstract art to the Museum from the Riklis Collection of McCrory Corporation. Augmented by important works drawn from the Museum's other holdings, the exhibition provides an in-depth view of one of the most vital and persistent traditions in modern art.

CONTRASTS OF FORM, which remains on display through January 7, 1986, was organized by John Elderfield, director of the Department of Drawings and curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, in collaboration with Magdalena Dabrowski, assistant curator in the Department of Drawings. The Riklis Collection of McCrory Corporation, received by the Museum in the spring of 1984, was formed by Celia Ascher, curator of the McCrory Corporation Collection, with the support of Meshulam Riklis, chairman of Rapid-American Corporation (parent company of McCrory Corporation). Despite the great significance of the collection, it has never been seen in New York.

Divided into five historical sections, ranging in date from 1910 to 1980, the presentation consists of seventy-five paintings, forty-eight works on paper, sixteen sculptures, and nineteen relief constructions. The exhibition is exceptional because it reveals how geometric abstraction has shaped the

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direction of twentieth-century art. It traces the style through each significant phase of its development, illuminating how work produced in the first half of the century has profoundly affected even the American art of recent years. Over one hundred artists are represented, including Europeans Robert Delaunay, Kasimir Malevich, László Moholy-Nagy, Piet Mondrian, Liubov Popova, Olga Rozanova, and Theo van Doesburg, and Americans Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin, and Kenneth Noland (complete list of artists attached).

The first section of the exhibition traces the Cubist, Futurist, and Cubo-Futurist movements that emerged between 1911 and 1914, and provided the conceptual and formal basis for the development of geometric abstraction. The next section focuses on the nonobjective movements that developed from 1915 to 1921 in Holland and Russia: Suprematism, de Stijl, and Constructivism, the latter of which was to become the dominant style. The third part, featuring works from 1922 to 1929, reveals how the ideas of Constructivism were disseminated internationally. These works indicate the high standards achieved even by less well-known artists during this productive period.

The final sections reflect the shift of centers of geometric abstraction from Germany to Paris to New York. The works from the thirties, forties, and fifties--a period in which the Riklis Collection is especially strong--illustrate the diversity as well as the endurance of ideas and forms in both European and American art. The exhibition ultimately reveals the impact that the earlier innovations had on a new generation of American Color-Field and Hard-Edge painters, and particularly the Minimalists who emerged in the sixties.

Dr. Elderfield has noted, "The Riklis Collection of McCrory Corporation is characterized by its commitment to works of the highest quality. Under the informed guidance of Celia Ascher, the collection has contributed to a

reappraisal of Constructivism and its influence on many important movements of twentieth-century art. The aim of the exhibition is to present highlights from this extraordinary gift in the context of the Museum's existing holdings in the same general field and to provide an overview of one of the most significant and vital traditions in the art of this century." In addition to its unprecedented gift, McCrory Corporation has endowed a gallery within the Painting and Sculpture collection galleries at the Museum.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Joyce Theater in New York City will present a reconstruction of Oskar Schlemmer's TRIADIC BALLET, sponsored by McCrory Corporation. Adapted from a dance originated in 1912, the ballet had its first performance in Stuttgart in 1922, when Schlemmer was teaching at the Bauhaus. Performances are October 1 at 7:30 p.m., October 3-5 at 8:00 p.m., and October 6 at 2:00 and 7:30 p.m. For information and ticket-charge call 212/242-0800.

A lecture series and film program will also accompany the exhibition. Details to be announced.

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Catalog: Contrasts of Form: Geometric Abstract Art 1910-1980. Essays, chronologies, and artist biographies by Magdalena Dabrowski. Introduction by John Elderfield. Fully illustrated with 70 color and 88 black-and-white illustrations. 288 pages. Clothbound, \$45; paperback, \$19.50 (\$23.50 after February 14, 1986). Published by The Museum of Modern Art.

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For additional information or photographic materials contact Jeanne Collins or Jessica Schwartz, Department of Public Information 212/708-9750.

Artists in the Exhibition

SECTION I.

ORIGINS OF THE NONOBJECTIVE--CUBISM, FUTURISM, CUBO-FUTURISM: 1910-1914

Giacomo Balla (Italy, 1871-1958)
Georges Braque (France, 1882-1963)
Robert Delaunay (France, 1885-1941)
Natalia Sergeievna Gontcharova (Russia, 1881-1962)
František Kupka (Czechoslovakia, 1871-1957)
Mikhail Fedorovich Larionov (Russia, 1881-1964)
Fernand Léger (France, 1881-1955)
Kasimir Severinovich Malevich (Russia, 1878-1935)
Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (Italy, 1876-1944)
Félix del Marle (France, 1889-1952)
Piet Mondrian (Holland, 1872-1944)
Pablo (Ruiz) Picasso (Spain, 1881-1973)
Liubov Sergeievna Popova (Russia, 1889-1924)
Olga Vladimirovna Rozanova (Russia, 1886-1918)
Gino Severini (Italy, 1883-1966)

SECTION II.

