

RAIMUND GIRKE

Force Fields

The Mayor Gallery, London
11 October – 25 November 2022



An influential figure of post-war German art, Raimund Girke (b. 1930 Lower Silesia - d. 2002 Cologne, Germany) first studied at the art school in Hanover before moving on to the Düsseldorf Art Academy with ZERO founders Otto Piene and Heinz Mack. Departing from Abstract Expressionism and initially influenced by the gestural-rhythmic abstraction of Art Informel, he became a forerunner of Analytical Painting committed to the investigation of the colour white. "White is emptiness, immateriality, calm and silence".

From 1956-7, reducing his palette to black and grey, Girke developed a painting style consisting of few colours and void of any figurative reference taking the work to the extremes of white in 1959. Brushstrokes increased in dynamism and force allowing vibration, rhythm and movement to flow through the materiality of the paint. Exploring the concepts of light, and colour his paintings are at once still and dynamic, meditative, and probing.

"Abandoning colourful polychrome for monochrome increases the scope for working with colour: the result of fewer colours is higher quality. Instead of many colours vying for precedence, one colour takes command, comes into its own, is free to attain its full intensity."

I have given up the polychrome in favour of the single colour, and have – as a logical consequence – in turn given up the single colour in favour of the sombre non-colour of black-white-grey. Black-white-grey is largely undisclosed colour, full of secrets and adventure."

(Quoted from: Raimund Girke, monochrome malerei (Kat.), Städtisches Museum Leverkusen, Schloss Morsbroich, Leverkusen 1960, translated by Timothy Adès)

"The white of my pictures has for two years been divided with sweeping, light grey, horizontally arranged lines. This creates zones or respectively force-fields of varying size. Each of these zones is an integrating component part of the white picture. The result is that motion occurs in the vertical: this upward or downward motion can gradually speed up or slow down, or stay the same... Endlessly the white spreads out, giving space, space without limits. The white puts the painting into a state of flight and takes its weight from it. By organising the white into horizontal zones, into force-fields, the substance white is changed, there is white of a different energy and radiance."

(Quoted from: Raimund Girke (Kat.), Galerie h, Hannover 1966 (Eine erste kürzere Fassung dieses Textes erschien bereits in: "Egoist" 7, Hrsg. Adam Seide, Frankfurt am Main 1965), translated by Timothy Adès)

Since 1971 Girke was a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts. In 1977 he took part in documenta 6 in Kassel and his works are represented in numerous museums and collections. In 1995-96 four German museums held a retrospective of his work- Sprengel Museum Hannover, Von der Heydt Museum Wuppertal, Saarlandmuseum Saarbrücken, Kunsthalle Nürnberg. This year, MKM Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg, held a retrospective commemorating the 20th anniversary of the artists death. His work is now in many major collections such as the Nationalgalerie Berlin, Sprengel Museum, Museum Bonn and the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard.

Image caption: Raimund Girke, *Kreuz im Quadrat*, 1968, oil on canvas, 114 x 114 cm

High-res images available on request

Opening times:

Monday – Friday, 10 am – 5.30 pm

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