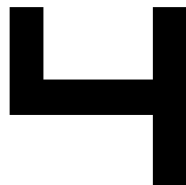
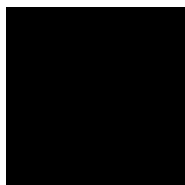


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orthogonal14
international forum for non-objective art



Richard Paul Lohse
Foundation
Zürich, Switzerland



concept/design georgi dimitrov

photography nina malcheva, georgi dimitrov,
anna-maria bogner, krasimira stikar, georgi kostov
catalogue publisher format.bg

isbn 978-619-90088-4-3

© 2015 by nonsafia and all authors
printed in bulgaria

website valentin slavov
poster preprint maya trifonova, proyko proykov
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www.orthogonal.bg | www.nonsafia.org

preface

today's world is progressively radicalising and becoming more uncertain. ordinary people are increasingly falling prey to the greed and cruelty of economic extremism. we are constantly being distracted by the noise created by those who want us to believe that it is intrinsically human to conquer, possess and abuse our natural environment. thanks to this very same noise we lose the ability to hear the ones around us, and what seems more important, we recede from our inner selves.

non-objective art offers us the constructive silence which reactivates our senses and keeps them alive. here we are fully free to define the concrete image of reality. in the compositions that you are about to see you may discover patterns, algorithms, logical structures and provocative colour combinations. this is a rare opportunity where one unleashes the power of their mind. in the long term, this inevitably dissolves all threats to our behavioural freedom. non-objective art does not only reflect on our most intractable issues, but above all, it provides for their ethical solutions.

orthogonal's second edition took place between 9 october and 7 november 2014 at the *red house centre for culture and debate*, sofia. it included the screenings of *max bill: the master's vision* [dir. erich schmid], *richard paul lohse [1902 - 1988]* [dir. peter münger and karl jost] and *when chagall was worth less than a pound of potatoes* [dir. giorgos zervas and giorgos papakonstantinou]. apart from the international film programme the forum featured a number of lectures, as well as a children's workshop. the festival visited *contemporary space*, varna between 20 january and 5 february 2015 for its black sea edition.

georgi dimitrov

dear colleagues and friends,

the european biennial for non-objective art is a fact. orthogonal14 has brought together a dozen of participants from 8 countries – these are austria, bulgaria, france, germany, greece, the netherlands, new zealand and switzerland. almost 40 works that cover the last 70 years of international geometric abstraction are gently and joyfully responding to your eyes.

starting from the mid 20th century with a number of original drawings by max bill, we mark the 20th anniversary of the passing of this notorious swiss designer, painter and architect. another legendary name, whose work participates in the exhibition is that of bob bonies – thank you, bob for accepting orthogonal’s invitation – it is a true honour to have you here with us.

prof. bruno haas has returned to orthogonal with another one of his gorgeous colour systems. as usual, he will contribute with a free-style lecture tomorrow, focusing on the intangible qualities of the image. the theoretical section will continue with a presentation by simon ingram, who has made it all the way from new zealand to tell us more about his unique artistic methodology.

while corresponding with the participating artists and all the partnering institutions, i had the pleasure to realise again that i was not only organising an international festival, but was simply making friends. thank you, dear arjan for coming to sofia together with your son abre and your fantastic paintings which master in both lightness and depth.

certainly, the friendly emotions refer also to those participants who invested their trust and whose work is present here today. the purpose of this forum is not just to show a few paintings, lectures and documentaries, but mostly to create an everlasting human friendship between us all.

speaking of this, i wish all diplomatic missions and foreign cultural institutes which were approached by *nonsofia* possessed the aesthetical senses demonstrated by the *austrian embassy in sofia* – they kindly supported the participation of two young artists from austria – anna-maria bogner and krasimira stikar.

if you take a closer look at orthogonal’s poster, you will notice that it again features the logos of the *gaudenz b. ruf award*, the *max bill georges vantongerloo foundation* and the *red house centre for culture and debate*. these cultural entities seem to have become orthogonal’s strategic partners. this makes me proud and grateful.

