

**Art Premium:** 'Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty at The Dallas Museum of Art', by Michelle Sevier, October 18, 2018

## Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty at The Dallas Museum of Art

BY MICHELLE SEVIER | NEWS

Opening on October 21, 2018, and running through until January 27, 2019, the first major museum presentation of Günther Förg's work in the United States since 1989 appears at **The Dallas Museum of Art** in Dallas, Texas. The show is co-organised with the **Stedelijk Museum**, Amsterdam, and will explore the artists' lifelong fascination with modernism. Diverse in his artistic practice, the exhibition brings together over 40 years of the artist's multimedia practice – including works on paper, photography, sculpture, and rarely- exhibited late-career paintings.



Günther Förg, Farbfeld (Colorfield) (1985), acrylic on wood © Deutsche Bank Collection

With a constant renewal of his artistic practice, *A Fragile Beauty* traces the development of Förg's pioneering cross-disciplinary work from 1973 – 2008, offering a fresh perspective and deeper understanding as well as appreciation of the artist's place in history. The exhibition includes major loans from private collections and notable German institutions such as the **Städel Museum**, Frankfurt and the **Staatliche Graphische Sammlung**, Munich.

### Reaction against Modernism

Günther Förg was closely associated with the Cologne scene of the 1980's and experimented with abstraction as well as monochrome painting, a rejection against figurative painting that was more prominent at the time. He was heavily engaged with the formalism of 20th-century avant-garde movements and adopted a utopian idea that the purity in the use of materials contributes to a better society, setting him apart from his contemporaries. Förg utilized materials in an unconventional manner, leading them to adopt a more 'impure' quality, evident in his series of lead paintings. His clashing use of color was a direct criticism of modernism.

Universal concepts of form, mass, proportion, rhythm and structure constitute a common thread in his work, and his early style was reminiscent of Cy Twombly and Ellsworth Kelly. He implied a more painterly approach to his photography with its grainy focus and unique perspectives, and created art not simply as object, but also as commentary, seeking out to explore the legacy of the modernist aesthetic in a postmodern age. His work has been closely aligned to modern masters including Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko and Edvard Munch, that too which he was heavily influenced by.



Günther Förg, *Untitled* (2009) © Max Hetzler Gallery, Berlin

#### Spotlighting Günther Förg's Diverse Artistic Practice

The exhibition begins with a recreation of a seminal wall mural from 1986, monochromatic paintings, an important gray painting from 1973 featuring undecipherable text, as well as and a monumental gray grid painting from 2009 that the artist layered over one of his vibrant Spot Paintings. It also includes many of the artist's multimedia paintings, such as a multi-panel work of painted lead, which is presented alongside a large diptych featuring acrylic and gold leaf. Five plaster and mixed media sculptures from 2000 are also featured in the exhibition. Many are composed of found household objects enveloped in plaster, renouncing their original forms to the amorphous plaster encasement. His interests are highlighted in architecture and history, featuring twelve photographs ranging in subject from portraits to modernist constructions in Italy from the 20's and 30's.



Günther Förg, Untitled, 2008. Acrylic and oil on canvas, courtesy of Matthew B. Gerson

Concluding the exhibition is a group of the artist's late works, Förg's *Spot Paintings* from 2007 to 2008, signaling his return to painting to manifest the expressive freedom he allowed himself towards the end of his life. These distinctive paintings feature large swathes of color on white ground, which lay bare the artist's gesture and emphasize the activity of painting itself.

*A Fragile Beauty* reignites an exciting dialogue with the artist, who was driven by a boundless urge for freedom in his experimental artistic practice. Today, his works can be seen in collections of the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, the Kunstmuseum Bonn, the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt am Main, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, amongst others.