

Galerie Gmurzynska Presents Work by Otto Piene, Founder of Group Zero

Exhibition Announcements

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The Second World War put into question many aspects of humanity, including the point of making art. Often quoted and misquoted is Theodor Adorno's claim that writing poems after Auschwitz is barbaric, which has marked the post-war climate in art. Informel artists turned to gesture and material as two key expressive components of their works, searching to separate themselves from the past that has failed them.

Many artists were looking for a clean slate at the time, including Otto Piene, the co-founder of Group Zero. An exhibition of his works is currently on view at Galerie Gmurzynska New York, under the title Rouge at Noir.



Otto Piene - Ancient Star, 1994-95. Courtesy of Galerie Gmurzynska

Piene and Group Zero

Otto Piene (1928– 2014) is considered a pioneer of modern art and one of the key avant-garde figures of the second half of the 20th century. Together with Heinz Mack, he established Group Zero with the idea that reconstruction might be achieved artistically if it started with the mind. The initiative attracted many artists worldwide and sparked the movement under the heading ZERO. Among its representatives were Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana, Yayoi Kusama, Piero Manzoni, Getulio Alviani, Arman, Jean Tinguely, Daniel Spoerri, and Jesús Rafael Soto.

Throughout his career and in collaboration with other artists from the movement, Piene explored diverse and innovative ways of visual creation in order to reinvent art, using fire, steel, ceramic, kinetic installations, film, sky art, and performance.



Otto Piene - On the History of Light, 1959. Courtesy of Galerie Gmurzynska

Selected Works

The exhibition at Galerie Gmurzynska presents a selection of Piene's painted ceramics, fire paintings, a light installation, and gouaches. The focus is on the combination of the red and black colors in his practice, which is also reflected in the title of the show. Piene used a variety of red and black hues in his painted ceramic, canvases, and light installations. For Piene, red and black symbolized passion and are also the colors symbolising the fusion of matter, as they dominate the process of the firing of ceramic.

Rouge at noir will showcase the artist's most recent series as well as works from the early part of his career. Among the selected pieces are Die Geburt des Regenbogens (The birth of the rainbow, 1966), oil on canvas with fire and smoke; Feuerorgel (Fire Organ, 1972), a painting of fire on cardboard, and Lichtraster o.T (Light grid, untitled) (2012–2014), a light installation. "Light was the uniting, overarching element in the art that my friends and I made," Piene once explained.



Otto Piene - The Birth of the Raibow, 1966. Courtesy of Galerie Gmurzynska

Rouge at Noir at Galerie Gmurzynska

The exhibition Otto Piene: Rouge at noir will be on view at Galerie Gmurzynska in New York until June 25th, 2022. It is accompanied by an original essay, *Le degré zéro de l'art* (Degree Zero of Art) written by Jerome Neutres, in which the author situates Piene's oeuvre within the context of post-Second World War modern art.