another wonderful example of partnership led to a contribution by the *greek state*

museum for contemporary art, thessaloniki. theodore markoglou is here to tell us more about the non-objective tradition in greece. by the way, how many of you are aware that one of the world’s largest collections of russian avant-garde art is only 4 hours away from sofia..? you will find out details about the historical context around it tomorrow in the documentary *when chagall was worth less than a pound of potatoes*.

yorgos vourlidas is showing bits of the finest contemporary graphic design and completes perfectly the variety of genres shown at this festival.

another very important film will be included in the forum’s screening programme. thanks to our fruitful collaboration with the *richard paul lohse foundation* we will have the opportunity to see a rare documentary dedicated to richard paul lohse – a significant swiss artist and a radical thinker.

it is now time to cordially thank my dear friends and nonsofia collaborators valentin slavov, maya trifonova, maria chakarova, georgi kostov and nina malcheva for being reliable and helpful to orthogonal14’s organisation. also, a huge thanks to all nonsofia supporters around the world – the international non-objective network has sent multiple greetings from australia, europe and america.

i must note that the second edition of orthogonal is a massive victory over bureaucracy, formality and alienation. furthermore, it is a triumph of the temple of art over the art market. and if somebody cannot assimilate this, their place is probably not here yet. thank you all for coming to the opening of this historic event.

9 october 2014

the red house

sofia

arjan janssen

a radical expression of primordial sadness

one of the great mysteries of being an artist is the gap between how a work of art is perceived by spectators and the intentions the artist himself has with it. no one is as familiar with the work as the maker himself. but at the same time, no one is as alienated from it. as soon as the artist stops looking at his own work with amazement and uncertainty, his existence as an artist loses all ground. it may not be a pleasant message, but an artist is doomed to existential doubt, and *the other* as the receiver cannot take away that doubt.

i was asked to look at my own work from the point of view of its radicality. this was an interesting request because it directly appealed to myself and triggered all kinds of radars. do i still perceive my own work as radical, or am i so interwoven with it that i have lost that aspect? and is that something i should regret or not?

it is beyond doubt that at the beginning of my adult life radicality was the main touchstone in my evaluation of art. i was full of anger and incomprehension, and my attitude towards the rest of the world was hostile. the only attitude imaginable was one of radical resistance. without extremes change would not come.

what i needed was a visual language in which i could express myself without compromise. a fundamental approach of the sheet or canvas using only horizontals and verticals and excluding colour – rigid and ruthless. those were my ambitions. i charged myself with the task to approach the empty sheet in its purest form, without resorting to subject matter and with the material as my only resource. working like this i could transfer my physical energy directly onto the paper. of course, routine was a no-no.

now, after so many years and many drawings and paintings, i can conclude that these premises have proved productive. this self-imposed demarcation and the ensuing limitations have kept me alert and ensured that i could focus my concentration very precisely. my only ambition was and is to achieve the best works possible. being cut off from reality as a consequence of this is something one has to accept. the body of work refers only to itself and contains no references that make the contact to the surrounding world palpable.

but i did not stay twenty forever. through the years, my frame of mind changed and it would not have been logical if i had not expressed this in my work. vigorous

anger could have turned into bitterness – a spectre i guarded against. a large part of my creative effort went into exploring the rigid visual language. within the given framework, where did the possibilities lie to show, for instance, serenity, tenderness, complexity or even baroque elements? the frontal, monumental, imperative presence was there from the start. to find a balance i wanted to be able to show other aspects of my personality as well. during this ongoing research the idea of rigid radicality largely disappeared. instead, it became a technical process in which one work follows from the other.

of course, there are moments when this process stagnates, when you run into a brick wall, as it were. these are the phases in which you can distinguish yourself as an artist. these are the very moments for me to fall back on the principles of my work. then i need to get a clear picture of my primary drive and from that awareness reconsider the chosen road. one must also dare to slate oneself. satisfaction does not tend to produce strong works of art.

one of the principal questions i asked myself already at art school was what art has to offer in the face of violence? i was deeply aware of man's capacity for violence and had trouble coping with that knowledge. how in heaven's name is it possible that one man destroys the other? what does or should the artist have to offer against this?

