

VARIATION

Bruno Munari, Karel Štědrý, Stanislav Kolíbal, Bernard Aubertin, Alberto Biasi, Toni Costa, Edoardo Landi, Achille Perilli, Horacio Garcia Rossi, František Kyncl, Jan Kubíček, Zorka Ságlová

Curated by Mark Gisbourne

Organiser: gallery Cermak Eisenkraft_, cermakeisenkraft.com

Authors Tomáš Zapletal Cermak and Karel Štědrý

Venue: gallery Cermak Eisenkraft_, Národní 9 (2nd floor of Topič House), Prague 1

Opening hours: Tue-Sun 11:00-18:00 (closed on Mondays and public holidays)

Deadline: from 11 October to 10 November 2023

Opening: 10 October 2023 at 6:30 pm.

Cermak Eisenkraft Gallery_ presents an exhibition entitled *VARIATION - Bruno Munari, Karel Štědrý, Stanislav Kolíbal, Bernard Aubertin, Alberto Biasi, Toni Costa, Edoardo Landi, Achille Perilli, Horacio Garcia Rossi, František Kyncl, Jan Kubíček, Zorka Ságlová* on the 2nd floor of Topič House on Národní 9.

At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, many young artists denied the subjective post-war movements such as Abstract Expressionism or Informel and renewed their search for simple forms and pure, unconventional materials. In Europe, groups interested in geometric abstraction, kinetic art and op art began to form. In Germany, the *Zero* art group (1958-1968) was formed, and through the organization of events, exhibitions, performances and the publication of a magazine, it quickly managed to create an international movement uniting individuals and art groups under the name *ZERO*. In Italy, for example, it was *Gruppo N*, also known as *Gruppo Enne* (1959-1964), which favoured collective creation over individual artistic endeavour (the first works to emerge from this group were not individually signed, but marked with the group's initials); in France, the *Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel* (1960-1968); in Holland, the *Nul* group (1960-1965); and in the Czech Republic, *the Club Concretist* (1967-1971).

All the groups were characterized by an interest in light, movement, action, new materials, technologies and practices aimed at the reduction of artistic means and new possibilities to create interactive works and spaces within the rules of geometric abstraction, which would abolish the boundaries between painting, sculpture, installation, artist and public. At the same time, they were united by the conviction that art must be kinetic and participatory.

Under the curatorial direction of Mark Gisbourne, the project by artist Tomáš Zapletal Cermak will offer the audience paintings, sculptures, drawings, kinetic and op art objects by world renowned

artists from the above-mentioned groups *Zero* (Bernard Aubertin), *Gruppo N* (Toni Costa, Alberto Biasi, Edoardo Landi), *Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel* (Horacio Garcia Rossi), resonating with the artistic thinking of Italian Bruno Munari, one of the greatest actors of 20th century art. century., Achille Perilli, the founder of the Italian modernist art group *Forma 1*, and Czech artists from the circle of Concretists and Constructivists (František Kyncl, Stanislav Kolíbal, Jan Kubíček, Zorka Ságlová), from whose work the artistic roots of the youngest protagonist of the exhibition, the painter Karel Štědrý, stem. All artists are strongly connected by their inclination towards geometric abstraction and the ideas of the international ZERO movement. Their works are presented here in a creative dialogue with Karel Štědrý's paintings, which open the way to the depths of the relentless search for new geometric forms. The exhibition VARIATION traces how the artistic paths of all the protagonists diverge or, on the contrary, converge in the timeline up to the present day, documenting the development on the domestic and foreign art scene, mutual influences, changes in styles and specific approaches of the three generations, thus offering an exceptional confrontation.

For his paintings, Karel Štědrý first prepares spatial objects made of modelling clay, through which he searches for the possibility of processing shape. He then photographs the objects, edits the images in graphic computer programs, and finally transfers them to the canvas using a brush and acrylic paints. He works with bold color, but even black has a wide range of shades in his works. His earlier works

are characterised by bright colours and clear geometry, while the newer ones go into darker colours and their surface is all the more plastic. Other paintings the artist creates exclusively using his own black charcoal.

In the work of all the artists presented, one can notice a related visual language elaborated in all possible variations with the utmost simplicity and organic quality of each artist's specific personal idea. In fact, as their works show, playing with geometry and colours can allow to stimulate the abilities of analysis and imagination at the same time. In order to navigate their work, it is necessary to follow the goal of their main journey, which is the exploration of perceptual and sensory abilities as well as the search for ways to transcend the limits of the object and painting. Through this analysis, it is possible to identify the line that connects their works, pushing the boundary of the process of perceiving events and forms that affect human existence.

