

nul = 0

**The Dutch
Nul Group in
an International
Context**

**Edited by
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Tijs Visser**

**Stedelijk Museum
Schiedam**

NAi Publishers

**Jan Schoonhoven,
Armando, Henk
Peeters, Trier,
1961**

nul

**Jan Henderikse,
Henk Peeters,
Herman de Vries,
Amsterdam, 1962**



**Jan
Schoonhoven**

Armando

**Henk
Peeters**



**Jan
Henderikse**

**Henk
Peeters**

**Herman
de Vries**



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and Eleven
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Nul Two Thousand and Eleven

A Foreword

The Nul group was a collective of Dutch artists who manifested themselves between 1961 and 1966. Artists Armando, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters and Jan Schoonhoven formed the core of this group, which felt a kinship with the international ZERO movement that had started in Düsseldorf. They shared a search for a new objectivity in art. The Dutch artists had previously exhibited as a collective since 1958 under the name Dutch Informal Group and found in one another a common dedication to banish personal expression and to paint composition-free images. Artist Herman de Vries took part in the activities of the Nul group for a brief period.

The exhibition 'Nul' at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1962 was their first major event in the Netherlands, organized by Henk Peeters. It presented a broad overview of the international ZERO movement, including artists from France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium. In addition to various exhibitions in Düsseldorf, Paris and Milan, another museum exhibition at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague followed in 1964. Entitled 'ZERO-0-NUL', it featured works by Armando, Henk Peeters and Jan Schoonhoven along with works by the German Zero artists Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker.¹ In 1965 came the exhibition 'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig', again at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, in which artists from the Japanese Gutai group took part along with European ZERO artists. Like Nul62, Nul65 displayed the broad visual spectrum and the international reach of the ZERO movement, including artists' collectives like Azimut from Milan and Zero from Düsseldorf as well as the New York-based Yayoi Kusama and American artist George Rickey.

The various artists' collectives organized their own exhibitions and produced their own publications, in which they took a stand against the established order. They wanted to break with existing structures and institutions and showed an unconditional optimism about the possibilities of technological progress. Exhibitions no longer had to necessarily take place in museums. They produced objects with modern industrial materials like plastic, aluminium and everyday objects like light bulbs and engines, and created total installations using sound, light and motion. The planned, but never realized, project 'Zero op Zee' (Zero on Sea) that was to have taken place in 1966 on the Scheveningen Pier was an optimal expression of their optimism about the possibilities of technology and their dedication to integrate art into everyday reality. At the same time 'Zero on Sea' marked the end of the movement. Each subsequently went his own way, remaining true to the movement's principles, striking out in new directions or giving up art production (for a time).

Nul wants to signify a new start, more an idea and a climate than a particular style or a form; it aims to abandon all that no longer has any viability, if need be even the painting. The artist takes a step back; communal ideas inspire virtually anonymous works that have little left in common with traditional art. What emerges are objects, vibrations, structures and reflections . . . Not the banality of daily life, nor simply the regularities of optical phenomena: Nul is the domain between 'Pop' and 'Op', or, to paraphrase [Otto] Piene: the quarantine zero, the quiet before the storm, the phase of calm and resensitization.

With these words Henk Peeters introduced the catalogue of the exhibition 'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig'. Art was stripped of its traditional forms as painting or sculpture. In abandoning traditional media and in the intrusion of art into reality, ZERO stood at the dawn of a revolution in the visual arts that would unfold in the 1970s and was therefore a trailblazer for minimalist, conceptual and Land Art.

In the wake of major exhibitions in Antwerp (1984), Esslingen (1993), Düsseldorf (2006) and New York (2008) there is now renewed interest in ZERO around the world. In 2008 the ZERO Foundation was founded in Düsseldorf: a cooperative venture by Zero artists Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker with the Museum Kunst Palast and with financial support from the city of Düsseldorf. Since then there has been extensive research, more than ever before, using historical archive material; worldwide symposia have been organized; projects and exhibition activities have been given support. The renewed interest in ZERO cannot be considered separately from a renewed interpretation of the past through current developments in which phenomena from nature and reality are isolated or magnified, and in which the boundaries between the artificial and the real are transgressed. Once again we find ourselves at a juncture in history in which we sense an urgency to break with existing attitudes and conventions, the way ZERO and Nul did 50 years ago, offering new perspectives for the future in the process.

The Stedelijk Museum Schiedam is *the* museum for modern and contemporary Dutch art in an international context. There had been interest in devoting detailed attention to the activities of the Nul group for some time. An intensive collaboration between the ZERO Foundation and the Stedelijk Museum Schiedam has resulted in the exhibition and the book *Nul=0*. The exhibition includes not only important works that were displayed in the museum exhibition between 1961 and 1966, but also a number of three-dimensional installations that were made

especially for these occasions at the time. These three-dimensional installations are of great significance today: they reveal the ways the artists abandoned traditional art objects like paintings and sculpture in exchange for spatial and social experiences. In the drawings, sketches and proposals for the well-nigh utopian 'Zero on Sea', this evolution is even more explicitly expressed.

Nul=0: The Dutch Nul Group in an International Context re-examines the artistic principles of Nul and ZERO and reconstructs the developments and collaborations of the Dutch Nul group with like-minded artists elsewhere. In his essay, researcher and writer Antoon Melissen discusses the origin, the identity and the historical evolution of the Dutch Nul group in extensive detail. Renate Wiehager highlights the international perspective and the various national identities of ZERO. The special relationship between the Japanese Gutai movement and ZERO is examined in Atsuo Yamamoto's article. The intriguing presence of artist Yayoi Kusama at Nul's events is explained by researcher Midori Yamamura. Caroline de Westenholz, using numerous archival pieces, describes the genesis of and the various artistic contributions to the – sadly never realized – 'Zero on Sea' event. Of special importance to both the exhibition and the book are the conversations conducted with the Nul artists over the last two years, which have made it possible to put together an exhibition in the spirit of Nul.

In order to produce this book and the exhibition, in this form, numerous individuals and institutions were called upon for support in a material and immaterial sense. The Stedelijk Museum Schiedam is extremely grateful to all of them for their inspiration, enthusiasm and interest in the realization of the publication and the exhibition.

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Diagram by
Henk Peeters,
the Nul group
in an
international
context, 2011

- 1 References to the German group made up of Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker, as a group, are written with an initial capital only (Zero), while references to the international movement that also included groups like Azimut and Nul are written in all-capitals (ZERO).

holweck
von graevenitz
ernulf rainer

wim't schippers

dadamaino
nanda vigo
losario

stanley brown

girke

manzoni
fontana
castellani

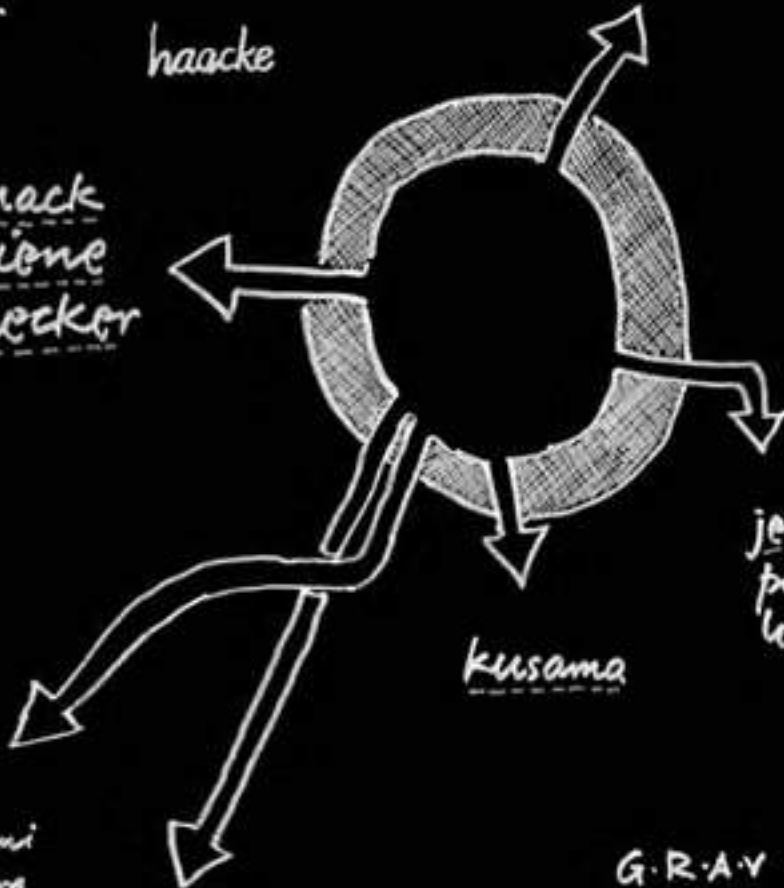
diterrot
mogert

haacke

gruppOT
colombo
boriani
alviani

mack
piene
wecker

vicgentils



jef verheyen
pat burg
loblane

kusama

brovdtbaers

gutai
murakami
yoshihara
motonaka
tanaka

G·R·A·V
le parc
hurrellet
Sobrinio

yves klein
friguely
Soto

aubertin

nouveau realistes:
arman
Spoorri

bischofshansen

george nickoy

Antoon Melissen

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The Dutch
Avant-Garde
of the 1960s
in a European
Context

Manifest
tegen niets,
1961

Catalogue for
the first exhibi-
tion by the
Dutch Informal
Group abroad,
at the Galerie
Gunar in Düs-
seldorf, 1959



'If we declare the whole of the world's development to be art, we're done; art is finished.'¹
Henk Peeters

Something Is Almost Nothing (Not Something) – From Informal to Nul
1 April 1961: A stone's throw from the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Galerie 201 organizes the 'International Exhibition of NOTHING'. The *Manifest tegen niets*, or Manifesto Against Nothing, sent as an invitation to the exhibition, hacks away at the pillars of institutions like the Stedelijk Museum, whose director, Willem Sandberg, was still quoting Constant's 1948 Experimental group manifesto as late as 1959: 'A painting is not an arrangement of colours, but an animal, a person, a scream, or all of these at once.'² The *Manifest tegen niets* seems to come from another planet: 'A painting is worth just as much as no painting, a sculpture is just as good as no sculpture' and 'something is almost nothing (not something)'. An alert reader of the manifesto would have figured out that on the day announced for the exhibition the gallery will be closed and empty: 'Having no art market is just as effective as having an art market.'³

The *Manifest tegen niets* and *Einde* (The End), a pamphlet published at the same time, were among the first activities of the Nul group, which consisted of Armando (b. 1929), Jan Henderikse (b. 1937), Henk Peeters (b. 1925) and Jan Schoonhoven (1914-1994), although the name Nul appears nowhere in either text. 'We need art like we need a hole in the head,' *Einde* states. 'From now on the undersigned pledge to work to disband art circles and close down exhibition facilities, which can then finally be put to worthier use.'⁴ The *Einde* pamphlet imagines a new beginning, as Armando and Henk Peeters had already proclaimed in texts written several years earlier for the Dutch Informals.