i saw two extreme options: either to take this as the subject matter of one's work, reacting frankly to the injustice or to distance oneself, working in concentration on a body of work that stands on its own. i opted for the latter.

i think beauty is the best weapon against violence. with this i do not mean empty aesthetics, but a beauty that is intrinsically aware of its struggle with destructive powers. a beauty that questions itself and is not unambiguous, aiming to defy evil powers with its presence. a beauty that is complementary. this is not a small ambition, but we do not settle for less.

in spite of my fundamental attitude, i am not a purist. i do not only appreciate visual art that is similar to my own work. nor am i a champion of abstract-geometrical art. i can be touched by all kinds of art.

it took me a long time to find the proper term to describe the underlying, most essential quality of a work of art. a term that not only describes formal qualities, but also what precedes them and what is required to add depth: the essential quality that makes a good work of art, irrespective of the form of expression chosen by the artist.

all i could come up with were melancholy or tone. both were unsatisfactory. but recently i read the essay *rondom de leegte* [about emptiness] by dutch philosopher cornelis verhoeven. this is a wonderful text by a great thinker, written in my year of birth. later, i attended his inspiring lectures on metaphysics at amsterdam university. in this text he uses the term *oer-verdriet*, *primordial sadness*, to describe what all men have in common and what is expressed through all times and in all fields: a deep sadness emanating from man’s awareness of mortality, used by verhoeven primarily in a religious context. i have taken the liberty of using it for art. it is a beautiful term which, for me, describes exactly what i expect from a work of art: showing this primordial sadness.

a radical expression of primordial sadness – that is how i would describe my work now. it is a description that denotes both its rigidity and the motivation that underlies it, describing both its formal and impalpable aspects and containing both the hard and the soft.

┐ the text is taken from the opening speech held on the occasion of gottfried honegger’s sculpture inauguration at haus bill, zumikon, switzerland, 2013.

georgi dimitrov

the crisis of senses ┐

art is a political, a strategic means. its most important function is to form the way we think, to predetermine our decisions and actions. art is the substance of culture which creates the values of our society. it explains both the similarities and the differences between us. it can build bridges, but it may also provoke conflict. therefore, the people involved in art production and distribution hold a unique social responsibility. the seeds that we plant today are essential for tomorrow’s harvest of social tendencies.

if we analyse the ongoing processes that take place in our society, we will conclude that our continuous endeavours towards material progress have led to various scientific and technological advancements. for instance, we live in comfortable and secure, [even earthquake-proof] buildings; we could instantly transfer our thoughts to the other side of the planet and practically be there in less than a day. we have defeated many illnesses that were incurable in the past. these achievements facilitate and save millions of lives across the so-called developed world.

but yet, they are unknown to the majority of the earth’s population of which one quarter still lives without electricity and only a third of it uses the internet. today billions of people survive without access to basic human needs such as fresh water, food, medical supplies and education. slavery does still exist. even in the developed world. it is wrapped in a cellophane and is euphemistically called corporate career. apparently, there is nothing new under the sun – the allocation of wealth is uneven just as it was 5,000 years ago. so where exactly is the human progress here?

furthermore, disregarding the values of all non-western cultures and ignoring the finite nature of the earthly resources, we constantly try to outsmart our natural environment. short term [‘scientific’] solutions are being applied in order to quench our civilisation’s thirst to subdue and to possess. thus, we generate a tremendous failure record and leave a heavy legacy of debt to the future generations. it is ridiculous to believe that nature can be conquered or tamed. and yet, we do not give up this predictable race while nature is always a step ahead.

no doubt, today’s modern society is in a deep ethical crisis. a crisis of the senses i would say. there is a devastating global tendency of alienation which results in our inability to communicate with each other. we look, but we do not see; we hear, but

do not listen; we memorise, but fail to remember; we touch – without a feeling; we dwell together, but we are so far apart.. we live, as if we are already dead.

if we think about it, creativity in the developed world is mainly exercised today between the shelves of the supermarket.. or in the process of changing tv channels thanks to the remote control. in fact, this is one of the major issues of contemporary society. and i do not mean that we should be all aiming at becoming the next leonardo da vinci or inventing a new fire and a new wheel. the problem is that we use our knowledge and inventions in the wrongest direction possible; automatically, without any historical or long-term consideration.