Karel Štědrý understands art as a form of communication - and not only with his peers. His work is full of originality and ideas, but at the same time he is not afraid to draw inspiration from the greats of the last century, especially abstract art. Therefore, the exhibition project is a symptomatic return to the essence of artistic creation as it is known in the European tradition: to

art as a sovereign expression of creative individuality, but at the same time also as a tool of never-ending artistic dialogue.

"I confess that with the same chance and happiness with which I discovered the thinking and reasoning of the artists presented here, I can exhibit with them and go deeper into their concepts and philosophy, which I identify with and find extremely sympathetic. It is based on perspective, humanity and an unceasing need to search and experiment, based on the basic human instinct to express oneself creatively, which has allowed them to entertain themselves with the beauty and mystery of unexplored forms, shapes and their contents applied in the everyday cycle of life."

Karel Štědrý

Admission to the Cermak Eisenkraft_ gallery is free for the duration of the exhibition.

Print quality photos on request at office@cermakeisenkraft.com

Keywords: Bruno Munari, Karel Štědrý, Stanislav Kolíbal, Bernard Aubertin, Alberto Biasi, Toni Costa, Edoardo Landi, Achille Perilli, Horacio Garcia Rossi, František Kyncl, Jan Kubíček, Zorka Ságlová, exhibition, Cermak Eisenkraft_ gallery, Prague, October, November, contemporary art, painting, sculpture, object, geometric abstraction, concretism, constructivism, kineticism, op art.

Bruno Munari (1907 Milan -1998 Milan) was an Italian painter, sculptor, designer, illustrator,



printmaker, writer, filmmaker, teacher and above all one of the most important artists of the 20th century, whose multidisciplinary revolutionary and innovative work was the subject of major exhibitions at the Venice Biennale (1930, 1932, 1934, 1936, 1952, 1966, 1970, 1986...), at the MoMA in New York (1954, 1955) and at the Documenta in Kassel (1964-1968). He made significant contributions to the development of many areas of visual art in Modernism, Futurism and concrete art, as well as literature and poetry. From the beginning of his career, Munari

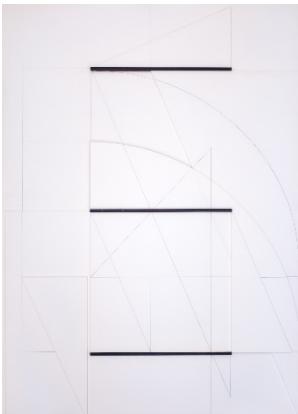
was concerned with the concept of art developed in space and sought to transcend expressive tools and boundaries. Munari's break from the idea of art being limited to painting, sculpture or the object occurred as early as 1930, when he began to create his first suspended mobile sculptures called *Useless Machines*. One of the most important themes in his work was movement, and the question of light played a significant role in his work. Therefore, he was one of the pioneers of kinetic art and is considered the founder of mapping.

Karel Štědrý (* 1985) lives and works in Prague. He is one of the leading personalities of the



generation that entered the Czech art scene during the first decade of the 21st century. His work reflects seemingly contradictory sources. We can recognize in her an interest in classical modernism, architecture, but also in pop culture and its specific manifestations such as graffiti, hip-hop, break-dancing and computer games. He first studied promotional graphics at the Václav Hollar Higher Vocational School (1998-2003) and the beginnings of his work were influenced by the period when he was actively involved in the developing Prague hip-hop scene as a member of the break-dance group 02 RedStars. He then studied painting in the studio of Stanislav Diviš at UMPRUM (2003-2010), from which he graduated with a painting series entitled *Nobody negeometric let him not enter*. This series foreshadowed his further artistic development within geometric abstraction. In the same year he received the ARSkontakt prize for young artists. The gradual development of his painting expression led Karel Štědrý from figurative painting through his favourite scenes from breakdancing to geometric abstracted expression, which has persisted to the present day. The author began exhibiting in 2002, in 2006 he had his first solo exhibition entitled Architectures at the 35m Gallery² in Prague, since then he has had over two dozen solo exhibitions and his work has been presented in more than forty group exhibitions in the Czech Republic and abroad. His work is represented in many private and public collections. At Sotheby's, his painting from the AcidHaus / What Remains of the Avant-Garde series was successfully auctioned for £9,450.

