

# THE MAYOR GALLERY

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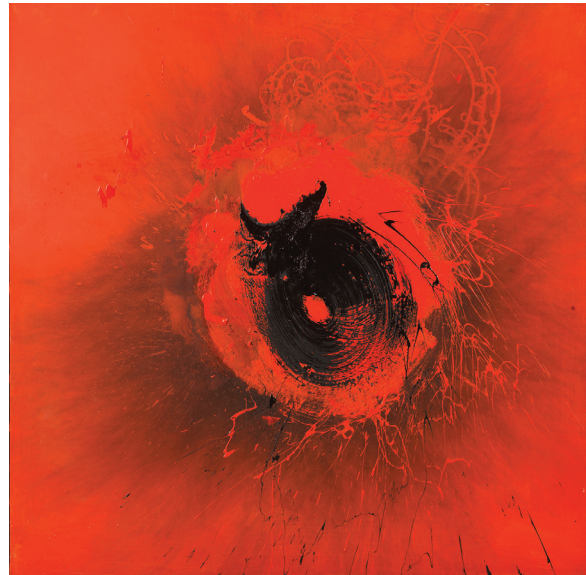
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## PRESS RELEASE

*For immediate release*

## OTTO PIENE FIRE PAINTINGS FROM 1965-2009

4 JUNE - 31 JULY 2014



Scarab, 1996/1997, Oil and fire on canvas  
122 x 122 cm, 48 x 48 inches

This summer, following on from their successful 2012 retrospective, The Mayor Gallery is presenting a solo exhibition of Otto Piene's signature **Fire Paintings from 1965 - 2009**. Otto Piene, the co-founder of the Group ZERO, alongside Heinz Mack in 1957, employs elemental fire as a tool to paint with light and energy. Created by lighting a thin layer of solvent on the canvas, the image is born organically from the flame and soot, then developed further with paint.

Group ZERO, a reference to a rocket launch countdown evoking a silence out of which a new beginning develops, started as a radical reaction against Neo-Expressionism, and post-war art. Piene's experience of light and fire in World War II held a fascination for him as well as terror. The Fire Paintings are a continually relevant expression of light as a source of life and death.

**'If you spend your nights staring at the night sky, with everything that's going on there, the cosmos good and the cosmos bad, half knowing it and trying to understand it, then (that) becomes life altogether.'** - Otto Piene speaking to Hans Ulrich Obrist, The Interview Project, 2011

Born in 1928, Laasphe, Germany, Piene attended the Blocherer Art School and studied painting at the Academy of Art, Munich between 1948 to 1953, then gained a Philosophy degree from the University of Cologne in 1957; the year Group Zero was founded. A leading figure in Kinetic art, dealing with light, motion, technology and the environment, from 1968- 1971 he became the first Fellow of the MIT Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) and between 1974- 1994 Piene was the Director of CAVS. He lives and works between Groton Massachusetts, USA and Düsseldorf, Germany.

In October 2014 the **Guggenheim Museum** in New York will stage the first large-scale retrospective in the United States dedicated to the ZERO movement. The exhibition ZERO: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s-60s then travels to Europe presented by the ZERO foundation at the Martin Gropius-Bau, Berlin from March 2015 and then at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam from July 2015.

The illustrated exhibition catalogue available from June presents a fascinating conversation between **Otto Piene and Hans Ulrich Obrist** for The Interview Project (Obrist's compilation of artist interviews), getting a personal insight into the evolution of Zero Art and Piene's personal journey.

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Visitor Information:  
Mon-Fri 10am-5.30pm; Admission: Free  
Nearest Tube Station Green Park or Piccadilly Circus

Press enquiries:  
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