certainly, the media has contributed a lot to the imposition of overconsumption as the determinant of our daily agenda. it constantly stimulates our fears and prejudices. but not only the media has been dominated by the increasingly powerful corporations. each day national legislatures pass laws in order to ensure the longevity of their economic interests. moreover, corporations have expropriated the educational function from the schools and the academia. they act as implicit mentors to the students or directly train their employees in corporate procedures and policies. this is how today’s relations of production enter our homes and bring up our children.

an aging father once gave each of his three sons an equal amount of money. he commanded them to go on a journey and bring back home the most valuable commodity in the world. *with it*, he said, *you will fill up your rooms and i will decide which one of you will inherit my fortune*. it took a couple of years for the three men to return home. the eldest son brought in a huge stack of hay. *what will you use it for*, asked the father, who started coughing when he neared his room. *i will become an animal merchant and this is what i will feed the animals with*. *good*, said the father and carried on to the next room which was full of cotton bolls. *what will you need all of this cotton for*, asked the sneezing father. *to produce textiles and clothes*, replied the second son. very good, said the father and moved on to inspect the room of his youngest son. when he entered the room it was clean and tidy – there was nothing but a lighted lamp in the middle of the table. *what did you do with the money i gave you*, asked the stunned father. *i went to school*, replied the young man, *and with what was left i bought this lamp to fill up my room with light..*

light captures truth, contours it.
creates a universal form, a beat,
whose brightness spheric is, a unity..
that turns our optics obsolete.

anna-maria bogner

1984

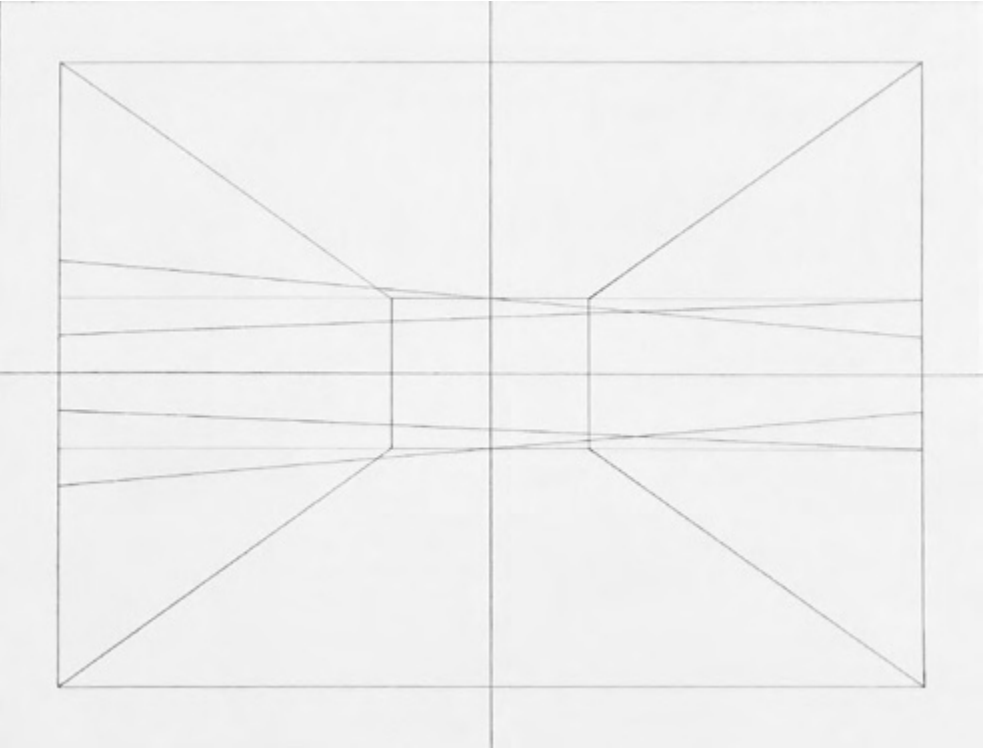
austria

ambogner.com

each object talks about space

the artistic work of anna-maria bogner is driven by a preoccupation with space and its interaction with social configurations. her installations, objects and drawings focus on the appropriation of space, space limitations and the spaces in between. her work is characterised by a close interlinkage of the artistic object, its perception and the subjective position of the artist. thus the observer is compelled to abandon their personal pre-perception of the multiple spaces which are created by bogner’s objects and form an intrinsic part of them. bogner’s work points to the mutual interdependence of experience and situation in the individual appropriation of space. it deconstructs a naive understanding of space and demonstrates that a close examination of divergent perspectives on space is needed to experience the borders of one’s own spatiality and its experience.