Stanislav Kolíbal (* 1925) is one of the most important protagonists of Czech and international art



of the second half of the 20th century and the first half of the 21st century. He is one of the important representatives of Czech conceptual art and geometric abstraction. From 1945-1951 he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and from 1951-1954 he studied scenography at the Prague DAMU, where he worked as a teacher until 1959. Since 1954 he has been a member of the Artistic Beseda. In 1960-1970 he was a member of the artistic group UB 12, which he co-founded. He exhibited his works in group exhibitions from 1943 and individually

from 1949. He began as a painter, illustrator, typographer and scenographer, and in the 1960s he began to create abstract spatial objects, which he still does today, as well as graphic design. In 1990-1993 he worked as a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague in the studio of sculpture - installation. In 2019 he represented the Czech Republic at the Venice Biennale of Modern Art and prepared the exhibition Echoes of the Venice Biennale for the National Gallery in Prague. His work is represented in the collections of three dozen museums and galleries around

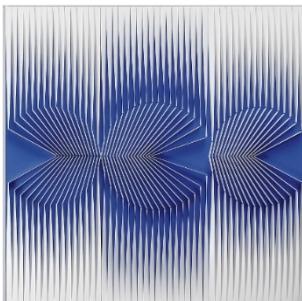
the world, including the National Gallery in Prague, the Louvre and Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum and Brooklyn Museum in New York, MUMOK in Vienna, museums in Bochum, Grenoble, Poitiers, Toronto, Budapest, Lodz and the Kampa Museum in Prague.

Bernard Aubertin (1934 Fontenay-aux-Roses – 2015 Reutlingen) was a French artist known for his



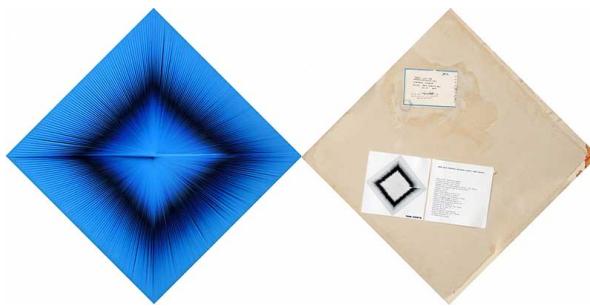
red monochromes created with spatulas, which he used to spread the paint on the canvas, as well as with more common objects such as forks, spoons and hands. In 1960 he began his most important series, *Tableaux clous*, followed by *Tableaux feu* in 1961. The visual power of colour was enhanced by the techniques the artist used. From 1957 he was a close friend of Yves Klein, through whom he joined the German art group *Zero* in 1960-1961, due to the urgent need to redefine his own ideas about art and painting. Aubertin's work remained faithful to his exploration of the dynamic possibilities of red and fire, although gold, white and black also occasionally appeared. His works have been exhibited in major international shows, such as Documenta 6, Kassel (1977) and the Venice Biennale (2011).

Alberto Biasi (b. 1937, Padua), Italian artist who debuted in 1959 with a work born from



observation of nature, consisting of superpositions of perforated paper, cotton gauze or metal mesh that interact with light to create optical-kinetic effects by forming a modular grid. He was a co-founder of *Gruppo N*. The idea of founding the art group *Gruppo N* in 1959, whose founders were Albert Biasi, Edoardo Landi and Manfred Massironi, came about during their frequent trips to Milan, which at the time was a crossroads for internationally renowned artists. Toni Costa and Ennio Chiggio joined the group in 1960. The group quickly became the protagonist of major national and international exhibitions of kinetic art. In addition to opening an exhibition hall in Padua, *Gruppo N* joined the *New Tendencies* movement, exhibited in Zagreb, Paris and Venice, and made contact with other European experimenters. In 1962, *Gruppo N* participated in the travelling exhibition *Arte Programmata* - the title referred to computer software - organised by Bruno Munari and hosted by Olivetti stores in Milan, Rome, Venice and in London and American galleries and museums. In 1964 *Gruppo N* was invited to the XXXII International Biennale in Venice and the following year to MoMA in New York, where it participated in the famous exhibition *The Responsive Eye*. *Gruppo N*'s brief history ended in September 1964, although Biasi attempted to create *Gruppo Enne 65* the following year with Landi and Massironi.