The Dutch Informal Group – the later Nul group plus Kees van Bohemen – was founded in 1958.⁵ Until early 1961 its members showed works in oils or pigments mixed with plaster and sand, usually on panels, linen or jute. The group replaced the expression of emotions in paint with an attempt at an absence of visual signature, resulting in colourless and monochrome works virtually devoid of form or composition. After CoBrA, however, the Netherlands had little patience for yet another revolution-in-paint. Exhibitions by the Informals were panned by critics, virtually without exception: 'Beneath the greyish crusts lurks the hand of a craftsman who denies his own gifts' and, worse still, the painters 'acknowledge no moral, religious or social imperatives'.⁶

The catalogue for the first exhibition of the Dutch Informal Group abroad, at the Galerie Gunar in Düsseldorf in 1959, included Armando's text 'Credo I':

There must be an entirely new art, and everything seems to indicate that it is on its way. No more beautiful and ugly, no more good and evil (they still exist), but an art that is no longer art, but a fact (like our paintings).⁷

The programmatic texts 'Credo 2' by Armando and 'Vuil aan de lucht' (a play on words alluding to a Dutch expression akin to 'not a cloud in the sky', in this case without the 'not a') by Henk Peeters, published a few months later, display a similarly sardonic undertone, make digs at people and wrong-foot the critics.⁸ Asked for a reaction to a joint text, Jan Schoonhoven wrote: 'The story, of course, is not quite accurate, but that's probably irrelevant. Anyway, legends need inaccuracies.'⁹

The texts 'Vuil aan de lucht', 'Credo I' and 'Credo 2' were published during the Informal period, but they carried the seeds of Nul. An aversion to theorizing and institutionalized power – museums, galleries and art dealers – as well as mocking the romantic idea of the artistic genius re-emerged in expanded form during the Nul period. Nul was the fulfilment of the Informal aim to disavow the emotionally charged work of art. Not through a different approach to traditional academic materials like paint and canvas, but by seeking out different resources.

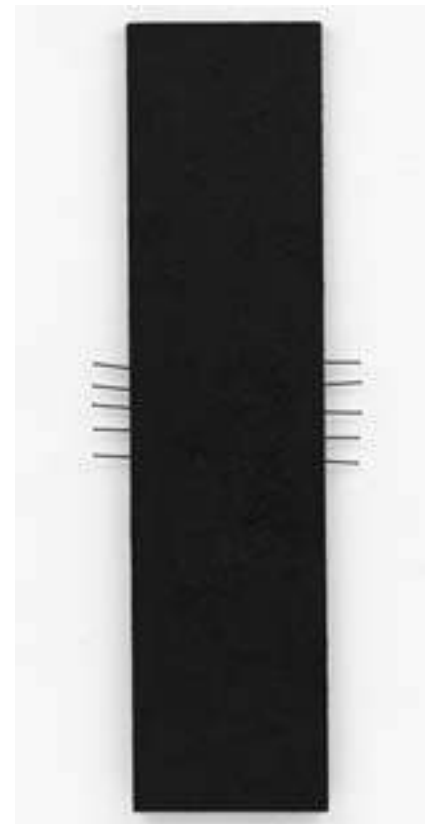


In 1958 Henk Peeters saw the work of Lucio Fontana and Alberto Burri for the first time, at the Venice Biennale. Fontana's escape 'from the prison of the flat surface' by piercing or slicing up the canvas and Burri's material, burnt plastic, made a big impression on him.¹⁰ Burri and Fontana played a vital role in the transition from paint on canvas or panel to the use of industrial materials and the abandonment of the flat surface. Barely a year later, in 1959, Henk Peeters burned two rows of holes in a painting, *1959-03*, and Armando set nails in the ends of a panel, *10 zwarte spijkers op zwart* (10 Black Nails on Black). These works marked a transitional phase from painting to Nul work; they are iconoclastic intermediate steps taken by Peeters and Armando on their new path. Henderikse also turned his back on painting in 1959, with assemblages of everyday objects, and toward 1960 Schoonhoven strived, in frozen, increasingly whiter reliefs, 'by avoiding intentional form . . . for a much greater organic reality of the artificial in and of itself'. These are works that, according to Schoonhoven, offer the possibility 'to arrive at [an] objectively neutral expression of the generally applicable'.¹¹

Nul – Establishing Reality as Art¹²

The Dutch Nul group manifested itself in form and name in 1961. Armando, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters and Jan Schoonhoven first exhibited their new, non-painting work at the 'Internationale Malerei 1960-61' exhibition in Wolframs-Eschenbach, Germany, although they took part as individuals rather than as a group.¹³ Only with 'Nederlandse Kunst 1960-'61' (Dutch Art 1960-'61), the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum's summer presentation, did the artists make their debut under the name 'groep nul'.¹⁴ The first issue of the new group's internationally oriented 'house organ', the journal *revue nul = 0*, edited by Armando, Henk Peeters and Herman de Vries, came out in November 1961. With contributions by artists who a year later would take part in the first Nul exhibition at the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum, the journal presented a good overview of the main themes of the international ZERO movement. The successor to *revue nul = 0*, the 1965 journal *de nieuwe stijl* (The New Style) also published texts about and by international ZERO artists.¹⁵ The name 'ZERO', in capital letters, refers to the international movement that emerged around the journal *ZERO*, published in 1958 and 1961 by German artists Heinz Mack and Otto Piene.¹⁶ The movement found sympathizers in countries like Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and Venezuela. Since the late 1950s the Dutch had established close ties with the German Zero group led by Heinz Mack and Otto Piene (Günther Uecker joined the group in 1961), as well as with Piero Manzoni and Enrico Castellani of the Italian group Azimut, the French Nouveau Réaliste Yves Klein and Japan's Yayoi Kusama.

Nul's pragmatism, its sober approach to the world, to the *product* of art, to being an artist and to reality, is expressed in the formal characteristics of its works, but also in its everyday practice, in the way works were created and exhibited, the way artists operated and presented themselves. A 1961 photo shows four clean-shaven gentlemen in suits at the opening of the 'Avantgarde 61' exhibition in Trier. The Nul artists aimed to shed the stereotyped image of the bohemian in a painting smock and had a fresh attitude towards the consumer society, quite at odds with the artistic scene of the early 1960s. Nul was a search for new relationships between art and reality, with at its base the rejection of uniqueness, authenticity and decorative attractiveness in the traditional sense of the word. The group reduced the multicoloured to the monochrome and opted for repetition, seriality and the directness of everyday materials and objects, in use and effect. Even its conceptual aspect, the splitting of thought and action, of conception, production as well as the possibility of repeat production was, in the footsteps of Marcel Duchamp, linked to a different interpretation of ideas like craftsmanship and expertise. At the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in 1962, for instance, Armando and Jan Henderikse left the setting up of their installations to museum staff, and in 1965, at Peeters' request, Yayoi Kusama produced a work in *his* material, card sliver, a spun synthetic fibre. 'The process of creation is . . . completely unimportant and uninteresting; a machine can do



Henk Peeters,
1959-03, 1959,
oil on canvas,
pyrograph,
45 x 40 cm,
Stedelijk
Museum
Amsterdam

Armando,
10 zwarte
spijkers op
zwart, 1959,
oil on canvas,
nails, 122 x
30/42 cm

it,' Peeters said. 'The personal element lies in the idea and no longer in the *manufacture*.'¹⁷

Jan Schoonhoven's 'objectively neutral expression of the generally applicable' persisted throughout Nul, and in his work, monochrome – the reduction of all colour to white – was the chosen instrument. Henk Peeters also considered monochrome a levelling effect that could bridge contradictions across the two-dimensional plane, although his work was never as explicitly monochrome as Jan Schoonhoven's. Armando saw a straight line from his monochrome oil paintings of the late 1950s to his assemblages of bolts and barbed wire during the Nul period. In both instances, to Armando, monochrome was a farewell to the psychology of the maker; the monochrome surface is frozen and anonymous – as far as it goes.¹⁸ In Henderikse's work monochrome played a far more modest role, although in 1959 he was already painting his earliest assemblages black. Mass and multiplication were Henderikse's major methods of reducing the personal element: 'I hate little stories but I really love *a lot of stuff*, of all those things people love, everyday things especially. It's always been that way.'¹⁹

Archetypal Nul work seems constructed out of a multiplication of uniform and isolated forms, objects or phenomena: as a linkage of steel bolts, rows of matchboxes, an array of identical white surfaces or the repetition of burn holes and cotton balls. In 1965 Schoonhoven made bold pronouncements on seriality, on the repeated pattern of identical elements. Organization '... comes out of the need to avoid partiality' and had nothing to do with geometric structure. To Schoonhoven, Nul's method was driven by its intentions, by the consistent acceptance of isolated reality without accentuating any one thing, with no high points or low points.²⁰ Armando spoke of 'intensifying one of the elements out of which a painting used to be constructed', because '... combining fragments is an obsolete method'.²¹ Seriality was their common way of expressing their refusal to compose, although each found his own material and method: Armando's seriality is more frozen than Henderikse's, harder than that of Peeters and more direct in material than Schoonhoven's.

Machine-made objects and materials also proved ideal for taking the personality aspect out of the work. The choice was not linked to any deeper notion; the material is most of all 'itself' in all its ordinary beauty. This acceptance of reality implied that the contribution of the artist, aside from making the choice, was often reduced to a minimum. In 1960 Henderikse signed Düsseldorf's Oberkassel Bridge in whitewash; three years later he made plans to sign a HEMA shop in Amsterdam, to turn it into the biggest ready-made assemblage ever.²² These are examples of radical adaptations of reality, like Armando's 1964 installation of oil drums at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague. According to the Nul artist, there was little you could do to improve on a piece of isolated reality in its unadulterated form. 'Everything was beautiful,' Armando said in 1975. 'Everything was interesting. One big eye, that's how I felt.'²³

For Peeters, the choice of synthetic products and plastic cut both ways. The material was free of visual signature, but it was also emphatically unpainterly and an expression of resistance against the academic establishment and the rules of the game: 'You were contributing to the destruction of the commercial aspect of art.'²⁴ To undermine the retinal aspect of art, the precious and status-based object as a fetish for the eye, Peeters envisaged one more method: to bypass 'seeing' altogether and appeal to the sense of touch. Peeters's 'tactilist' works of cotton wool, feathers, hair pieces, nylon thread or fake fur are 'objects of greater interest to senses other than the eye'.²⁵

Jan Schoonhoven is the only one who never 'annexed' objects or ready-made materials. Schoonhoven saw his reliefs as 'spiritual reality', as a representation of forms out of reality and therefore, in a roundabout way, fitting within the Nul idiom.²⁶ One exception to the rule was his wall of folded and stacked boxes in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague in 1964. If we take a signatureless use of industrially produced material as a requisite, this is Schoonhoven's only 'pure' Nul work – not to mention directly taken from reality, since Schoonhoven had spotted the stacked boxes in the attic of the Histor paint factory.²⁷

The work of Herman de Vries, who worked as an editor at the journal *revue nul = 0* until 1963, shows similarities with Nul in terms of form, although he was never part of the movement's hard core. Using monochrome-white structural reliefs and objects, De Vries sought to convey visual information stripped of personality and partiality. However, his scientific approach as a foundation for the form did not fit in so well with Nul's more sober outlook.²⁸ In 1962 De Vries shared a room with Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters and Jan Schoonhoven in the first Nul exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, but he did not take part in the second exhibition, held in the same museum in 1965.²⁹ And yet Schoonhoven's pointed text about ZERO and Nul, about '... showing the essence of reality, the actual reality of materials, of localized things in isolated clarity' comes through in De Vries's work.³⁰

The identity of the Dutch Nul group navigated between a cheerful orientation towards the world of the everyday and the cool sobriety of the serial monochrome. Whereas the German Zero artists were still 'painting' with the elements, with the effects of fire, light, shadow, movement and reflection, the Nul artist preferred to let reality speak for itself by isolating it, usually in raw form. Among the Dutch, only Henk Peeters worked with the elements water and fire – although Peeters saw his 'pyrographs', soot and scorch marks on various surfaces, as a typically Nul solution to the elimination of any excessively personal element: to work with the fickleness of a flame is '... to let go of the work and to become the spectator of a self-directed performance'.³¹ In terms of form, Peeters's tactile cotton balls, whether on a canvas or on a wall as a three-dimensional installation, are balanced on the cusp between Nul and the German Zero.