FROM SURFACE TO SPACE--SUPREMATISM, DE STIJL, RUSSIAN CONSTRUCTIVISM: 1915-1921

Yuri Pavlovich Annenkov (Russia, 1889-1974)
Chris Hendrik Beekman (Holland, 1887-1964)
Ilya Grigorievich Chashnik (Russia, 1902-1929)
Theo van Doesburg (Holland, 1883-1931)
Vasily Dimitrievich Ermilov (Russia, 1894-1968)
Alexandra (Alexandrovna) Exter (Russia, 1882-1949)
Naum (Naum Neemia Borisovich Pevsner) Gabo (Russia, 1890-1977)
Vilmos Huszar (Hungary, 1884-1960)
Ivan Vasilievich (Kliunkov) Kliun (Russia, 1873-1942)
Gustav Gustavovich Klucis (Russia, 1895-1944)
Ivan Alexeievich Kudriashev (Russia, 1896-1972)
Bart van der Leek (Holland, 1876-1958)
Le Corbusier (Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris) (Switzerland, 1887-1965)
Willem van Leusden (Holland, 1886-1974)
El (Lazar Markovich) Lissitzky (Russia, 1890-1941)
Kasimir Malevich
Pavel Mansurov (Russia, 1896-1984)
Mikhail Vasilievich Matiushin (Russia, 1861-1934)
Piet Mondrian
Antoine Pevsner (Russia, 1886-1962)
Liubov Popova
Ivan Albertovich Puni (Finland, 1892-1956)
Aleksandr Mikhailovich Rodchenko (Russia, 1891-1956)
Olga Rozanova
Varvara Fedorovna Stepanova (Russia, 1894-1958)
Vladimir Evgrafovich Tatlin (Russia, 1885-1953)
Nadezhda Andreievna Udaltsova (Russia, 1886-1961)
Georges Vantongerloo (Holland, 1886-1965)
Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Vesnin (Russia, 1883-1959)

SECTION III.

INTERNATIONAL CONSTRUCTIVISM: 1922-1929

Giacomo Balla
Willi Baumeister (Germany, 1889-1955)
Etienne (Istvan) Béothy (French, born Hungary, 1897-1962)
Henryk Berlewi (Poland, 1894-1967)
Alexander (Sandor) Bortnyik (Hungary, 1893-1976)
Carl Buchheister (Germany, 1890-1964)
Jean Crotti (Switzerland, 1878-1958)
Walter Dexel (Germany, 1890-1973)
Theo van Doesburg
Auguste Herbin (France, 1882-1960)
Vassily Kandinsky (Russia, 1866-1944)
Lajos Kassak (Hungary, 1887-1967)
Paul Klee (Switzerland, 1879-1940)
František Kupka
Bart van der Leck
Fernand Léger
El Lissitzky
László Moholy-Nagy (United States, born Hungary, 1895-1946)
Oskar Schlemmer (Germany, 1888-1943)
Kurt Schwitters (Germany, 1887-1948)
Victor Servranckx (Belgium, 1897-1965)
John Storrs (United States, 1885-1956)
Georges Vantongerloo
Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart (Germany, 1899-1962)

SECTION IV.

THE PARIS - NEW YORK CONNECTION: 1930-1959

Josef Albers (United States, born Germany, 1888-1976)
Jean (Hans) Arp (Austria, 1887-1966)
Joost Baljeu (Holland, b. 1925)
Charles Biederman (United States, b. 1906)
Ilya Bolotowsky (United States, born Russia, 1907-1981)
Sonia Delaunay-Terk (Russia, 1885-1979)
Burgoyne Diller (United States, 1906-1965)
Lucio Fontana (Italy, 1899-1968)
Otto Freundlich (Germany, 1878-1943)
Fritz Glarner (United States, born Switzerland, 1889-1972)
Jean Gorin (France, b. 1899)
Gertrude Greene (United States, 1904-1956)
Auguste Herbin
Johannes Itten (Switzerland, 1888-1967)
Mary Martin (England, 1907-1969)
John McLaughlin (United States, 1898-1976)
László Moholy-Nagy
Piet Mondrian
George L.K. Morris (United States, 1905-1975)
Marlow Moss (England, 1890-1958)
Ben Nicholson (England, 1894-1982)