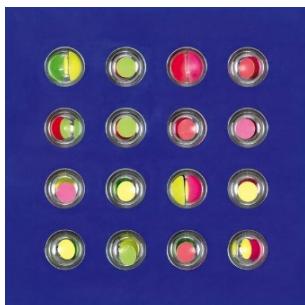
Toni Costa (1935 Padova – 2013 Padova) was an Italian artist who first became famous in 1959,



As pioneering figures in the field of optical art - and more specifically in the Italian *Arte Programmata* movement - they declared themselves "experimental draughtsmen", free from any plans or artistic tendencies, and involved in the search for a new definition of art

through the combination of traditional and non-traditional artistic materials in works on the border between two and three dimensions. Their work often integrated painting, sculpture, architecture and industrial production. After the breakup of *Gruppo N*, Costa continued to create and exhibit his work until his death. He created works consisting of slatted structures that form spaced segments from which a second level image emerges, often represented by linear or curved forms. Only with the participation of the viewer's gaze do these works release their dynamism and constant changeability.

Edoardo Landi (b. 1937, San Felice sul Panaro), Italian kinetic artist who, after studying industrial



design at high school in Venice and obtaining a degree in architecture at the University of Venice, joined *Gruppo N*, a group with which he was associated by his passion for provocation and his opposition to the art market system. His first works date from this period. With *Gruppo N*, he undertook avant-garde research in the field of kinetics and used the contribution of science to provide multimedia tools as an alternative to

media conditioning. His work is based on the use of geometric shapes with gradients or programmatic separations and tends to provoke perceptual stimulation in the viewer. In some of his works, the artist develops the phenomenon of retinal fatigue and optical illusions, which causes a close relationship between the viewer and the work. He is particularly interested in the relationship between light and colour and the close connection between painting, sculpture and architecture, as evidenced by his involvement in graphic design and industrial design.

Achille Perilli (1927 Rome - 2021 Orvieto) was an Italian artist who attended a classical high school



and received a degree in literature thanks to his thesis on Giorgio de Chirico. After World War II, he founded the modernist art group *Forma 1* with Carla Accardi, Ugo Attardi, Pietro Consagra, Antonio Sanfilippo and Giulio Turcato. Between 1963 and 1964 he participated in the travelling exhibition *Peintures italiennes d'aujourd'hui* (Italian Paintings of Today) in Beirut, Damascus, Tehran, Ankara and Tunis. In 1995 he became a

member of the Accademia di San Luca and in 1997 he received the Oscar Luigi Scalfaro Prize of the

President of the Italian Republic. He was a friend of Stanislav Kolíbal, whom he met in August 1968 during an international mosaic symposium on the island of Korčula and later exhibited with him.

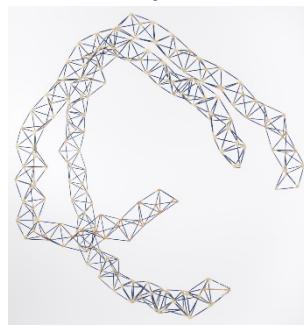
Horacio Garcia Rossi (1929 Buenos Aires - 2012 Paris) was an Argentine artist who studied at the



National School of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires from 1950 to 1957. From 1959 he lived and worked in Paris. As an artist of light objects, he began working with like-minded people in the *Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel*. He was interested in the study of visual phenomena and from 1962 he investigated the actual movement of light. His first experiences were with geometric shapes on screens. He also developed objects

inviting the viewer to collaborate (e.g. rotating cylinders), continuously investigating the problem of the instability of light and movement / the use of light and structure in changing colours. In 1961, he participated in the first exhibition of the GRAV group at the Denise René gallery in Paris, and in 1963 he presented his work with GRAV at Documenta 3 in Kassel. Between 1972 and 1974 he returned to questions of two-dimensionality and the search for simple structures through an artistic exploration of colour and its possibilities. From 1974 to 1978 he explores the problem of the artistic incorporation of linguistic devices and from 1978 onwards he continues his research into the issues of colour and light.

František Kyncl (1934 Pardubice - 2011 Düsseldorf) was a Czech painter and sculptor, one of the



most important Czech constructivists of the second half of the 20th century and a leading representative of the Czech Concretist Club. In Pardubice he founded the art association Grupa mladých, where he worked closely with Polish artists and participated in their symposia. In 1968 he emigrated to Germany and settled in Düsseldorf, where he

studied at the Academy of Arts. Together with Günther Uecker, Norbert Krick and Joseph Beuys, he was one of the most important German artists of the so-called Düsseldorf School, which at that time was one of the most radical art movements in Germany and the world. He exhibited at important institutions such as the Düsseldorf Kunstverein, the Hans Mayer Gallery. He had many contacts with artists in exile, such as Jiří Kolář, Jindřich Zeithamml, Milan Mölzer, Jan Kotík and the Hungarian Imre Kocsic. In Germany, he published the magazine *Schwarz auf Weiss* (Black on White), which dealt with the Czech independent and exile art scene. Influenced by Constructivism and the German group Zero, in the 1970s the artist began to create three-dimensional geometric spatial structures made of skewers reflecting the light that became part of them.