'It is not our job to educate, any more than it is our job to convey messages,' said Piero Manzoni in 1960.³² This might as easily have been a statement by Henk Peeters, by Jan Henderikse and even by the German Zero group. And yet the sober-minded outlook of the Dutch distinguished itself from the German Zero. 'Yes, I dream of a better world. Should I dream of a worse?' wrote Otto Piene in 'Paths to Paradise' in 1961.³³ With their clear-eyed view of reality, the members of Nul were not dreaming of the world, neither a better nor a worse, and certainly not of 'paths to paradise'. During the Nul period, radicalism and a sincerely felt admiration for what was new and contemporary went hand in hand; nimble provocation is what Nul seemed to have a patent on.

ZERO – A New Conception in a European Perspective

The international orientation of the Dutch Nul group is closely related to the way exhibitions were organized in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Exhibitions such as 'Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision' at the Hessianhuis in Antwerp (1959), Udo Kultermann's 'Monochrome Malerei' (Monochrome Painting) in Leverkusen (1960) and 'Avantgarde 61' in Trier (1961) led to an intensifying of contacts, based on a shared distaste of the emotionally charged, painterly gesture. These exhibitions were eye-openers, not least for the participants themselves. 'Vision in Motion' brought different European avant-garde movements together for the first time, showing current developments across the board, from monochrome to kinetic art, the use of light in three-dimensional installations and the work of the latter Nouveau Réalistes. The exhibition was organized by Jean Tinguely, Paul van Hoeydonck, Pol Bury and Daniel Spoerri at the invitation of the Antwerp artists' collective G 58.³⁴

The exhibition 'Monochrome Malerei' played a significant role for the Dutch Nul artists. Henderikse met Lucio Fontana there, and remembers the *taglie* he exhibited, razor-sharp cuts in canvas; they seemed to him the inevitable conclusion of the Informal trajectory.³⁵ For Henk Peeters, 'Monochrome Malerei' was the inspiration for an internationally oriented phase as an artist-curator. At Jan Henderikse's urging, Peeters went to Leverkusen and saw the works in storage, after the exhibition was over. A few weeks later, Peeters let its organizer, Udo Kultermann, know that he would like to bring the exhibition to Amsterdam.³⁶ Peeters' initial idea was to duplicate the exhibition in its entirety, although he indicated in a letter to prospective



First edition of a total of three issues of the periodical *ZERO*, published by Heinz Mack and Otto Piene to mark the seventh evening opening of 'Das Rote Bild' exhibition, Düsseldorf, 1958

Nul = 0, art periodical edited by Armando, Henk Peeters and Herman de Vries, April 1963

participants that he also wanted to show 'experiments in the domain of light and three-dimensional installations'.³⁷ Several months later, however, he found out that Daniel Spoerri was working on the same theme for the Stedelijk Museum. Peeters worried that the field would be 'grazed bare', as he intended to focus, just as Spoerri's exhibition 'Bewogen Beweging' (Moving Movement) would, on 'non-painterly aspects'. Peeters sought a solution in exhibiting on-going developments in painting, with the emphasis on emptiness and monochrome.³⁸ How quickly the plans evolved was made clear when Peeters submitted his plans to Willem Sandberg in February 1961: by that time there was a provisional list of 28 participating 'painters' – note the inverted commas – and Peeters envisaged the exhibition as '... a week of international demonstrations in which something can happen on a daily basis'.³⁹ On the spur of the moment the exhibition was initially entitled 'De laatste schilders' (The Last Painters), but this proved a mere afterthought.⁴⁰ In the spring of 1961 Armando, Jan Henderikse, Yves Klein and Henk Peeters met in Günther Uecker's Düsseldorf studio to discuss further elaboration of the plans, and correspondence also shows that Peeters consulted intensively with Günther Uecker and Piero Manzoni.⁴¹ Thanks to these 'conversations with colleagues', as Peeters called them, a new exhibition concept emerged in the course of barely a year. Peeters' role as liaison, organizer and promoter of 'the cause' was the foundation for the first Nul exhibition in Amsterdam in March 1962.

'Ultimately, it turns out, it all came out of coincidences,' said Peeters about the emergence of an international network.⁴² In 1957, Yves Klein met Rotraut Uecker, Günther Uecker's sister, at a party at Arman's in Nice. Klein did not speak German, and so Rotraut became his link with the Germans: when Klein exhibited work in Germany, Rotraut would accompany him and translate. Jan Henderikse became friends with Uecker in 1959, almost as soon as he moved to Cologne, and the latter told him about a vacant studio in Düsseldorf; Henderikse's new neighbours were Joseph Beuys and the German Zero artist Gotthard Graubner. At Uecker's studio Henderikse saw the nail objects that would be shown for the first time at the 'Vision in Motion' exhibition in Antwerp later that year.⁴³

The Dutch Informal Group had its first presentation abroad in February 1959, at Galerie Gunar in Düsseldorf. Otto Piene came to see the exhibition and was to stay in touch with Henk Peeters from that point on. In February 1960 Peeters met Hans Haacke while setting up an exhibition of the Dutch Informal Group in Kassel.⁴⁴ Haacke came to the gallery as the exhibition's photographer, but he also spoke with Peeters about his own work, white-monochrome embossed prints on paper, already in the spirit of *ZERO* (unlike the Dutch artists' Informal paintings). This would lead to Haacke's participation in the first Nul exhibition at the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum, in 1962. The initial contact with Yves Klein also took place in 1960, through Peeters' visit to the Iris Clert gallery in Paris. Later that year, when they took part in the exhibition 'Prix Suisse de Peinture Abstraite' (Swiss Prize for Abstract Painting) at the Georges Kasper gallery in Lausanne, Peeters and Henderikse met fellow exhibition participant Christian Megert.⁴⁵ When he organized two exhibitions in Bern that same year, 'Internationale Avantgarde 1960' and 'Neue Malerei' (New Painting), Megert included work by the Dutch Informals. The exhibition 'Avantgarde 61' was the first significant international presentation in which the Dutch artists exhibited work under the name 'Nul'.

Between 1957 and 1961, Otto Piene and Heinz Mack organized a series of evening exhibitions at their studios in Düsseldorf and used the occasion to present two issues of the journal *ZERO*, which was a catalogue for the exhibitions and a platform for European sympathizers all rolled into one. The journal's third issue, which featured work by Henk Peeters and Jan Schoonhoven, was presented during 'ZERO – Edition, Exposition, Demonstration' at Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf in July 1961.⁴⁶ Peeters attended the *ZERO* happening at Galerie Schmela; it inspired him to open Galerie A in Arnhem later that year and to bring the Düsseldorf event to the Netherlands. 'Expositie, demonstratie *ZERO*' was the Netherlands' first broad introduction to the international *ZERO* movement.⁴⁷

In the Netherlands, the official art circuit took very little notice of the Informal Group, the later Nul group and the international ZERO movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Cor de Nobel's Galerie .31 in Dordrecht – again an artist's initiative – was the only serious podium for artists working in the informal genre, beginning in 1957. Piero Manzoni exhibited work for the first time in the Netherlands in September 1958. Jan Henderikse and Jan Schoonhoven visited this exhibition, organized by Hans Sonnenberg at the Rotterdam Kunstkring.⁴⁸ Henk Peeters saw Manzoni's work for the first time in April 1959 at Galerie De Posthoorn in The Hague. Henderikse recalls Manzoni's first solo exhibition in the Netherlands: 'For us it was really a jolt to see *that* much work *that* was that provocative. Jan [Schoonhoven] was hugely impressed by the order in Manzoni's work. And of course everything was white, pure white!⁴⁹

On 8 April 1960, Hans Sonnenberg's Internationale Galerij in The Hague was rechristened Internationale galerij OREZ and opened with a solo exhibition by Piero Manzoni.⁵⁰ OREZ, led from 1960 by Leo Verboon, was quick to join forces with the international ZERO movement and in January 1962 organized 'Nieuwe tendenzen' (New Tendencies), an ambitious exhibition featuring 40 participants, 23 of which would also take part in the first Nul exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum a few months later. In December 1960, Hans Sonnenberg opened Galerie Delta in Rotterdam. In 1962 the gallery exhibited work by Enrico Castellani, Piero Manzoni and Jan Schoonhoven. The 'mikro nul zero' exhibition in 1964 showed work by artists including the German Zero group, the Dutch Nul artists, Piero Manzoni, Enrico Castellani, Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Arman, Jef Verheyen and Yayoi Kusama. The Amstel 47 gallery in Amsterdam also held prominent presentations, though 'Panorama van de nieuwe tendenzen' (Panorama of The New Tendencies) and 'mikro nul zero' took place somewhat later, in 1963 and 1964, respectively.⁵¹

Leo Verboon and Albert Vogel of Internationale galerij OREZ made plans to organize a large-scale happening, 'Zero on Sea' on the pier at Scheveningen in 1966, with contributions by 36 artists from ten countries. With their open character, the plans for this true ZERO *Gesamtkunstwerk* (synthesis of the arts), involving sculpture and installation art, music, theatre and even poetry, exuded the spirit of ZERO.⁵² But a combination of financial difficulties and the unpredictable Dutch weather proved fatal to the project; 'Zero on Sea' remained nothing more than a utopian idea. The prospect of art in the midst of bathers and chip-stands must have undoubtedly appealed to Henderikse and Peeters. A year earlier, in October 1965, Peeters had already made a 'water ceiling' for a glove manufacturer's stand at the Amsterdam garment fair, using plastic bags filled with water; Kusama had produced a hanging assemblage of rubber gloves for the occasion. Like 'Zero on Sea', these are the ultimate embodiments of the desire to detach the work of art from a strictly academic and museum setting.

