



Press release

Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg Exhibition Program 2023/2024

Re-Inventing Piet. Mondrian and the Consequences

March 11 – July 16, 2023

Curator: Andreas Beitin

Co-Curator: Elena Engelbrechter

Piet Mondrian, the media star! The famous Dutch painter repeatedly called for art and life to be connected. In fact, his art has succeeded like no other in visually permeating many areas of life: From clothing, consumer items, and bags to entire façades of buildings. Who does not know it, the catchy and quickly recognizable design of everyday objects that uninhibitedly and bluntly make use of his ingenious compositions. It is also impossible to imagine social media without Piet Mondrian as an “influencer”: On the TikTok platform, the hashtag #mondrian currently registers no less than 26.4 million views.

Like hardly any other artist, Piet Mondrian managed within a few years to move away from figuration in the 1910s to establish a trend-setting abstract style of painting, which, in his extensive art-theoretical writings, he called “New Design” or “Neoplasticism.” The ostensibly simple compositions of initially black lines, colored squares and rectangles of the primary colors red, yellow, and blue on a white or gray ground did nothing less than revolutionize the art world and forever changed the view of pictorial reality.

Starting with works from Piet Mondrian’s main Neoplastic phase, the exhibition offers a glimpse into the cosmos of the many new creations, adaptations, confrontations, and further developments of his artistically groundbreaking compositions: from artworks by his immediate contemporaries in the context of De Stijl to the famous Mondrian cocktail dresses by Yves Saint Laurent, objects of applied art, design, and everyday culture, as well as numerous works and installations by contemporary artists.

Re-Inventing Piet. Mondrian and the Consequences is being realized in cooperation with the Wilhelm Hack Museum in Ludwigshafen, where the exhibition will be on view from September 2023 to January 2024. Accompanying the exhibition, a comprehensive publication will be published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König with texts by Friedrich von Borries, Nancy J. Troy, Wolfgang Ullrich, Marek Wieczorek, and others (ed. Andreas Beitin, René Zechlin, ca. 256 pages).

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Friendships

Works in Common from Dada to Now

May 13 – September 24, 2023

Curator: Blandine Chavanne

Scholarly Advisor: Jean-Jacques Lebel

There has hardly been a time when the idea of working in a team and bundling different competencies was as omnipresent and popular as it is today. Long before artists in the field of art formed permanent collaborative duos or collectives, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in particular saw the emergence of collaborative works of art from a wide variety of personal, artistic, and historical backgrounds. The exhibition *Friendships. Works in Common from Dada to Now* explores the conditions and temporal constellations that led acquaintances, close confidants, friends, lovers, or even competitors to devote themselves to a collaborative work process for a limited period of time.

Especially in retrospect, it is easy to idealize the collegial togetherness and the genesis of the artwork. Not only enjoyable collaboration, but also (competitive) disputes among friends brought to light the most progressive ideas and new artistic methods. The fighting out of disputes, as well as complex amorous relationships, also accompanied the process that led to perhaps the most important discovery of the Surrealists, the *cadavres exquis*. With shared authorship, they significantly changed the paradigm of genuine artistic expression through play characterized by chance and improvisation. The Dada artists invented collaborative action art, which was further developed by the Fluxus artists with new themes. Driven by a common socio-political commitment, a group of artists realized the *Grand Tableau Antifasciste Collectif* in 1960 out of solidarity with an Algerian freedom fighter and to protest against colonialism and torture.

Developed in cooperation with the Mucem – Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations in Marseille, where the exhibition will be on view through February 13, 2023, the transnational exhibition project features a spectrum of collaboratively created artworks and is itself, in a sense, the expression of a friendly collaboration between the curator Blandine Chavanne and the artist Jean-Jacques Lebel as scholarly advisor. The countries of the two partner institutions, France and Germany, also share close ties of friendship.

Accompanying the exhibition, a richly illustrated book has been published by Hatje Cantz Verlag (ed. Blandine Chavanne and Jean-Jacques Lebel with Andreas Beutin and Jean François Chougnet), which contains essays, detailed texts on the works, and interviews with renowned authors to present the history and background of the collaboratively created artworks (German and French editions, 304 pages each, approx. 400 illustrations).