Jan Kubíček (1927 Kolín - 2013 Kolín) was a Czech painter, graphic artist and one of the most



important representatives of constructivism and concrete art in Central Europe. He is one of the most important representatives of Czech geometric abstraction. The legacy of another native of Cologne, Jaromír Funke, was reflected in the beginnings of his work. His early works were closely linked to the legacy of Group 42, and he was particularly inspired by the work of František Hudeček. From 1949-1953

he studied at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, and from 1954-1957 he studied scenography at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. He was a member of the Association of Czech Graphic Artists Hollar, from the late 1960s he participated in exhibitions devoted to Czech Constructivism and at the same time was involved in the Concrete Artists Club. His distinctive handwriting began to emerge at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, when he produced paintings created using coloured varnishes on cardboard or metal. At the same time, he was engaged in the creation of assemblages and collages and was strongly influenced by Lettrism, which gave rise to a huge number of photographs, illustrations and, above all, graphic work, thanks to which he became the winner of the Vladimír Boudník Prize in 1999.

Zorka Ságlová (1942 Humpolec - 2003 Prague) was a Czech painter, graphic artist, textile artist,



action artist and pioneer of Czech land art. In 1961-1966 she studied in the textile studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. In the first half of the 1960s she focused on constructive geometric painting, serial images of structures made of small geometric elements. The point structure of the serial paintings from the mid-1960s, which she also used later in the 1980s with rabbit motifs, is directly based on the way of drawing textile matrices. She thus followed the constructive current of Czech geometric abstraction, which was presented in the exhibitions

Constructive Tendencies (1966) and New Sensibility (1968). She developed constructive geometric painting into space with relief paintings and geometric objects in the late 1960s, and into the open landscape in land art events in the late 1960s and 1970s. From the 1990s onwards, she focused on conceptual explorations of the mythological meanings of the rabbit, on symbols of Chinese mythology and on shape elements found in archaeological drawings.

On the occasion of the exhibition, a publication will be published in Czech-English with a text by the exhibition curator and art historian Mark Gisbourne and an interview with Karel Štědrý by gallerist Tomáš Zapletal.

Mark Gisbourne (* 1948, Stratford-upon-Avon) is an exhibition curator and art historian. Visiting professor at 17 universities in the UK, the US and Germany during 1987-2013. President of the British Section (AICA) of the International Association of Art Critics from 1994-1997. Author of more than 250 books on 20th and 21st century art. Contributor to many cultural periodicals and close associate of the BBC in London.

Links

cermakeisenkraft.com
[instagram.com/cermak_eisenkraft/](https://www.instagram.com/cermak_eisenkraft/)

About the gallery

Cermak Eisenkraft Gallery_ was established in 2014 with the ambition to become a major player in the field of trade in post-war and contemporary Czech and international art. The founders, Tomáš Zapletal and David Železný, who had previously been active on the Czech art market independently, set as their main goal the creation of a trustworthy, reputable institution of international importance, which, thanks to the highest standards of its work, contributes to the cultivation of the art market in the Czech Republic. The gallery is affiliated with the CE Foundation, which has been supporting contemporary Czech and international artists in their activities for the past seven years. Magdalena Jetelová, Milan Kunc, Vladimír Škoda, Jiří Černický, Šimon Brejcha, Martin Velíšek, František Matoušek, Pavel Bařka and others. It also supports the *Fotograf* magazine and thus helps to create the highest quality media about Czech photography in the Czech Republic.

Currently, Cermak Eisenkraft_ Gallery operates an exhibition space on the 2nd floor of Topič House, Národní 9, Prague 1.

About the exhibition space

After several years of operating in Dlouhá Street and later in the SmetanaQ house on Smetana



Embankment in Prague, the Cermak Eisenkraft_ gallery will move in the spring of 2021 to the renovated premises of the listed Topič House, where it will offer the public an exhibition in sensitively restored exhibition halls on the second floor. The genius loci of this place provides visitors with an unforgettable cultural experience. Topič's Art Nouveau house has influenced many destinies and has continued to shape Czech society for over 125 years. Originally an Empire

tenement house, it was built in 1894 as an exhibition hall and shop for Topič's publishing house on Ferdinandova Street, now Národní třída. An exhibition of graphic arts in 1896 featured sixty European graphic artists, including Toulouse-Lautrec, Rops, Marold and Mucha.

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