Benchmarks – Museum Presentations in the Netherlands, 1962-1965

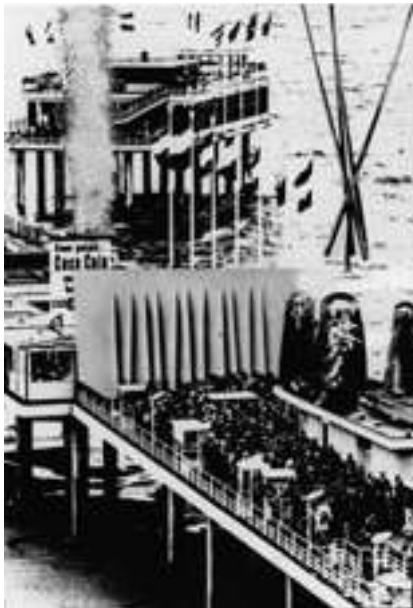
There were three major ZERO museum presentations in the Netherlands, two in Amsterdam, 'Nul' (1962, hereafter called Nul62) and 'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig' (1965, hereafter called Nul65), and one in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, 'ZERO-0-NUL' (1964). Nul62 has since taken on mythic proportions, yet a certain adjustment to its perception is required, particularly in regard to the role of director Willem Sandberg. Nul62 only happened because of an unexpected gap in the museum's schedule, an intensive lobbying effort and the artists agreeing to shoulder the costs themselves – including transport, set-up, insurance and even posters and catalogues.⁵³ Willem Sandberg's contribution was limited to making the exhibition space available; he had no serious involvement in the on-going developments around Nul or ZERO.

The entries for the first exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum show the vast differences among the participants, in terms of form and programme – although the common denominator was still the search for a value-free art divorced from the psychology of its maker. This explains the contrast between such displays as the *Salle de lumière* (a darkened corner room



'Zero on Sea', photo montage by Henk Peeters using work by Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana, George Rickey and Günther Uecker, 1965

'Expositie,
demonstratie
ZERO',
Galerie A,
Arnhem, 1961



featuring Otto Piene's light projections and works by Heinz Mack and Günther Uecker), Jan Henderikse's installation of beer crates, Henk Peeters's cotton-ball tactile pieces and the monochrome paintings of the Belgian artist Jef Verheyen. The exhibition illustrated how ZERO had succeeded in stretching the traditional concept of art: from the fascination with the elements fire and water, monochrome, movement and vibration, to the 'annexation' of consumer goods and the use of industrial materials. In a few instances, however, this led to friction among the participants. The German Zero group, for instance, were uncomfortable with the conceptual and in their view rather crass character of Piero Manzoni's *Merda d'artista* (Artist's Shit), the artist's tinned faeces. Henk Peeters recalls Manzoni's suggestion to release 20 chickens – monochrome white and kinetic, after all – into the German *Salle de lumière* during the opening, as an act of sweet revenge.⁵⁴

Afterwards the participants were somewhat disappointed by this first museum presentation in the Netherlands: the plans had been grand and ground-breaking, but some had also been unfeasible or too expensive. On the way to Amsterdam to consult with Sandberg, in 1960, bad weather on the motorway inspired the idea of a museum filled with fog, about isolating this monochrome natural phenomenon in rooms containing Breitters, Mondriaans and Appels – the ultimate levelling of the painterly gesture, it seems. Rooms – environments really – filled with drizzle, foam and mounds of snow and ice never materialized either. Sandberg was willing to listen, but ultimately he was a director of painters: 'Guys, would you please remember I still have some Van Goghs upstairs for my successor?'⁵⁵

At the end of March Nul62 had to make way for an exhibition of children's drawings, and the day after the show closed the artists found their works piled up, unprotected and in some cases damaged, in a corner of an exhibition room.⁵⁶ A work made on location by Manzoni had been thrown out with the rubbish.⁵⁷ Only later that year would the Stedelijk Museum acquire two works by the Nul group, a relief by Jan Schoonhoven, *R62-16*, and a pyrograph by Peeters, *60-06*, although Sandberg's annotation on the purchase of Schoonhoven's work speaks volumes: 'Can be exchanged (has little in stock at the moment)'. Peeters' pyrograph was obtained as payment of debts after the exhibition.⁵⁸ And yet plans were soon made for a second Nul exhibition, which was supposed to take place at director Edy de Wilde's Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven in October 1963. Peeters started inviting various artists to participate at the beginning of that year, and even designed a stamp for the occasion himself, bearing the words 'Exposition Nul 2'.⁵⁹ However, a second, large-scale Nul exhibition would not take place until 1965, at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. By then, 'Eindhoven' director Edy de Wilde had succeeded Willem Sandberg in Amsterdam.⁶⁰

As a few years passed, Dutch museums became somewhat more accommodating, in funding, operational support and a show of involvement in what actually filled the exhibition rooms, although the press still expressed the same disapproval about 'ZERO-0-NUL' at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague in 1964.⁶¹ *Het Parool* mostly found Armando's *Zwart water* (Black Water) amusing: 'One visitor tosses a match into it, another some scraps of paper, while some people spit in the water. Fodder for psychologists!'⁶² Nul65 opened in April 1965 and featured works by the Nul group, the German Zero group, the Italian Gruppo T, the Japanese Gutai group and artists such as Yayoi Kusama, George Ricky, Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni. Henk Peeters had wanted to invite the Japanese Gutai group in 1962. 'Yves Klein will take care of Japan,' Peeters wrote Sandberg in February 1961 about the line-up of participants.⁶³ But Klein changed his mind about taking part in the exhibition in Amsterdam and pulled out barely five weeks before the opening.⁶⁴ It was only after the exhibition that Peeters was able to make contact with the Gutai group.⁶⁵

The longer duration of Nul65 seems to be an indication of an evolving climate: Sandberg had allowed no more than 16 days in 1962. Peeters was again the exhibition's organizer in 1965, now with curator Ad Petersen and designer and collector Martin Visser. However, Peeters says director Edy de Wilde made a point of emphatically differentiating himself from his

predecessor Sandberg, more as a corrective exercise than out of any genuine interest.⁶⁶ Still, in 1965 the Stedelijk Museum organized, paid for and insured the transportation of the works to Amsterdam, took care of setting up the exhibition rooms and published a two-part catalogue. Following the example of Daniel Spoerri's successful *Edition MAT*, an idea emerged in June 1964 to generate some extra income by publishing an *Editie ZERO* of do-it-yourself art works, with a numbered and signed certificate.⁶⁷ Henk Peeters made Armando's and Ricky's prototypes, and Ad Petersen handled the production of Fontana's work. De Wilde found the plan too financially risky, however, and pulled out. The artists involved had hoped the publication would help offset the expenses of the exhibition, incurred among other things in shipping back their works. The project never really got off the ground, although Peeters and Petersen were still in touch with artists about the plans as late as 1967.⁶⁸

Aside from Armando's and Henderikse's installations of car tyres and beer crates, Nul62 still showed many works on canvas and panel, including in smaller sizes. The installations of 1964 and 1965 provided a glimpse of a growing realization that the world was bigger and more beautiful than could be captured within the four sides of a frame. In 1964 the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague displayed large installations: in addition to Uecker, Piene and Mack's *Salle de lumière*, there were also Armando's oil drums and the unfathomable depths of his *Zwart water*, Peeters's walls of cotton balls and shiny paint cans, and Schoonhoven's wall of stacked cardboard.⁶⁹ The Nul installations have a historical context, but their construction is also context-free: they can and may be reconstructed without erasing the 'signature of the maker'. Ultimately Nul's installations are also about the 'authenticity of what is demonstrated, of the information', as Armando said in 1965, and not about the touch of the artist.⁷⁰

And yet ZERO eventually became 'established', as Armando put it; 'the essential points of Nul', as K. Schippers called them, were reluctantly accepted and gradually canonized.⁷¹ To be embraced by the establishment was perceived, certainly by Armando and Henk Peeters, as the kiss of death, as though the struggle of resistance had all been for nothing. By then ZERO's utopian ideology had also faded, due to differences of outlook within the groups, both within Nul and the German Zero, to developments in the work of individual members or to the abandonment of the agreement that only together could anything be achieved. Everyday life seemed to catch up with Nul's practice: plastic turned out to be not just beautiful, but polluting as well, apparently art was needed more than 'like a hole in the head' and even troublemakers ended up, against their will, tidily spotlighted in the museum gallery.

In April 1966, at the same time as the exhibition 'Zero on Sea', which presented the design plans for the cancelled project – the unofficial end to the international ZERO movement – the Internationale galerij OREZ held Peeters' solo exhibition 'Nul = 0 II'.⁷² Peeters wrote a short text prior to the exhibition: 'The works exhibited are intended only as examples of mass-produced articles . . . which can be ordered in any size and any colour desired.' A stamp on the back left room to fill in by hand the dates of design and manufacture and the number of the work – even though the edition was unlimited. The announced incineration of the originals once the first 'mass-produced articles' had been made did not take place, but a short text that was supposed to be read out afterwards does survive: 'The age of the unique work of art is over. . . . From now on I will no longer sign any work. . . . Under present conditions only copyright is upheld, even though it's considered nonsense.'⁷³ The exhibition was the ultimate consequence of Peeters' efforts to finish with authenticity, uniqueness and the status-dependent work of art. And, for a good number of years, with the mixed blessings of being an artist as well: for a long time after 1965 Peeters focused exclusively on his teaching at the Academy of Arts in Arnhem. Armando stopped for two years after 1965, and in 1968 Jan Henderikse announced that his switch to film and photography meant the end of his 'hanging and standing art'.⁷⁴ Only Jan Schoonhoven kept working, unruffled, on his oeuvre of crisp-white reliefs and pen drawings, although by about 1980 the expressiveness



'Nul', Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1962

Wall with cotton wool by Piero Manzoni, 1962

and dynamism of his signature style from before *Nul* had resurfaced.

