



Cortesi Gallery

HEINZ MACK: THE BREATH OF LIGHT

Curated by Francesca Pola

September 12th – November 15th 2019

Opening: September 11th 2019, from 6 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.

Catalogue presentation in the presence of the artist: October 24th 2019, from 6 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.

Cortesi Gallery, Corso di Porta Nuova 46/B, 20121 Milan

Heinz Mack (Lollar, 1931) is one of the main artists of the second half of the 20th Century: a radical and revolutionary figure, who is continuously renewing expressive essentiality concepts and developing new artistic techniques since the '50s.

The exhibition at the Cortesi Gallery, curated by Francesca Pola, is the first solo show in Italy dedicated to this artist, with the aim to widely retrace his whole artistic *iter*. Almost after sixty years of his first Italian exhibition, held in Milan in 1960 at the Azimut Gallery invited by Enrico Castellani and Piero Manzoni, followed by that in 1963 at Galleria Cadario.

Made in close collaboration with the artist and his studio, the exhibition collects a series of fundamental examples of his work, concentrating on one of the crucial point of his creative activity: the relationship between light, color, structure and space. The exhibited works, mostly of large dimensions, start from 1959 to 2018 marking the key moments of his creative activity which placed Mack among the figures of the international artistic scenario of the time.

The entire Mack's work has always been focused on the fundamental role played by the light as a constitutive element of vision which he turned into a the key of a poetic language able to radically modify the bases of the modern art. In 1957 (together with the colleague and friend Otto Piene) the artist founded the international movement ZERO and has experimented a plurality of artistic techniques going from paintings to embossed canvases, from sculpture to installations, from drawings to writings, from photographs to movies.

He did not just employed non-conventional materials related to the industrial world as synthetic resins, aluminum, plexiglas, glass, steel, luminous and kinetic devices, but he has also been able to deeply renew the use and the outcomes of those materials considered more conventional as oil, acrylic, marble and bronze. The identity between light and color has been transformed into shapes of dialectic and active relationship such as structure, vibration, rhythm and it also constitutes the central element of the continuity and of his work's metamorphosis which is the key point that Cortesi Gallery intends to present in this exhibition through the "breath" of this light (in) variation of surfaces and spaces.



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The exhibition starts with rare works from 1959 belonging to the aluminium series "Lichtrelief" ("light reliefs") which has been shown in January 1960 at the Azimut Gallery in Milan during the historical exhibition "The new artistic conception" with a dedication on the back by the artist and friend Piero Manzoni. Alongside these and others "light reliefs", is exposed a selection of significant paintings from the cycle "Dynamische Struktur" ("dynamic structures)", many of which have been exhibited in significant moments during the first years of ZERO (e.g. at the Hessenhuis in Antwerp or the Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf) representing the same theme of the luminous vibration through a similar structuring and a chromatic palette reduced to the essentiality of the blacks, whites and greys.

Two important *Stele* sculptures of three meters high (1966), synthesizing the light through glasses and lenses, are presented as space-modifying devices as well as the great *Erzengel Michael und Gabriel* (Archangel Michael and Gabriel) made in 1972. It is from this liminal area of the color, between light and dark considered by Mack the germinal place of the vision that get started his great transition of 1991. When the artist starts focusing on a new pictorial work that translates his intuitions of redefinition of the surface and the space into a new and surprising chromatic key. This is how the monumental "Chromatische Konstellation" ("chromatic constellations") were made: an impetuous painting, made of pure colors, free from any naturalistic or descriptive element rather the unfolding of the luminous spectrum as a distillate of thought and energy. In the exhibition are shown real masterpieces of the serie as *Ex Tempora* (1998) which is about four meters by three, that exemplarily materializes this vision of the color as space and light and that also proceeds in intermediate stages of works where everything is focused on rhythm perceived as an harmonic sequence of a chromatic expansion in a free sensuality and impetus luminosity. To complete the exhibition there are also some sculptures that investigate in a three dimensions way these aspects as the *Circular Space Sculpture* (2000). A particular attention is dedicated to the latest activity of the artist in which the dialectics of the pure colors of his "Chromatische Konstellation" (chromatic constellations) (2018), stratified or juxtaposed in counterpoint or shade, articulates the spatiality of the surface in new and radiant tonal harmonies.