untitled
[part 2 of a triptych]
2013
pencil/crayon/paper
36 x 48 cm



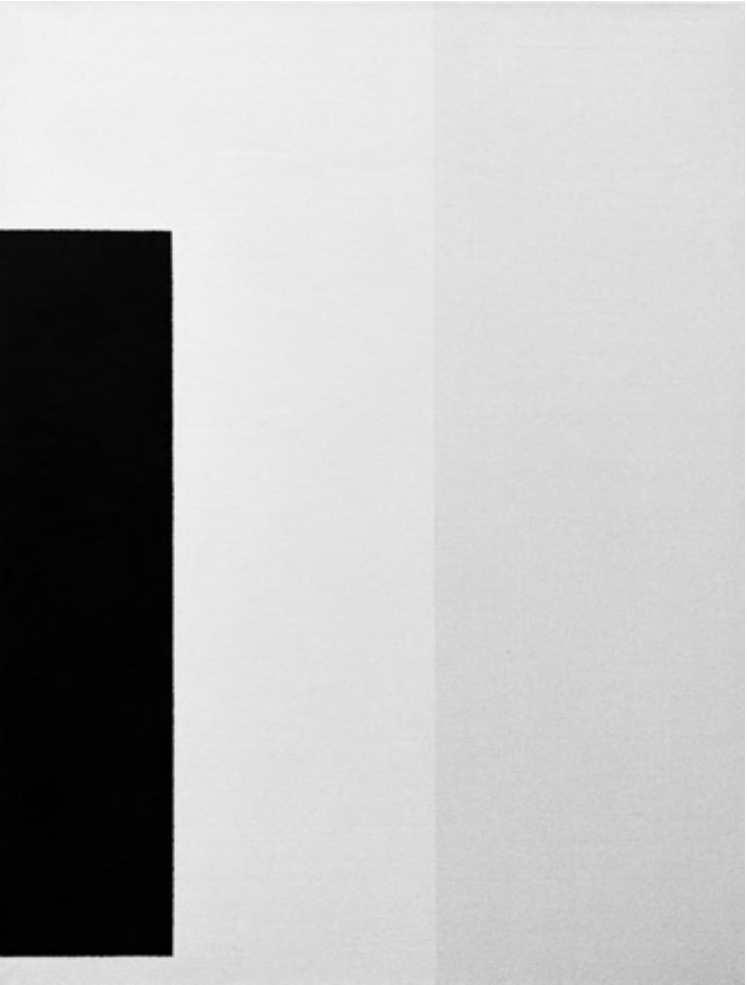
arjan janssen

1965

the netherlands

arjanjanssen.nl

untitled
2013
oil/canvas
80 x 60 cm



bob bonies

1937

the netherlands

bonies.nl

study 08/02
1976
acrylic/canvas
112 cm diagonal



bruno haas

1967

germany



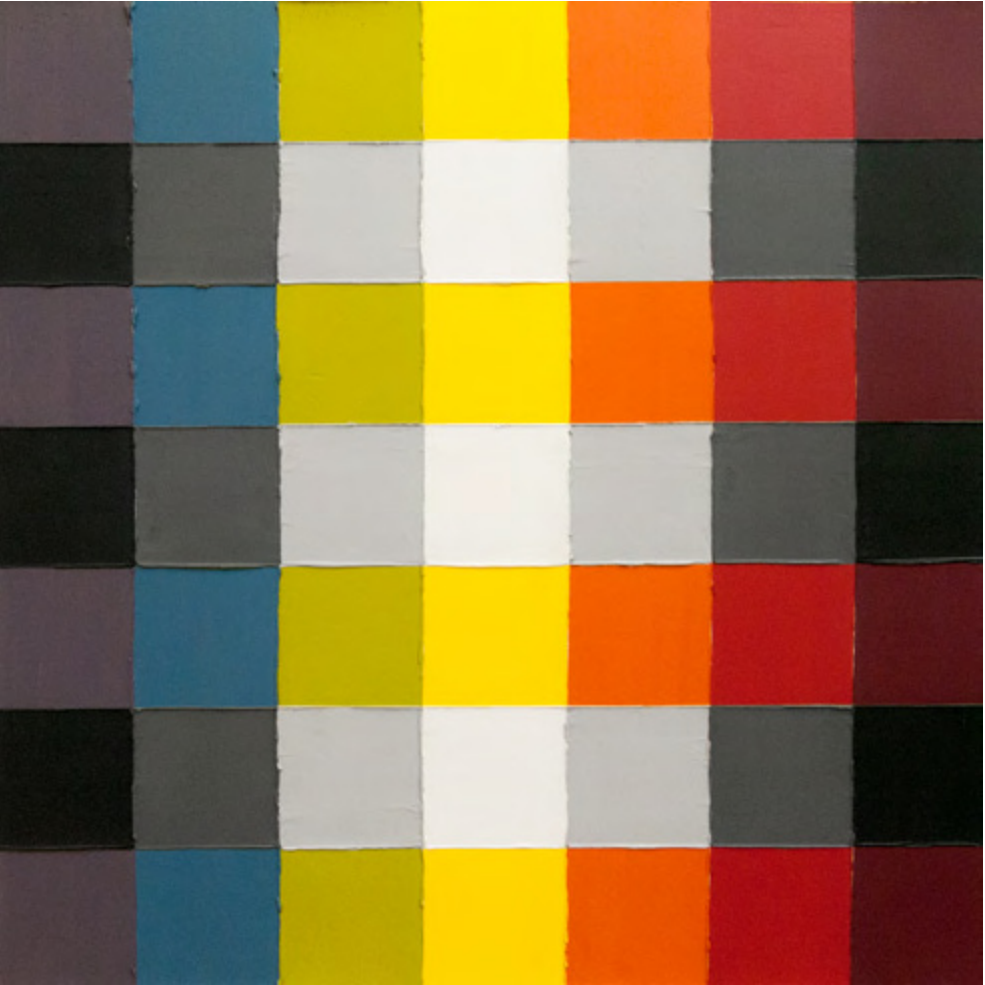
part of six
2014
oil/acrylic/canvas
57 x 65 cm

georgi dimitrov

1980
bulgaria
larypsed.com

non-speculative art must deliver ethical solutions to all issues of humanity until the world is freed from vanity and prejudice. it should strive for the most number of people and the longest line of time.

emulation
2009
oil/canvas
85 x 85 cm



guillaume millet

1970

france

guillaumemillet.fr

satisfactory

through a daily practice i paint geometric forms juxtaposed in a process of progressive recovery. the flat colours separated by sharp contours give my paintings a visual evidence. the compositions which appear are not orthogonal. the diagonals i paint are not parallel, but dynamic. from a satisfactory composition i may create a family.

often the composition is like a checkerboard because it gives the painting a visual efficiency. sometimes, i enjoy to redo a painting i love. i may also double a painting that i misdoubt because this makes it more conclusive. i am ready to paint on books in the library, on furniture in the living room, on your car doors, on traffic signs at a crossroad.

i do not particularly enjoy that my paintings can be mostly seen in books or on the internet, but i like to think about it. i imagine how they travel through airwaves and cables, from cameras to websites, art books, newspapers.. the photograph of my painting is also my painting.