'We need an entirely new art,' Armando wrote in 1959.⁷⁵ Over ten years later Peeters would make a correction: 'No, we need an entirely new public.'⁷⁶ In 1965, at the Stedelijk Museum, that still seemed a bridge too far: 'The public is infected by the critics. They walk through the rooms screeching and snorting and wrecking everything.'⁷⁷ Nearly half a century later that public finally seems to have arrived. Everything is a question of timing, says Peeters: 'Art is like camembert, either unripe or already spoiled.'⁷⁸

'ZERO-O-NUL', Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1964

Armando, *Zwart water* (Black Water), 1964

- 1 *Zero onuitgevoerd* (Amsterdam, Kunsthistorisch Instituut, 1970), np.
- 2 *De vitaliteit in de kunst* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam/Venice: Palazzo Grassi/Recklinghausen: Kunst-halle, 1959), 9.
- 3 *Manifest tegen niets*, pamphlet (Amsterdam, April 1961).
- 4 *Einde*, pamphlet (Amsterdam, April 1961).
- 5 Fred Sieger and Rik Jager also exhibited their work with the Dutch Informal Group until May 1959. Bram Bogart occasionally joined in. Kees van Bohemen left the Informal Group in February 1961, because he was uncomfortable with its new direction. See also Franck Gribling, *Informeel kunst in België en Nederland 1955-'60. Parallellen in de Nederlands-talige literatuur* (The Hague: Gemeentemuseum/Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 1983), 16.
- 6 'De Nederlandse Informelen', *Dordrechts Nieuwsblad*, 1 October 1958, newspaper clipping in RKD (Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague), Henk Peeters archive; *Het Vrije Volk*, untitled review, 13 October 1958.
- 7 Armando, 'Credo 1', in: *Holländische Informelle Gruppe* (Düsseldorf: Galerie Gunar, 1959), np.
- 8 Armando, 'Credo 2', in: *Informeel Groep* (Nijmegen: Besiendershuys, 1959), np.
- 9 Fred Wagemans and Mark Peeters, *Henk Peeters Tastbaar/Ex plumis cognoscitur avis* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1998), 18.
- 10 Interview with Henk Peeters, 23 February 2011. See also *Fontana* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam/London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1988), 33. This catalogue includes the last interview with Fontana, from 1968: 'I make a hole in the canvas as a way of leaving behind the old pictorial formula, the painting and the traditional ideas about art, and I escape symbolically, but also in terms of the material, from the prison of the flat surface.'
- 11 *Nederlandse Informele Groep*, self-published exhibition catalogue, 1959, np.
- 12 Paraphrase of Jan Schoonhoven's statement: 'The aim is to establish reality as art in an im-personal way.' See J.J. Schoonhoven, 'Zero', in: *de nieuwe stijl* Vol. 1 (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1965), 123.
- 13 Bram Bogart and Kees van Bohemen also took part in this exhibition. See *Het Vaderland*, untitled review, 26 April 1961.
- 14 Interview with Henk Peeters, 23 February 2011. See also Caroline Roodenburg-Schadd, *Expressie en ordening. Het verzamelbeleid van Willem Sandberg voor het Stedelijk Museum 1945-1962* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam/Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2004), 657.
- 15 *De nieuwe stijl* came out of the Flemish journal *Gard Sivik*; Armando, Henk Peeters, Hans Sleutelaar, Bastiaan Vaandra-ger and Hans Verhagen joined its editorial staff. *De nieuwe stijl* also looked at 'the new

- poetry': the 'depoetization' of the lofty language of the poet had similarities to the Nul group's strategy. Two issues of the journal were published, both in 1965.
- 16 The three issues of the *ZERO* journal came out in April 1958, October 1958 and July 1961.
- 17 *Interview Henk Peeters*, 1964, typescript, Düsseldorf, ZERO Foundation, Henk Peeters archive.
- 18 K. Schippers and Betty van Garrel, interview Nul group in Galerij OREZ, The Hague, 1975 (DVD).
- 19 Interview with Jan Henderikse, 10 January 2010.
- 20 Schoonhoven, op. cit. (note 12), 123.
- 21 *nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig*, exhibition catalogue SM 377, two volumes (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1965), np.
- 22 The plan was never put into action. See undated letter [1963] from Jan Henderikse to Henk Peeters, RKD, Henk Peeters archive.
- 23 Ischa Meijer, 'De roerloze beweging van zestig', *Haagse Post*, 22 November 1975, quoted in: Janneke Wesseling, *Alles was mooi. Een geschiedenis van de Nul-beweging* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1989), 7.
- 24 Interview with Henk Peeters, 23 February 2011.
- 25 *nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig*, op. cit. (note 21).
- 26 Schippers and Van Garrel, interview, op. cit. (note 18).
- 27 Janneke Wesseling, *Jan Schoonhoven: beeldend kunstenaar* (The Hague: SDU/Amsterdam: Openbaar Kunstbezit, 1990), 44.
- 28 In the second issue of *revue nul = 0*, De Vries describes his method of objectivation based on the *Statistical Tables for Biological, Agricultural and Medical Research* (1938) by statisticians Ronald Fisher and Frank Yates. See *revue nul = 0*, series 1, no. 2 (April 1963), 32.
- 29 Later that year De Vries took part in the exhibition 'Atelier 2' (24 September 1965) with his *random objectivations* and a free-standing three-dimensional installation, *random spatial structure*.
- 30 Schoonhoven, 'Zero', op. cit. (note 12), 123.
- 31 *nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig*, op. cit. (note 21).
- 32 Germano Celant, *Piero Manzoni* (Milan: Charta/London: Serpentine Gallery, 1998), 271.
- 33 Heinz Mack and Otto Piene, *ZERO* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1973), 146.
- 34 The title 'Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision' is a reference to Lászlo Moholy-Nagy's book of the same name (1947). Sometime in 1958, the artists' collective G 58 obtained possession of the attics of the Hessenhuis, a sixteenth-century warehouse in the port of Antwerp. The artists refurbished the building and organized their own exhibitions. Besides 'Vision in Motion', the Hessenhuis held such prominent exhibitions as 'ZERO – groupement international de l'art d'aujourd'hui' (the group around Hans Sonnenberg, 1959), 'new european school' (organized by Georges Kasper, 1960-1961) and 'Anti-peinture' (organized by Walter Leblanc, 1962). The Dutch Informal Group exhibited there in 1960.
- 35 Interview with Jan Henderikse, 10 January 2010.
- 36 Letter from Henk Peeters to Udo Kultermann, 1 June 1960, RKD, Henk Peeters archive.
- 37 Letter from Henk Peeters to the intended participants of the Nul62 exhibition, 2 July 1960, RKD, Henk Peeters archive.
- 38 Letter from Henk Peeters to Charles Karstens, 4 January 1961, RKD, Henk Peeters archive. 'Bewogen Beweging', at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (10 March-17 April 1961), was organized by Daniel Spoerri, Pontus Hultén and Willem Sandberg and showed the works of artists such as Picabia, Malevich, Duchamp, Calder, Soto, Tinguely, Uecker, Piene, Mack, Colombo and Rickey.
- 39 Letter from Henk Peeters to Willem Sandberg, 4 February 1961, RKD, Henk Peeters archive. 'Together we want to perform a light ballet by Otto Piene, have Yves Klein play his monochrome music, Uecker do archery, Manzoni hand out eggs, etc.'
- 40 Letter from Henk Peeters to Willem Sandberg, 6 March 1961, RKD, Henk Peeters archive.
- 41 *Henk Peeters* (Londen: The Mayor Gallery, 2011). See also: undated letter from Piero Manzoni to Henk Peeters (probably early 1961), and letter from Günther Uecker to Henk Peeters, 19 October 1961, Düsseldorf, ZERO Foundation, Henk Peeters archive.
- 42 Interview with Henk Peeters, 23 February 2011.
- 43 *ZERO – Internationale Künstler-Avantgarde der 50er/60er Jahre* (Düsseldorf: Museum Kunstpalast/Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 267.
- 44 This was the exhibition 'Niederländische Informelle Gruppe', Galerie Weiss, Kassel (February 1960).
- 45 'Prix Suisse de Peinture Abstraite', 5-30 October 1960, Georges Kasper gallery, Lausanne. See also .31, *Een gerucht makende Dordtse galerie voor moderne kunst 1957-1962* (Dordrecht: Dordrechts Museum, 1990), 37.
- 46 Mack and Piene, *ZERO*, op. cit. (note 33), 271-272.
- 47 'Expositie, demonstratie ZERO', Galerie A, Arnhem, opening on 9 December 1961.
- 48 Manzoni's introduction to organizer Hans Sonnenberg and artists Gust Romijn and Jan Schoonhoven led to the formation of the artists' group ZERO on 31 July 1958. See also p. 74.
- 49 Interview with Jan Henderikse, 11 February 2011.
- 50 The name 'OREZ', 'ZERO' spelled backwards, was Jan Schoonhoven's idea for the title of a group exhibition at the Internationale gallerij in The Hague (opening on 20 October 1959) in which Kees van Boemen, Piero Manzoni, Jan Schoonhoven and Jaap Wage-maker also took part. See also p. 74.
- 51 These exhibitions were also organized on a grand scale, with contributions from the German Zero group, members of Italy's Gruppo T and Azimut, the French Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV) and outsiders like Kusama, George Ricky and Jesús Rafael Soto. See also Philip Peters, 'Van Ouborg tot Orez – Haagse kunstenaars en kunstbemiddelaars', in: *Onmetelijk Optimisme, Kunstenaars en hun bemiddelaars in de jaren 1945-1970* (Amsterdam/Zwolle: Waanders, 2006), 67-70.
- 52 A presentation of the plans was still held at OREZ (16 April to 4 May 1966).
- 53 Interview with Henk Peeters, 23 February 2011. See also Renate Wiehager and Antoon Melissen, *Jan Henderikse. Acheiropoietia* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 289.
- 54 *Henk Peeters*, op. cit. (note 41).
- 55 Marinus Boezem, 'Boezem-Henk Peeters', *Museumjournaal*, series 16, no. 2 (April 1970), 81-82.
- 56 E-mail from Henk Peeters, 4 July 2010.
- 57 *Henk Peeters*, op. cit. (note 41).
- 58 Roodenburg-Schadd, *Expressie en ordening*, op. cit. (note 14), 658.
- 59 Letter from Henk Peeters to Paolo Scheggi, 12 March 1963, Düsseldorf, ZERO Foundation.
- 60 Edy de Wilde was director of the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven from 1946 to 1963.
- 61 Only the German Zero group (Mack, Piene, Uecker) and the Nul group, with the exception of Jan Henderikse, took part in this exhibition.
- 62 *Het Parool*, untitled review, 3 April 1964.
- 63 Letter from Henk Peeters to Willem Sandberg, 4 February 1961, RKD, Henk Peeters archive.
- 64 Letter from Yves Klein to Henk Peeters, 29 January 1962, Düsseldorf, ZERO Foundation, Henk Peeters archive.
- 65 See interview with Henk Peeters in this publication.
- 66 Telephone conversation with Ad Petersen, 18 May 2011.

- 67 Letter from Edy de Wilde to Henk Peeters, 22 July 1964, RKD, Henk Peeters archive.
- 68 Telephone conversation with Ad Petersen, 18 May 2011.
- 69 In 1964, unlike in Amsterdam in 1962, the walls of the *Salle de lumière* were covered in aluminium panels.
- 70 *nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig*, op. cit. (note 21).
- 71 Schippers and Van Garrel, interview, op. cit. (note 18); and J. Bernlef and K. Schippers (eds.), *Een cheque voor de tandarts* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1967), 150.
- 72 Invitation to opening on 15 April 1966, RKD, Henk Peeters archive.
- 73 Henk Peeters, undated typescript, RKD, Henk Peeters archive. See also Bernlef and Schippers, *Een cheque*, op. cit. (note 71), 157. According to K. Schippers the text was not read out at the conclusion of the exhibition: Schippers, e-mail of 9 May 2011.
- 74 Schippers and Van Garrel, interview, op. cit. (note 18).
- 75 *Holländische Informelle Gruppe* 1959, np.
- 76 Schippers and Van Garrel, interview, op. cit. (note 18).
- 77 *Haagse Post*, untitled review, 8 May 1965, newspaper cutting, RKD, Henk Peeters archive.
- 78 .31, op. cit. (note 45), 38.