The exhibition is accompanied by a bilingual monograph (Italian/English), curated by Francesca Pola edited by Skira, including a wide, critical essay with context pictures, the images of all the exhibited works, a significant selection of the artist's scripts relating to them, views of the exhibition, and a bio - bibliographic appendix. Founded on an extended historical - artistic research, it intends to offer new cues and occasions to the International studies about Mack s work.



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Heinz Mack – Sculptor and Painter

The German sculptor and painter, Heinz Mack, was born in 1931 in Lollar and attended the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 1950 to 1953; furthermore, he studied philosophy at the University of Cologne until 1956, graduating in both programs with state exams.

In 1957, Heinz Mack founded the ZERO group in Düsseldorf, Germany with the artist Otto Piene. Besides his participation in Documenta III (1964) and Documenta VI (1977), the artist represented the Federal Republic of Germany at the XXXVth Venice Biennale in 1970. Mack also obtained a professorship in Osaka, Japan in the same year and became a full member of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin to which he belonged until 1992.

The artist has been honored with major awards including the Art Prize of the City of Krefeld (1958), the Premio Marzotto (1963), the Premier Prix Arts Plastiques at the IVth Paris Biennale (1965), the Adolf-Grimme Recognition Award for his 'Tele-Mack' movie (1970), first prize in the International Competition of Light 79 in the Netherlands (1979), the Conferment of the Order of Merit of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Großer Kulturpreis des Rheinischen Sparkassen-Verbands (1992), the Grand Federal Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his work and function as an ambassador of culture (2004) as well as the Prize of the Cultural Foundation of the City of Dortmund (2012). He was also awarded the Grand Federal Cross of Merit with Star of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2011. In 2016, the city of Düsseldorf bestowed the Jan-Wellem-Ring upon Heinz Mack. He received the Moses Mendelssohn Medal in 2017. In the same year, Mack was honored as Düsseldorf of the year 2017 for his lifetime achievement.

In June 2014, the sculpture series 'The Sky Over Nine Columns' was inaugurated on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. The nine columns, each one measuring eight meters, are covered with more than 850,000 gold-plated tesserae. From the beginning of September 2015 until May 2016, the ensemble was exhibited in front of the Sakip Sabanci Museum, Istanbul. Since June 2016, the columns have been on view in Valencia – surrounded by the futuristic architecture of Santiago Calatrava at Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias. The installation was exhibited on the shore of lake St. Moritz from December 2016 until April 2017.

In October 2014, a major ZERO exhibition opened at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and travelled the following year to various venues including the Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the Sakip Sabanci Museum, Istanbul, drawing a total of almost 700,000 visitors.

In the summer of 2015 the senate of the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf unanimously elected Mack as an honorary member and comprehensive museum exhibitions took place in Baden-Baden, Ulm, and Duisburg. In 2016 and 2017 various solo exhibitions took place in museums and galleries in Istanbul, Berlin, Cologne, Paris, Singapore, Vienna, New York, and Hong Kong, and an array of books were published. The catalogue raisonné of Mack's ZERO painting was presented in the context of a solo show at the Akademiegalerie in Düsseldorf. A special presentation of Mack and Goethe was shown in the Goethe-Museum, Düsseldorf, in 2018. In 2019, the first solo exhibition of Mack in Africa opened at the Musée Théodore-Monod d'art africain in Dakar, Senegal. Various other international exhibitions are presented in 2019.



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Light is a central theme in the non-representational art of Heinz Mack. His multifaceted oeuvre includes sculptures of various materials – also monumental ones for public spaces, light reliefs, light cubes, light rotors, light stelae, paintings, drawings, pastels, ink drawings, graphics, photography, mosaics, ceramics, conceptual designs of public spaces and interiors, stage settings, as well as literary works.

Heinz Mack's artworks have been shown in over 400 solo and numerous group exhibitions. His works are among the holdings of some 136 public collections. A multitude of books and catalogues, as well as two films document his work.

Heinz Mack lives and works in Mönchengladbach, Germany and Ibiza, Spain.