*the composition goes
from one support to another,
from one format to another,
from one colour to another.*

untitled
2014
acrylic/canvas
62 x 46 cm



krasimira stikar

1980

bulgaria/austria

krasimira.at

composition 21
2013
pencil/paper
30 x 40 cm



maria chakarova

1972

bulgaria

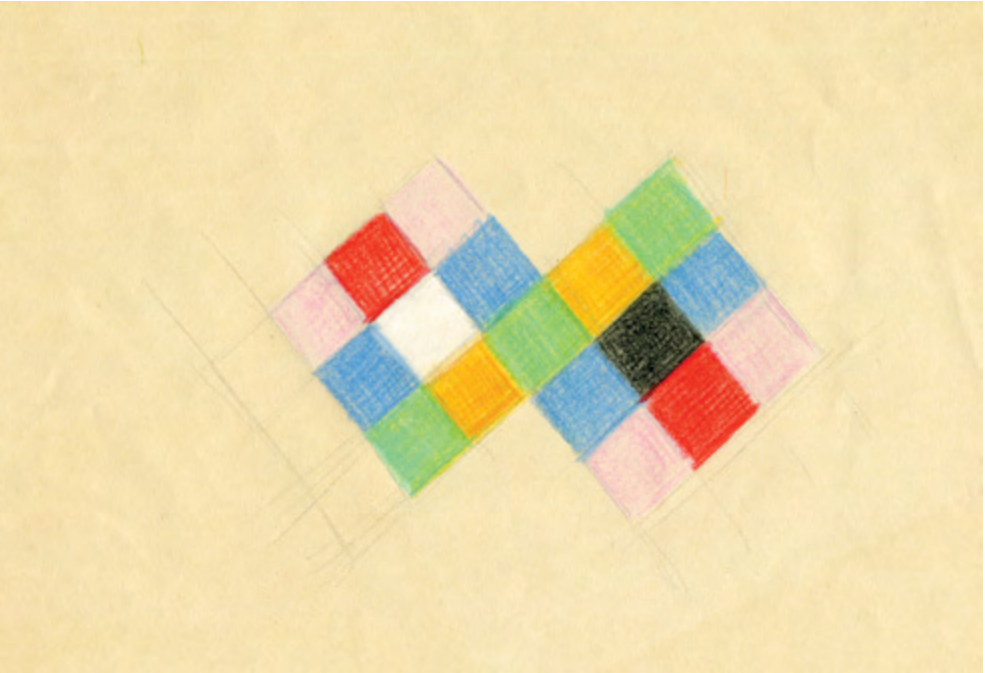


blue, red, yellow
2014
oil/canvas
70 x 70 cm

max bill

1908 – 1994
switzerland
maxbill.ch

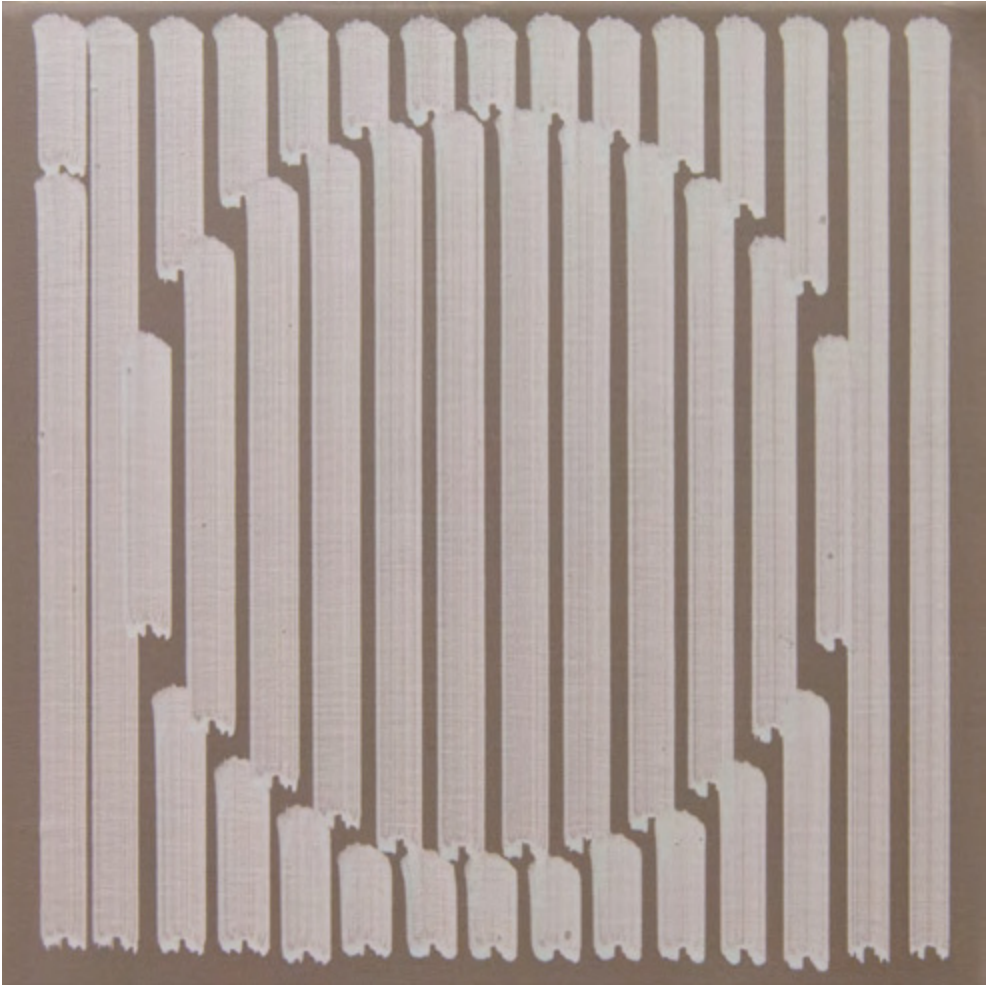
untitled
undated [1960s]
pencil/crayon/paper
14 x 21 cm