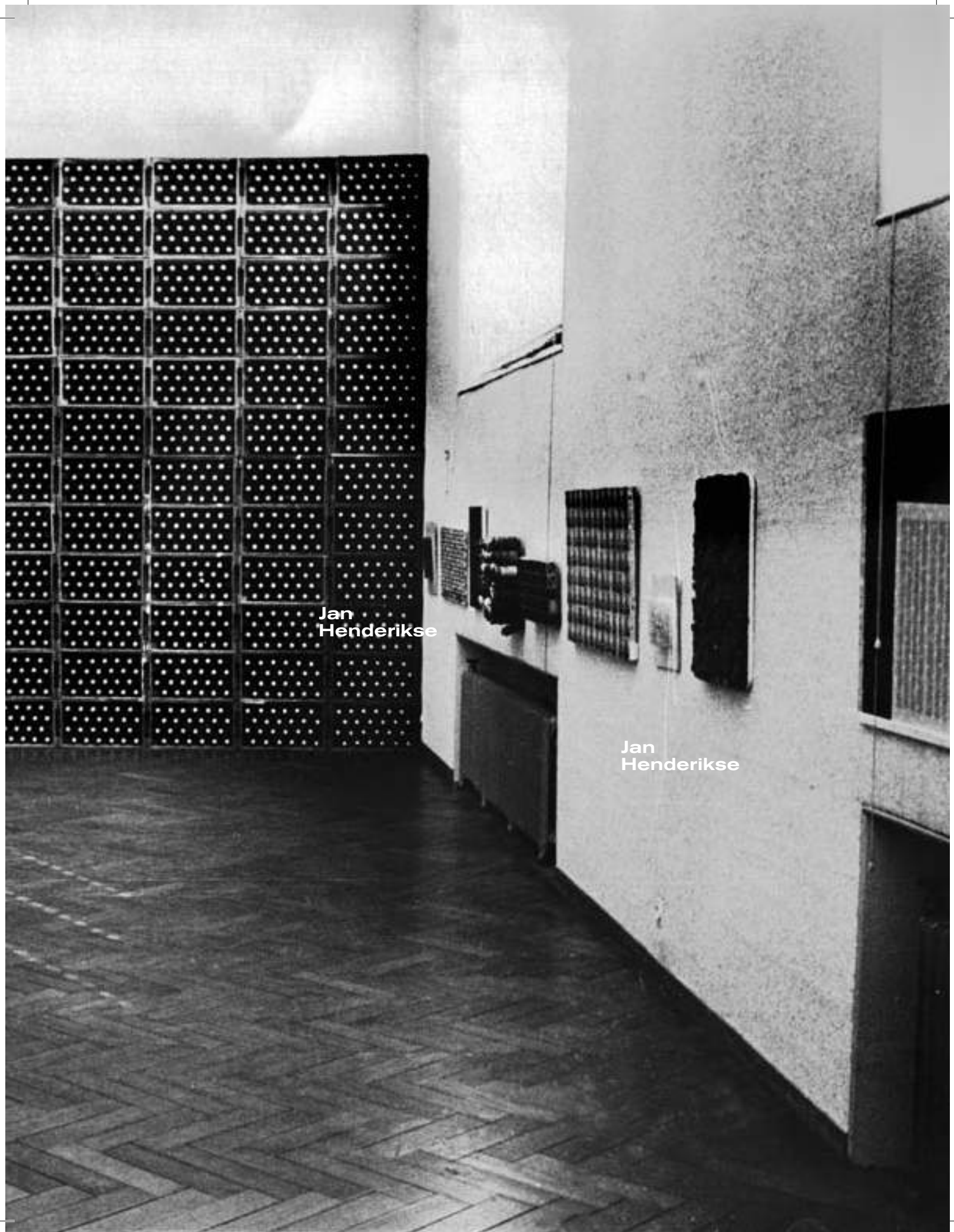
'Nul', Stedelijk
Museum
Amsterdam

1962

Henk
Peeters

Herman
de Vries

Herman
de Vries



Jan
Henderikse

Jan
Henderikse



Otto
Piene

Günther
Uecker

Heinz
Mack



Heinz
Mack

Heinz
Mack

Günther
Uecker

'Nul', Stedelijk
Museum
Amsterdam

Otto
Piene



**Günther
Uecker**

'Nul', Stedelijk
Museum
Amsterdam

Christian
Megert





ZERO-PROFEET ARMANDO: de weg naar niets.

Tal van argehoze kunstminnaars, die afgelopen maand het Amsterdams Stedelijk Museum waren binnengestapt, om met een bezoek aan de nieuwste expositie hun culturele horizon nog verder te verheffen, renden in paniek terug naar de portier om te vragen waar het museum was: zij moenden bij verplaatsing terecht te zijn gekomen in een reclame-ruimte voor moeilijk opvoedbare kinderen.

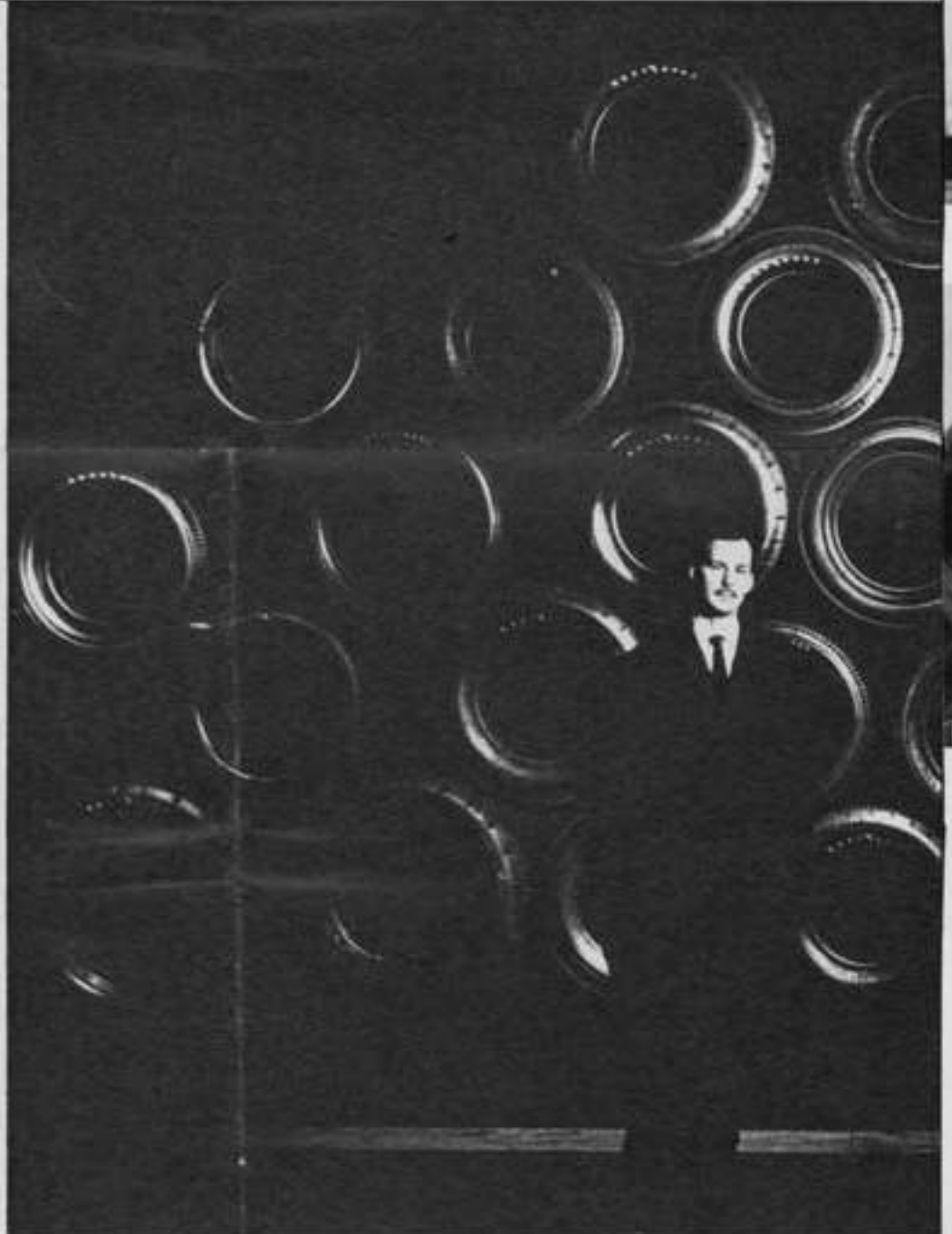
Andere bezoekers dachten hetzelfde, maar hielden zich groot en liepen schichtig verder langs uitgestalde knutselwerkjes van karton, spijkers en ander therapie-materiaal, af en toe „Braaf zo” roepend, om van hun welwillendheid te getuigen. Pas toen zij weer veilig buiten stonden, drong de verwarrende werkelijkheid tot hen door: zij waren tóch op een heuse expositie in een echt museum geweest.

Onder de treffende verzamelnaam „NUL” hadden vierentwintig personen van diverse nationaliteiten, bij hun familie als artistiek bekend, met instemming van museumdirecteur Sandberg hun stoutste stukjes in 't Stedelijk bijgebracht: „om gestalte te geven aan vernieuwende gedachten.”

Dit meisje is een kunstwerk, want ze draagt de handtekening van Manzoni.



DE NULLEN



Armando met handcompositie. Niets gedaan, en goed verdiend.



Met de inktpot in de hand maakt lijntekenaar Manzoni een reis om de wereld.



← Enige huisje kan leiden tot een schilderij van glasfiber.

Brand in het museum: 'n staaltje van de Parijse pyrrmaan Aubertin.

„Rabot in spijkers” noemt de Duitse Uecker deze schepping.



NUL

De kerngedachte van die vernieuwing werd pakkend samengevat door de Amsterdamse zero-beoefenaar Armando, voor hij aan het schilderen sloeg eens een veelbelovend visueel bij een signeerstrijker: „De kunst is volgens ons teruggekeerd tot op het nulpunt. Wij beginnen van voren af aan.”

Vuurtje stoken

Deze uitpraak werd terstond geïllustreerd door het werk van de Parijse pyrrmaan Aubertin: een tabbeau maken van honderden lucifers, er de brand in stoken, en dan een snerre tabbeau maken. Niet gering bleek ook de werkkraai van Magert uit Bern en Decker uit Düsseldorf, die een heleboel spiegelglas en spijkers hadden aangesleept, om aan te tonen dat je daar niet alleen in 't oerwoud, maar ook in Amsterdam aardig wat mee kunt bereiken.

