

press release

KUNSTHAL ROTTERDAM



Action ↔ Reaction

100 Years of Kinetic Art

22 September 2018 - 20 January 2019

1st press release, 25 June 2018

The Kunsthall Rotterdam exhibition 'Action ↔ Reaction. 100 Years of Kinetic Art' presents an impressive historical overview of kinetic art, the abstract art movement from the twentieth century focusing on light and movement. Around eighty works of the most famous artists who made important contributions to the development of kinetic art can be admired. From pioneers such as Marcel Duchamp, Alexander Calder and Victor Vasarely, to established names such as Julio Le Parc, Gerhard von Graevenitz, Christian Megert, Bridget Riley, Yayoi Kusama, Jan van Munster and Dan Flavin as well as representatives from younger generations such as Jeppe Hein, Žilvinas Kempinas and Philippe Decrauzat. Also shown is work by Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker of the German avant-garde group Zero.

In 2018, over a century after the birth of this art movement, and in close collaboration with the Réunion des musées nationaux – Grand Palais, Paris, the Kunsthall Rotterdam is proud to present 'Action ↔ Reaction' in the Netherlands, a prestigious retrospective exhibition, placing the kinetic art of yesterday in the context of the performative arts of today.

The exhibition is subdivided into twelve themes covering different aspects of perception and phenomenal experience, such as light, movement, rhythm, structure, vibration, space, radiance, immateriality and rotation. All artworks appeal to various senses and, as a result of interacting with the viewer, can lead to extraordinary perceptions. Feel, look, hear and experience the rhythms, vibrations, spinning and force fields all the way to the cosmos: Action ↔ Reaction!

Highlights

The exhibition 'Action ↔ Reaction' features many hallucinatory artworks. The monumental work 'Mechanisches Ballet' by Heinz Mack from 1963 that previously only existed as a model, will be constructed for the first time and have its world premiere in Rotterdam. Part of this work that contains references to Fernand Léger and Oskar Schlemmer, is a light and sound show with music by the composer György Ligeti. The 1964/65 work 'Blaues Segel' by the German artist Hans Haacke, consisting of a blue piece of fabric across which a ventilator causes continuous undulating movements, is of a great sculptural and abstract beauty. The artificial light spaces in the work 'Chromosaturation' from 1965 by Carlos Cruz-Diez immerse the viewer in an environment that consists of only three colours and enables our eyes – used to perceiving a broad range of colours – to transform the idea of colour to an almost physical experience.

The 1988 sensory installation 'Pénétrable de Lyon' by the Latin-American artist Jesús Rafael Soto invites the viewer to become one with the artwork. This playful work consists of a closed curtain made from thousands of little yellow plastic threads – of which the shape is continually changing as a result of human contact – into which the visitors can disappear.

The artworks in the exhibition, including a number of monumental installations (environments), originate from famous collections of various museums in Europe and are brought together by the renowned French guest curator Serge Lemoine (former Président of Musée d'Orsay and Professor emeritus at Sorbonne University, Paris) and Marianne Le Pommeré (Historian of Art).



History of kinetic art

Concepts such as space, movement, vision and light punctuated the abstract art of the twentieth century, as a reaction to the scientific and technical advances of that age. After World War II, kinetic art started playing an important role in dematerialising art. Art can only really become art when it is seen or experienced by the viewer. From 1955, when the Paris exhibition 'Le Mouvement' takes place at the Denise René gallery, a number of developments all started to fall into place. Marcel Duchamp's spinning 'rotoreliefs', Alexander Calder's mobiles and the work of Jean Tinguely marked the beginning of movement art. The exhibition 'Action \leftrightarrow Reaction' also shows work by some of the movement's predecessors, including Giacomo Balla, Hans Richter, François Morellet and László Moholy-Nagy who were the first to try and express abstract and dynamic concepts of reality through painting, sculpture and film.



Kinetic art in the Netherlands

There is a historic link between the Netherlands and kinetic art. In 1961 the first large international exhibition 'Bewogen beweging' was presented at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam by Willem Sandberg and Pontus Hultén. This Dutch premiere was a logical sequel to 'Le Mouvement' and was followed across the world, for example during the 1964 and 1968 Documentas in Kassel, the Venice Biennales in the same period, the exhibition 'The Responsive Eye' (1965) at the MoMA and during a second large exhibition in the Netherlands, 'KunstLichtKunst' (1966), initiated by Jean Leering at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven.

In this day and age – where the creation of experiences has become increasingly important – an appeal to all the senses has again become central to many forms of artistic expression. After more than a century of surviving both good and bad times worldwide, kinetic art is again relevant to young artists such as Žilvinas Kempinas, Carsten Höller and Conrad Shawcross.

Catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue, published by Lannoo with contributions by Serge Lemoine and Marianne Le Pommeré.

Education

For children and adolescents, the exhibition 'Action \leftrightarrow Reaction' is literally an eye-opener because of its labyrinth-like installations, moving objects and possibilities for interacting with the artworks and experiencing them directly. A Kunsthall Education Kit, delving deeper into the senses and the laws of nature, is available for primary and secondary schools, as well as for secondary vocational schools. At the KunsthallLAB visitors are welcome to start experimenting for themselves with a variety of kinetic objects. Students can use the Digital Playground to create 'vlogs' in the exhibition. In collaboration with SKVR, 'Action \leftrightarrow Reaction' is part of the Cultural Trajectory for Rotterdam students.

Save the date: Weekend of Art Hallucinations

An extensive activity programme will be developed to accompany the exhibition. The Weekend of Art Hallucinations will take place on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 November 2018, when the days get shorter and darkness starts setting in earlier. More information about this event and other activities will follow.



Réunion
des musées
nationaux
Grand Palais

This exhibition is realised in a close collaboration with the Réunion des musées nationaux - Grand Palais, Paris.

Photo's: Hans Haacke, Blaues Segel, 1964/65; Carlos Cruz-Diez, Chromosaturation, 1963/2013; Jesús Rafael Soto, Penetrable, 1988; Giacomo Balla, Compenetrazione iridescente no.7, 1912; Victor Vasarely, Altai III, 1955/58; François Morellet, 2 trames 45° -135° de néons interférents, 1972; Julio Le Parc, Lumière alternée, 1966/1993; Christian Megert, Environment Documenta 4, 1968; Žilvinas Kempinas, Beyond the Fans, 1969.

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