



## Max Bill

### SQUARES AND SCULPTURES 40S, 50S, 60S, 70S

April 16th, 2014 – June 7th, 2014

Massimo De Carlo is pleased to announce the gallery's first exhibition in London of Max Bill, the preeminent visual artist as well as designer, architect and writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The exhibition *Squares and Sculptures 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s* combines a rare selection of artwork and design objects spanning his prolific career by focusing on two seminal themes: the square and the sculpture.

An 'Uomo Universale', Max Bill is considered the most fruitful stimulator and progressive innovator of the Bauhaus student generation. Born in 1908, he spent his formative years at the Bauhaus in Dessau under the tutelage of Josef Albers, László Moholy-Nagy, Paul Klee and Vasily Kandinsky. Having returned to Switzerland after his studies, Max Bill laid the foundations of *Concrete Art*, an abstractionist movement that evolved out of Modernism and De Stijl. The term *Concrete Art* was coined by the artist Theo van Doesburg in his Manifest of 1930, which was reformulated by Max Bill in his exhibition catalogue for *Zeitprobleme in der Schweizer Malerei und Plastik* in 1936. *Concrete Art* does not abstract or distort natural models, it is purely based on the harmony of lines, surfaces and colours. In other words, *Concrete Art* must be free of any symbolic association with nature; lines and colours are powerful enough to stand on their own and create an independent reality.

The current exhibition's goal is to establish Max Bill's significance in simultaneously innovating design, sculpture and painting. The design objects *Ulmer Stool* (1954), *Dreirund Table* (1949) and *Quadratrund Table* (1949) directly resonate the sculptures and paintings in their clarity, simplicity and mathematical logic. Max Bill's success as a designer led him to experiment with sculptures after his friend Marcel Breuer asked him to create an object that would accompany a fireplace. The task ended in the acclaimed sculpture *Endless Ribbon* (1935–1937) and revealed Max Bill's true genius as a visual artist. The gold plated sculptures *Sechseckflaeche mit vollem Kreisumfang* (1953) and *Schleife durch Bewegung verwandelt* (1977) exemplify how the minimal gesture of twisting a line can result in a powerful composition. After working in three dimensions, Bill soon began to translate the *Concrete* thinking of the sculptures to painting. Correspondingly, the subtlety in form and colour of Bill's early paintings herald a radical new kind of abstraction. From the early work *Acht Farbgruppen* (1947) to *2 x 1 bis 3* (1970-72) we can observe a fascination with the square shape. During the next 30 years Bill revisited the square through different geometric compositions until he rotated the canvas to a diamond shape as in *Vier Zonen im Weiss* (1967), thereby accentuating the shape's predominance throughout his career.

By the time of his death in 1994, Max Bill had established himself as one of the main protagonists in European Modernism with a revolutionary vision overarching art, design, architecture and politics. Through his extensive travels and international network Max Bill led the way to introduce a new generation of artists, especially in Latin America, to European geometric abstraction.

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