ALMINE RECH

ZERO
An international artist movement 1957 - 1966

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ZERO marks a new beginning in art after 1945: artists wanted to rethink art “from scratch” – beyond ideology and post-war painting. Instead of traditional images, structure, movement, chance, and light came to the fore as central artistic means.

The exhibition shows how ZERO formed an international network from Düsseldorf – with connections to Italy, France, and Belgium, among others. A special focus is placed on the light and aluminum works of Heinz Mack, in which serial structures, reflective surfaces, and “virtual movement” make light itself the actual material. Works by Otto Piene and Günther Uecker, as well as by artists such as Hal Busse, Dadamaino, Yayoi Kusama, and Nanda Vigo, illustrate the diversity of ZERO. There is much to discover, from smoke and fire paintings to nail reliefs to mirror and spatial objects.

The ZERO movement disbanded in 1966 but is now considered one of the most important movements in international post-war art and a pioneer of light art, kinetic art, and space-related installations.

Heinz Mack – The Biographer of Light

Heinz Mack creates the poetry of immateriality. For him, light is not just a theme, but a lifelong artistic obsession. Influenced by early experiences of light during the war – nights of bombing over Krefeld, a narrow beam of light in a darkened hallway, dancing dust particles in the air – he developed a strong awareness of immateriality and the magic of minimal light sources. Later, a trip to the Sahara deepened this interest: the dazzling mirage reflections, the barely perceptible horizon, and the silence of the desert became key experiences for him. In his work, he attempts to translate these elusive phenomena into abstract, autonomous constellations of light and space – using aluminum, stainless steel, glass, acrylic glass, marble, and reflective surfaces. Silver in particular plays a major role because it reflects light intensely and, for Mack, is symbolically associated with inwardness, night, and consciousness.