

SELECTION OF ABSTRACT GEOMETRIC PRINTS AND DRAWINGS FROM THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION INAUGURATES NEW GALLERIES AT MoMA

Geo/Metric: Prints and Drawings from the Collection

Second Floor Galleries

June 11-August 18, 2008

NEW YORK, June 9, 2008—The Museum of Modern Art inaugurates new galleries on the second floor with ***Geo/Metric: Prints and Drawings from the Collection***, an informal survey of the widespread impulse toward geometric abstraction in modern and contemporary art over the past century. One of the seminal innovations and most enduring legacies of modernism, geometric abstraction—art based on simple geometric shapes—has surfaced and resurfaced across geographical boundaries, particularly in Europe and the Americas. Artists representing various movements and geographical backgrounds are featured, from Cubist, Dada, and Russian avant-garde artists of the 1910s and 1920s, through artists associated with Minimalism, Op art, and hard-edge abstraction in the 1960s and 1970s, to artists who have emerged in more recent years and continue to exploit the infinite potential of simple geometries. Among the highlights of the more than 100 works in the exhibition are several recent acquisitions, including major projects and series by Lyubov Popova, Robert Ryman, and Gabriel Orozco. This exhibition, on view from June 11 to August 18, 2008, is organized by Starr Figura, The Phyllis Ann and Walter Borten Associate Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books, with Kathleen Curry, Assistant Curator for Research and Collections, Department of Drawings, The Museum of Modern Art.

The new second floor galleries, located adjacent to Café 2, were recently converted from offices to provide more gallery space for the collection. The galleries will feature exhibitions of works from the collections of the Prints and Illustrated Books and Drawings Departments. These galleries will also feature the special exhibitions *Van Gogh and the Colors of the Night* (September 21, 2008, to January 5, 2009) and *Aernout Mik* (May 10 to July 27, 2008).

Geo/Metric begins with work of the 1910s and 1920s, a period when various artists began to make art from nothing more than an arrangement of geometric shapes on a flat picture plane. Influenced by the Cubist collages of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque from 1912-13, and, like them, rejecting centuries-old conventions about representation in art, artists such as Piet Mondrian in the Netherlands and Lyubov Popova and Kasimir Malevich in Russia focused on the essences of materials and forms. For them reductive abstraction involved the search for cosmic

harmonies or universal truths. Popova's series *Six Prints* (c. 1916-17) is a rare example of what the artist called "painterly architectonics." Her aim was to depict physical and spatial dynamism by layering her shapes so they would seem to be continually shifting and rotating. The portfolio format enhances this effect, as the energy of each sheet seems to influence the push and pull in the others.

The exhibition continues with works from the 1950s and 1960s. Although these decades are most strongly associated with Abstract Expressionism and Pop art, many artists of this period worked with a geometric vocabulary of hard-edged forms. Some, such as the American artists Ellsworth Kelly and Myron Stout and the Brazilian Hélio Oiticica, took a relatively lyrical approach to forms and colors. Oiticica's *Metaesquemas* series, created from 1956 to 1959, were composed of squares and rectangles, usually against a pale background. Arranged in a gridlike structure but without complete regularity, his shapes seem to rhythmically shift and float slightly off the surface of the paper.

Others, such as Josef Albers, the German-born artist who emigrated to the United States in 1933, and François Morellet in France, developed their work along more controlled and theoretical lines, investigating the optical effects of patterns and adjacent colors. In Albers's 1962 series of ten screenprints, *Homage to the Square: Ten Works by Josef Albers*, the viewer is meant to perceive shifting depth and changes of tone at the outer and inner perimeters of these nesting squares, even though the areas are printed in solid, unmodulated color.

Minimalist works from the late 1960s and 1970s by Dorothea Rockburne, Robert Ryman, and Daniel Buren embody the rigorously spare aesthetic of that movement and demonstrate as well each artist's interest in integrating his or her work more fully into its surroundings. The exhibition concludes with works executed within the past decade by a younger generation of international artists including Gabriel Orozco, Olaf Nicolai, and Mark Grotjahn. Their projects pay homage to earlier practitioners of geometric abstraction and reaffirm the infinite potential of elemental forms, colors, and lines.

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