In cooperation with the Mucem – Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations, Marseille

Mucem

Kapwani Kiwanga

September 16, 2023 – January 7, 2024

Curator: Uta Ruhkamp

Archive-based, thematically highly topical, and future-oriented: This is how the impressive work of Kapwani Kiwanga (b. 1978) can be described. In the fall of 2023, the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg will present the first comprehensive mid-career retrospective of the Canadian French artist, who was recently awarded the Zurich Art Prize (2022) and the prestigious Prix Marcel Duchamp (2020).

Kapwani Kiwanga is adept at seducing viewers aesthetically, while at the same time touching them in terms of content. For she uses the power of color, light, and material to tell history from a new perspective and to point to

asymmetries of power. Delicate plants harbor toxic power and history, colors unfold manipulative effects, and light is exposed as a political instrument. The most striking feature of her work is the artistic translation of a well-founded theoretical basis, whereby her installations, paintings, works on paper, photographs, and video works captivate through formal clarity and reduction. In doing so, Kapwani Kiwanga spans an arc of reference from the local to the global, incorporates location factors, but also addresses colonialism, postcolonialism, gender, racism, slavery, faith, and spirituality. As a trained anthropologist and comparative religion scholar, she has the academic background for her interdisciplinary, social-analytical practice, in which she works with so-called exit strategies. She searches for a vocabulary that invites multi-perspective ways of looking at existing situations and hardened hegemonic structures in order to think about them differently in the future. Through this historical-sociopolitical dimension, which is only revealed at second glance, Kapwani Kiwanga breaks up the visual pleasure of her works in terms of content, doubling their effect and giving them a lasting impact.

Raised in Hamilton, Canada, Kiwanga studied anthropology and comparative religion in Montreal before participating in the “La Seine” program at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris. The artist lives and works in Paris and is currently a fellow at the Harvard Ratcliffe Institute/Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive, richly illustrated publication (German/English) with an extensive interview with the artist by Cecilia Alemani and texts by Julie Pellegrin and Uta Ruhkamp (ed.).

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Paolo Pellegrin
Fragile Wonders

November 25, 2023 – March 17, 2024

A gigantic iceberg, glowing lava, barren landscapes, mighty vegetation, boundless flocks of birds, and enraptured animal worlds—Paolo Pellegrin’s (b. 1964) photographic exploration of the Anthropocene is a visually powerful journey into the unknown. For one year, he traced the state of nature from Iceland to Greenland, from Sicily to South Tyrol, and from Namibia to Costa Rica. The roots of this project lie in an expedition to Antarctica that Pellegrin undertook in 2017 together with a group from NASA. In a comprehensive exhibition, the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg will present for the first time in Germany the impressively direct, but also poetic and at times surreal photographs and projections of the Italian photographer’s global analysis of nature.

The winner of ten World Press Photo Awards, various Photographer of the Year Awards, the Robert Capa Gold Medal Award, and many other honors, Paolo Pellegrin is one of the most famous documentary and war photographers of our time. His photographs are captivating not only for their documentary value, but also for their aesthetic power. They are more than pure reportage photography, for he has long since abandoned image sharpness in favor of a broad spectrum of light and shadow. Thus, his most recent nature photographs, which are based on the four elements, are also motivated by a personal quest: “Yes, of course it’s about landscapes and nature, but I have to transform them. [...] I’m looking for the sublime.” Whether in color or in black and white, Paolo Pellegrin exposes the textures and patterns, the surfaces, the enormous power, as well as the vulnerability of our planet. His *Fragile Wonders* not only tell the story of climate change, but open space for new viewing experiences of nature beyond catastrophes.

The exhibition was developed for the Museum Intesa Sanpaolo in Turin and adapted and expanded for the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg in collaboration with Magnum Photos. Nominated as early as 2001, Paolo Pellegrin has been a member of the renowned Magnum photo agency since 2005.