En dan Armando zelf. Een aardige jongen, en gemiaal zonder meer. Zijn inleiding getuigde van een waarlijk verbluffend diep inzicht in niets doen. Hij liet een zending autobanden op zich komen, liet ze door personen aan een zwarte wand hangen, ontving vierhonderd gulden voor de handreclame, en ging met de handen in de zakken van zijn nette blikse pak tevreden naar zijn creatie staan kijken.

Ook begaafd, maar minder zakelijk leunde zich de naar Düsseldorf uitgeweken Nederlander Heenderikse, die veen-negentig kisten met lege Bierflexjes tegen een muur liet opstapelen; hij kreeg van de bruuwerij slechts tweehonderd gulden.

De grote grappax van de tentoonstelling was opnieuw de om zijn goallen voormaard Manzoni uit Milaan. Deze Italiaanse gut, die eens kans zag ballons als kunst te verkopen, omdat zijn adem erin sat, vonden wij nu terug met een omgekeerde fles vulpeninkt in de hand. Daarmee bestreek hij een ronddraaiende rol papier, albus werkte aan een lijn van veertigduizend kilometer langte; zijn voorstelling van een reis om de werelt. En mocht hij in Amsterdam niet geroed komen, geen nood — er wachten hem nog exposities in Düsseldorf en Zürich. Maar meen niet, dat Manzoni het bij deze lijn laat. Hij had nog een steekje staaltje in petto: het signeren van meisjes. Jongedames die vooruit wilden, konden bij hem een handtekening op de arm halen, met een begeleidend certificaat van echtheid, waarop gedrukt stond dat hij van nu af een kunstwerk waren — om de aflopende reden van Mantoni's signatuur.

Geen imitatie

Een zwaar gemis achtten de exponenten de afwezigheid van de speenbopings-konstenaar Arman uit Nice. Hij had naar Amsterdam zullen reizen, om een vulnistak in een vitrine leeg te starten. Maar de vitrine bleef leeg. Gevraagd, waarom zij dan zelf geen vulnistak ter hand genomen hadden, antwoordde een der zullisten: „Dat zou een schandelijke imitatie van de grote meester zijn geweest.”

Wat mochten de entree-betalende museumbezoekers achter de met een dure catalogus ondersteunde expositie „NUL” zoeken?

Directeur Sandberg, in afwachting van zijn pensioen, zei niet meer dan: „Leuk, zeer leuk.” De tentoonstellers zelf hadden stapels ingewikkelde geloofsbepijde-missen klaar, uitpuilend in: „Een reactie op de vermaatschappelijke werelt.”

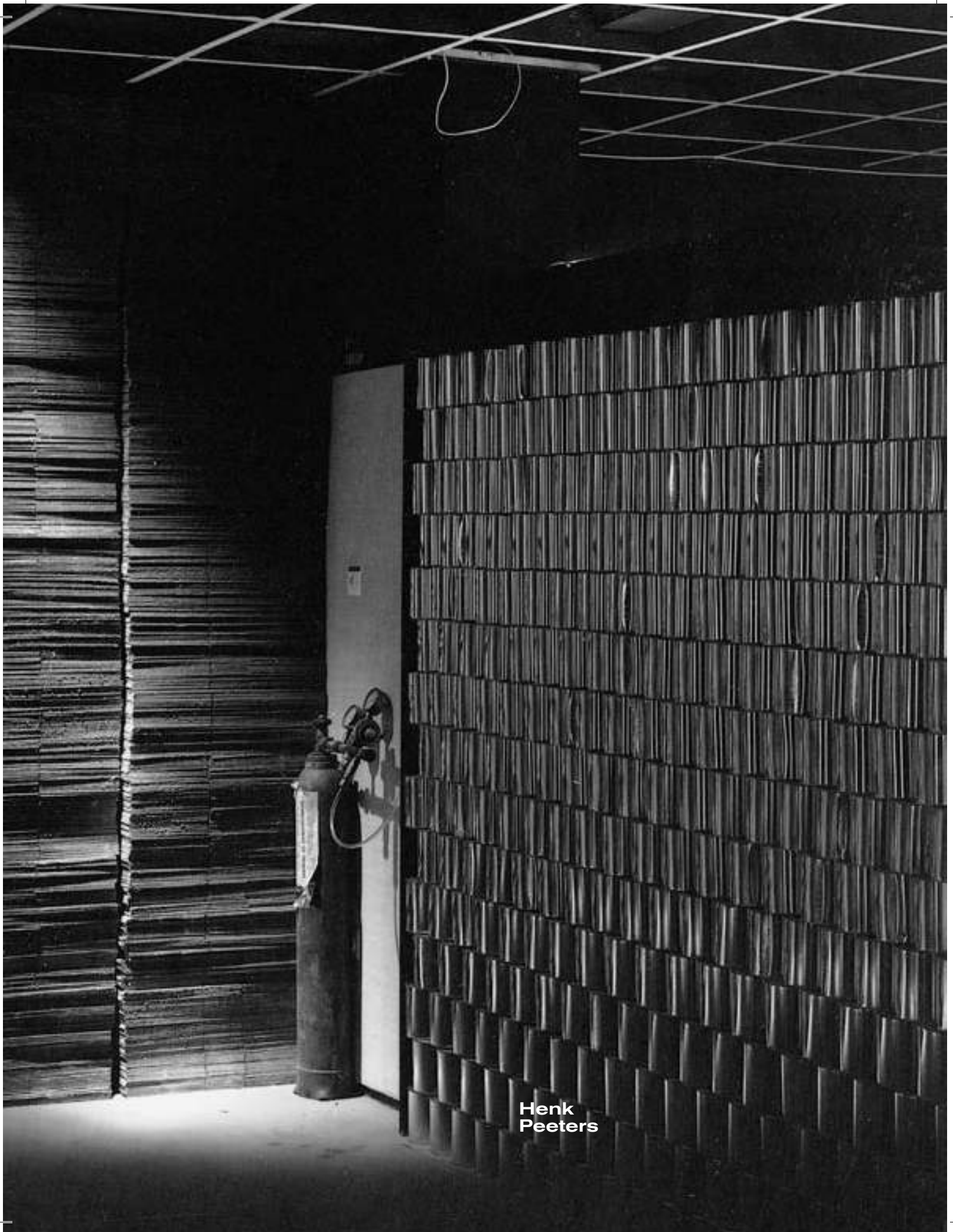
Het duidelijkst was de godse Armando, toen hij minzaam afdoend tot burgermanstaal, verklaarde: „Wij willen de mensen laten zien, hoe mooi primitiefs, alleszame dingen zijn, die men ook buiten het museum kan ontmoeten.”

Goed. Maar waarom dan niet het museum geheel afgebroken, om eens volop te genieten van die verrukkelijke bepaal-compotie vrunder?

'ZERO-0-NUL',
Gemeente-
museum
The Hague

1964

Jan
Schoonhoven



Henk
Peeters

'ZERO-0-NUL',
Gemeente-
museum
The Hague

Armando

Otto
Piene



Jan
Schoonhoven

Armando

'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig',
Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam

1965

Armando



Henk
Peeters

Jan
Schoonhoven

'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig',
Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam



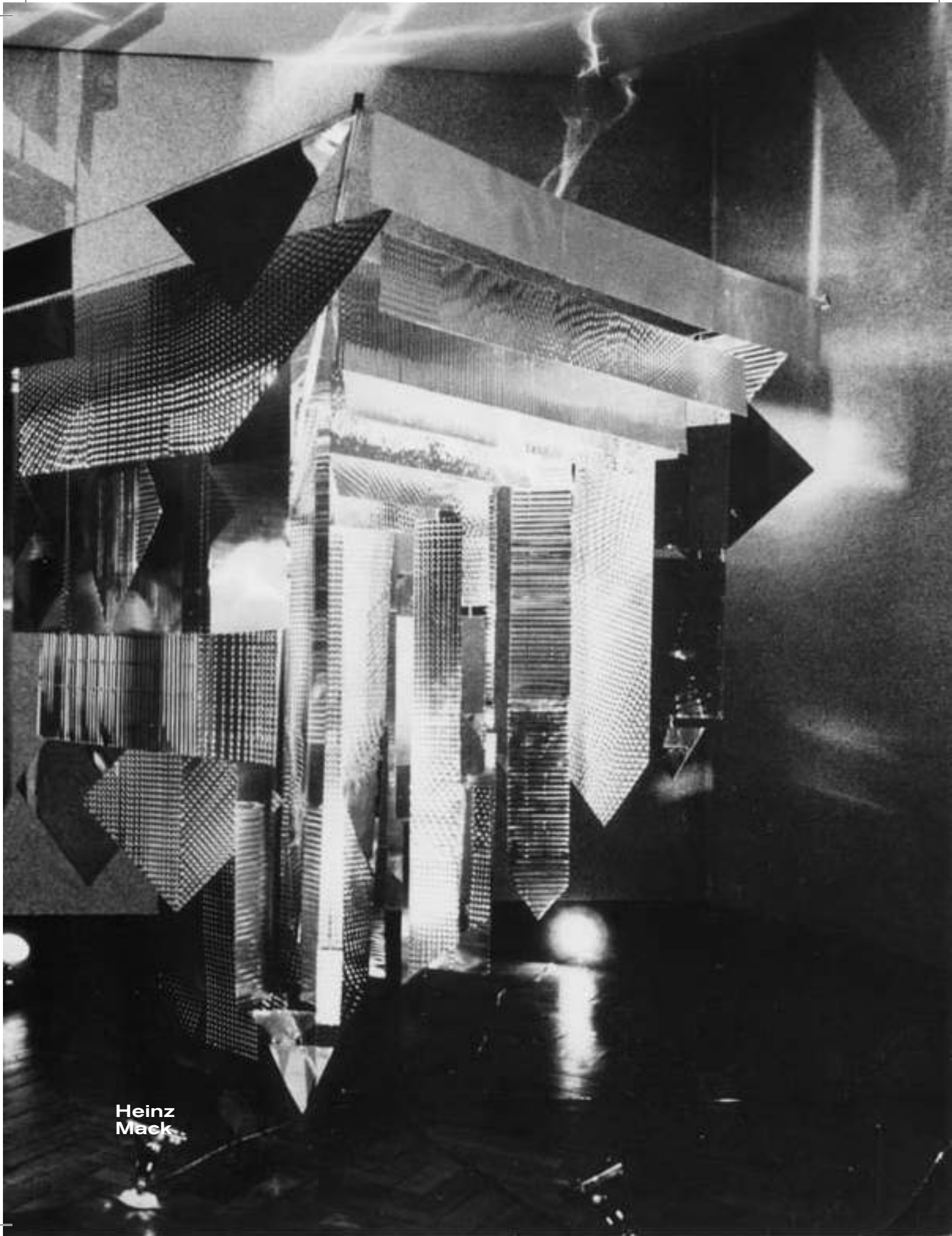
Hans
Haacke



'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig',
Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam



**Günther
Uecker**



**Heinz
Mack**

'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig',
Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam

