

Art Daily: 'First U.S. museum exhibition of work by Günther Förg in nearly three decades debut at the Dallas Museum of Art', October 22, 2018

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Günther Förg, Untitled, 1987, acrylic on lead on wood, 32 parts, The George Economou Collection, © Estate Günther Förg, Suisse.

DALLAS, TX.- [The Dallas Museum of Art](#) is presenting exclusively in the US the most comprehensive survey to date for renowned German artist Günther Förg (1952-2013). The first American museum exhibition dedicated to the artist in nearly three decades, *Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty*, brings together over 40 years of the artist's multimedia practice – including work on paper, photography, sculpture, and rarely-exhibited late-career paintings – to provide new insight on the practice and enduring influence of this extraordinary and complex artist.

Organized in collaboration with the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and their curator of photography Hripsimé Visser, in close dialogue with the artist's estate, *Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty* builds on both institutions' histories with the artist, with each having staged seminal exhibitions of his work in 1992 and 1995 respectively. The exhibition includes major loans from private collections such as Deutsche Bank and notable German institutions such as the Städel Museum, Frankfurt and the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich.

"We are excited to collaborate with the Stedelijk Museum to bring renewed attention to the practice of an artist who has undoubtedly influenced the creative processes of many artists working today," said the Eugene McDermott Director of the DMA, Dr. Agustín Arteaga. "As a place of discovery and learning, the DMA is proud to share Förg's vivid work with a new generation of local and national audiences for the first time in nearly 30 years, and to re-ignite dialogue about this fascinating artist."

While Förg's multidisciplinary approach has become predominant today in contemporary artists' practices, it was uncommonly eclectic and provocative in his time. Art historians have grappled with the breadth of his production, and have frequently aligned his work with that of modernist masters such as Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko and Edvard Munch, all of whom greatly inspired Förg. There is limited scholarship focused on the artist's singular contributions, such as his skillful manipulations of the language of abstraction and explorations of the relationships between object and viewer.

Reflecting the incredible scope of the artist's practice, *Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty* traces the development of Förg's pioneering cross-disciplinary work from 1973 to 2009 to offer a new perspective and deepen understanding and appreciation of the artist's place in art history. The exhibition pivots around major themes recurrent in Günther Förg's oeuvre, including his interest in surface and substrate, the grid motif, and color theory. Rather than a broadly chronological view, the presentation creates juxtapositions between series and works demonstrating artistic concerns that the artist returned to throughout his life.

The exhibition begins with a recreation of a seminal wall mural from 1986, as well as a number of the artist's monochromatic paintings, including an important gray painting from 1973 featuring undecipherable text and a monumental gray grid painting from 2009 that the artist layered over one of his vibrant Spot Paintings. The paintings feature both exquisitely sensitive surfaces and a gestural, improvised quality found across the artist's work, encouraging further investigation into the artist's explorations of the instability between image and reality. The exhibition 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. As with many of the artist's paintings, these materials impart distinct textures and compositional elements that create tension between surface and substrate.

A similar tension is prevalent in Förg's sculptural work, where bronze masks flout a fine line between figuration and abstraction. Five plaster and mixed media sculptures from 2000 are featured in the exhibition. Many are composed of found household objects enshrouded in plaster, relinquishing their original forms to the amorphous plaster encasement.

Though he is most often recognized for these formal innovations, Förg also had an interest in architecture and history, as evidenced by his photographic works. Twelve photographs are featured in the exhibition, ranging in subject from portraits to modernist edifices in Italy from the 20's and 30's. His documentation of building elements like stairwells, windows, and portals – often depicting the artist – are framed behind reflective glass. When viewed in an installation setting and paired with framed mirrors of the same scale, these works mimic architectural features and create interruptions within the space. As with all of Förg's work and installations, the individual works are regarded as part of a whole, merging photography with wall paintings and sculpture to activate a space with specificity to site.

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.