Victor Pasmore (England, b. 1908)
Antoine Pevsner
Theodore Roszak (United States, born Poland, 1907-1981)
Kurt Schwitters
Charles Sheeler (United States, 1883-1965)
Niles Spencer (United States, 1893-1952)
Wladyslaw Strzeminski (Russia, 1893-1952)
Sophie Taeuber-Arp (Switzerland, 1889-1943)
Georges Vantongerloo
Charmion von Wiegand (United States, 1900-1983)

SECTION V.
RECENT NONFIGURATIVE TENDENCIES: 1960-1980

Josef Albers
Carl Andre (United States, b. 1935)
Jake Berthot (United States, b. 1939)
Max Bill (Switzerland, b. 1908)
Ad Dekkers (Holland, 1938-1974)
Richard Diebenkorn (United States, b. 1922)
Camille Graeser (Switzerland, 1892-1980)
Al Held (United States, b. 1928)
Alfred Jensen (United States, 1903-1981)
Donald Judd (United States, b. 1928)
Ellsworth Kelly (United States, b. 1923)
Sol LeWitt (United States, b. 1928)
Richard Lohse (Switzerland, b. 1902)
Robert Mangold (United States, b. 1937)
Agnes Martin (United States, born Canada 1912)
Kenneth Martin (England, b. 1905)
Ben Nicholson
Kenneth Noland (United States, b. 1924)
David Novros (United States, b. 1941)
Joanna Pousette-Dart (United States, b. 1947)
Ad Reinhardt (United States, 1913-1967)
Bridget Riley (England, b. 1931)
Robert Ryman (United States, b. 1930)
Ludwig Sander (United States, 1906-1975)
Jan Schoonhoven (Holland, b. 1914)
Frank Stella (United States, b. 1936)
Victor Vasarely (France, born Hungary 1908)

Note: Artists whose works are represented in more than one section are cited in shortened form after the first mention.

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MAGDALENA DABROWSKI

Magdalena Dabrowski, assistant curator in the Department of Drawings, collaborated with John Elderfield to organize the exhibition, CONTRASTS OF FORM: GEOMETRIC ABSTRACT ART 1910-1980, and is author of the accompanying catalog. In conjunction with the exhibition she will present a lecture on the evolution of the style of geometric abstraction on November 14 in the Roy and Niuta Titus Theater I.

Since she joined The Museum of Modern Art in 1975, Ms. Dabrowski has organized several exhibitions including REVOLUTION: RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE, 1912-1930 (1978) and THE SYMBOLIST AESTHETIC (1980-81), for which she wrote accompanying publications. In 1983 she organized MONDRIAN: NEW YORK STUDIO COMPOSITIONS (1983) and IMAGES OF LANDSCAPE, which traveled to five American museums. In 1984 she collaborated on both the catalog and exhibition for THE DRAWINGS OF HENRI MATISSE, organized by The Museum of Modern Art and the Great Britain Arts Council.

A native of Poland, Ms. Dabrowski was educated in Poland, France, and the United States. She received a Master of Arts degree at The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, where she is currently completing her doctoral dissertation on Russian Constructivism.

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JOHN ELDERFIELD

Since 1980 John Elderfield has been director of the Department of Drawings at The Museum of Modern Art, where he also holds the position of curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture.

Dr. Elderfield has directed several major exhibitions since he joined the Museum in 1975, including the recent KURT SCHWITTERS, as well as THE DRAWINGS OF HENRI MATISSE (1985), THE MODERN DRAWING (1983), NEW WORK ON PAPER (1981), THE MASTERWORKS OF EDVARD MUNCH (1979), MATISSE IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (1978-79), and THE WILD BEASTS: FAUVISM AND ITS AFFINITIES (1976). He is also the author of the catalogs for each of the exhibitions, as well as of another Museum publication, European Master Paintings from Swiss Collections.

In addition to his curatorial accomplishments, Dr. Elderfield has written extensively for many international art journals on subjects ranging from Cézanne to the American avant-garde. He has served as contributing editor to Artforum and Studio International for several years. His other publication credits include a catalog on Morris Louis, a critical introduction to Hugo Ball's The Flight out of Time, and The Cut-Outs of Henri Matisse.

Born in Yorkshire, England, in 1943, John Elderfield is a graduate of the University of Leeds, England. He received his Doctor of Philosophy degree at the Courtauld Institute of Art at the University of London. He held a Harkness Fellowship at Yale University from 1970 to 1972, and was a recipient of a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 1973. From 1973 to 1975 he taught art history at the University of Leeds. He currently lives in New York City.

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