simon ingram

1971

new zealand

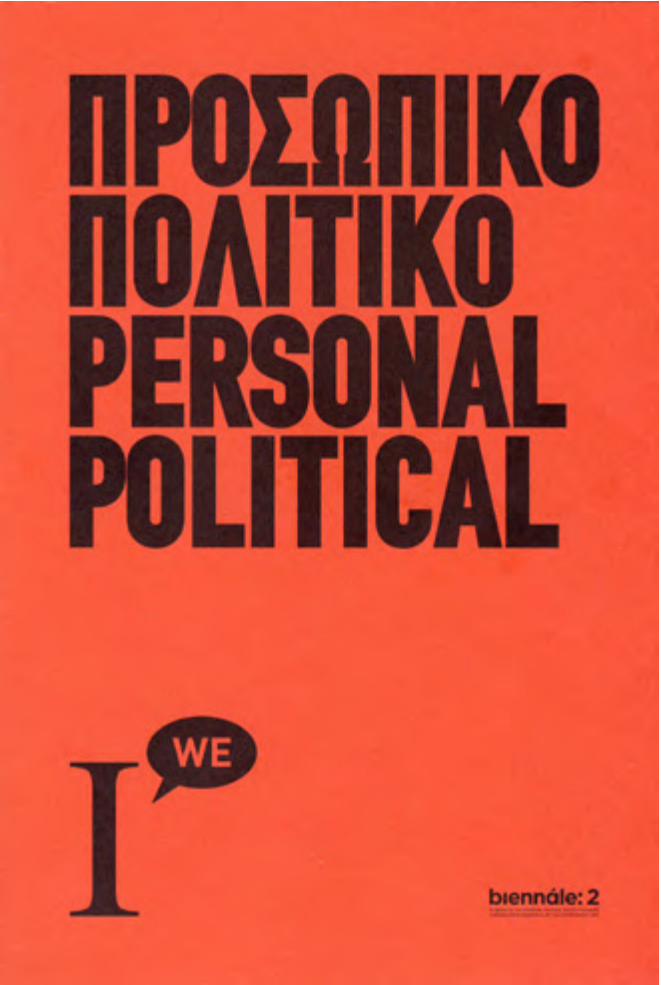


circle
2014
acrylic/linen
30 x 30 cm

theodore markoglou

1977
greece

personal – political
biennale: 2, parallel programme
exhibition catalogue
co-curated with areti leopoulou
cact, thessaloniki, 2009



yorgos vourlidas

1977
greece
opora.gr

granny records poster
2013
digital print
50 x 35 cm