Michio Yoshihara



Michio
Yoshihara

Saburo
Murakami



Sadamasa
Motonaga

Jiro
Yoshihara

Tsuruko
Yamazaki

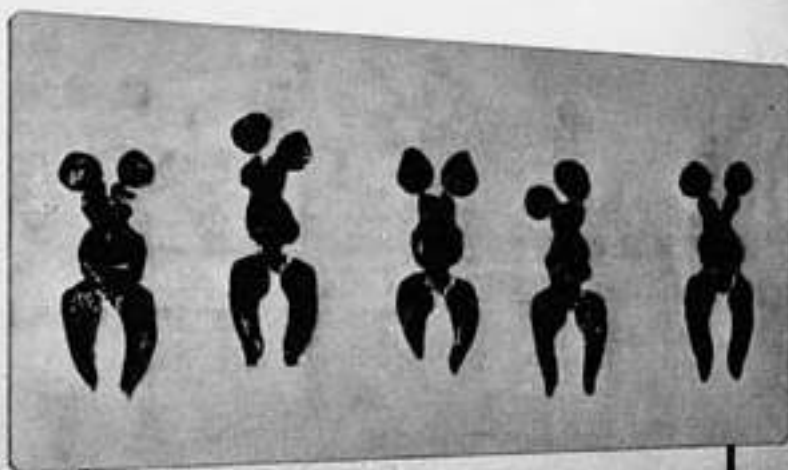
Atsuko
Tanaka

Saburo
Murakami

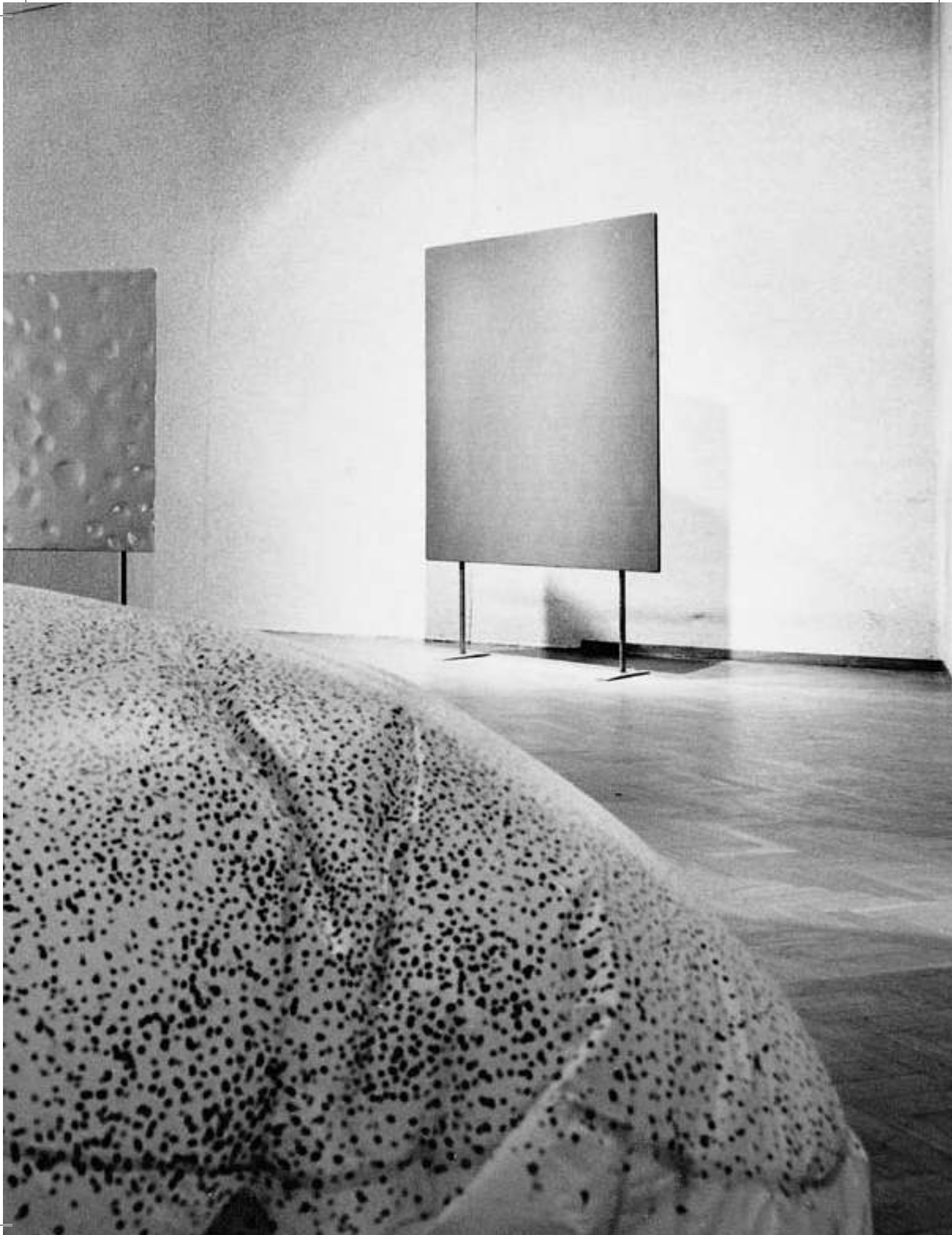
Shozo
Shimamoto

'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig',
Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam

Yves
Klein



Akira
Kanayama



'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig',
Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam

**Lucio
Fontana**



'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig',
Stedelijk
Museum,
Amsterdam

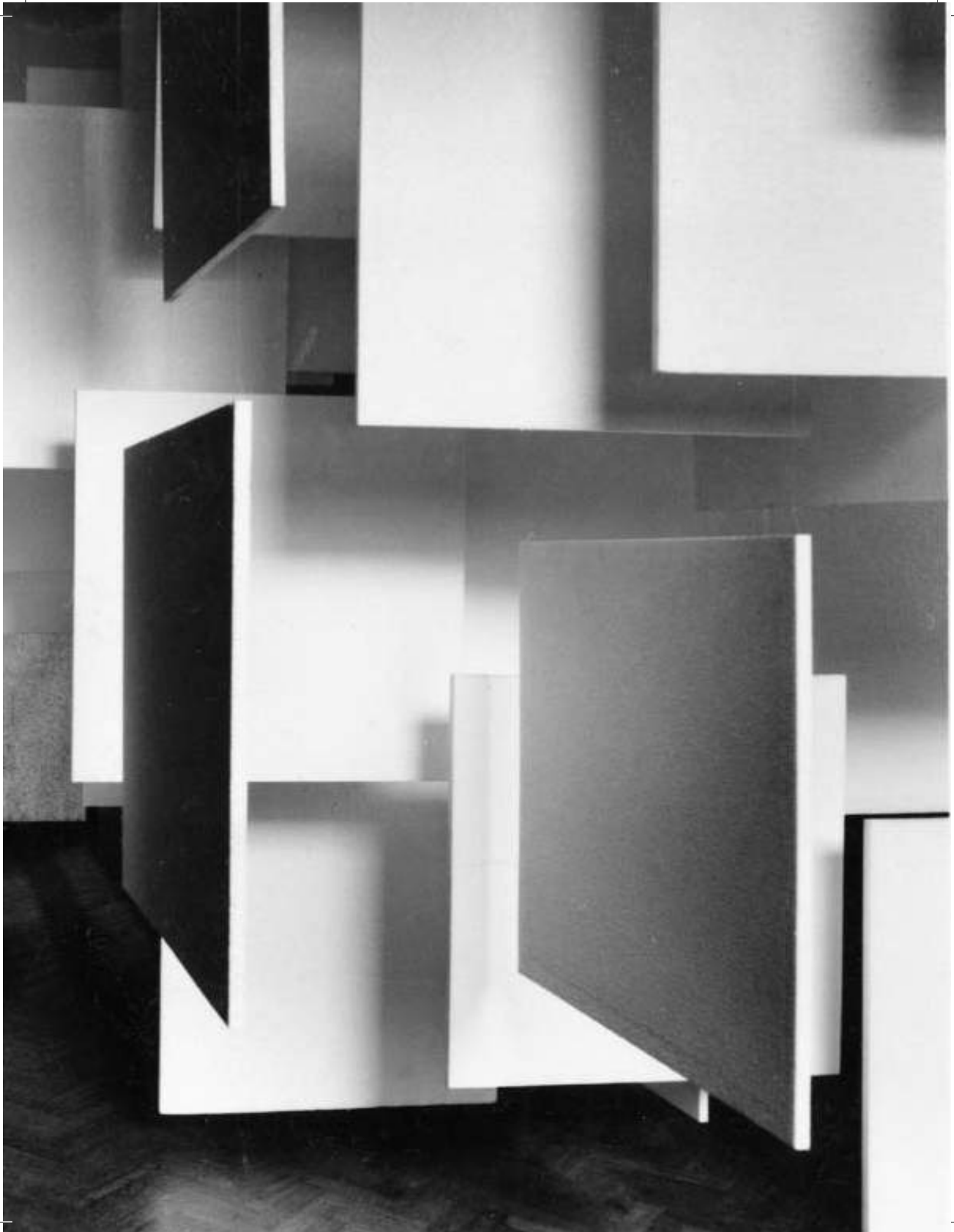
Yayoi
Kusama



'Atelier 2',
Stedelijk
Museum,
Amsterdam

1965

Herman
de Vries



'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig',
Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam



**Jiro
Yoshihara**

**Hans
Haacke**

**Henk
Peeters**

**Rotraut
Klein-Uecker**

**Jan
Schoonhoven**

**Lucio
Fontana**

**Pol
Bury**

**Gianni
Colombo**

**Teresita
Fontana**



**Edy
de Wilde**

Soto

**Nanda
Vigo**

**Nono
Reinhold-
de Wilde**

**George
Rickey**

**Alfred
Schmela**

**Heinz
Mack**

**Emile
Soestbergen**

**Yayoi
Kusama**

**Otto
Piene**

**Günther
Uecker**

Colin Huizing

nul = 0 / 0 = nul

Herman de Vries, *toevals-structuur*, 1966, mixed media, 100 x 100 cm, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam

Armando, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters and Jan Schoonhoven are normally considered the most important members of the Nul group. Herman de Vries is not usually listed as a member. De Vries does not join in exhibitions with the members of the Dutch Informal Group, but he develops an informal style of painting during more or less the same period, and in 1958 he starts to make white collages and canvasses. At the time he is employed at the Institute for Biological Field Research in Arnhem, and he develops his first 'Nul' works in his free time, using materials from the post room, the lab and his own home.¹ Inspired by texts on Zen Buddhism, De Vries creates a void in his work.² During this period De Vries meets Henk Peeters, who lives in Arnhem; Peeters regularly includes him in the exhibitions he organizes in the Netherlands and abroad.

De Vries founds the publication *revue nul = 0* with Armando and Peeters, and they all serve as editors. In 1962 De Vries takes part in the 'Nul' exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, where he shows white sculptures in the form of beams, blocks and cylinders in the same room with the other members of Nul. The second issue of *revue nul = 0* was followed by a break with Peeters in 1964, due to a difference of opi-

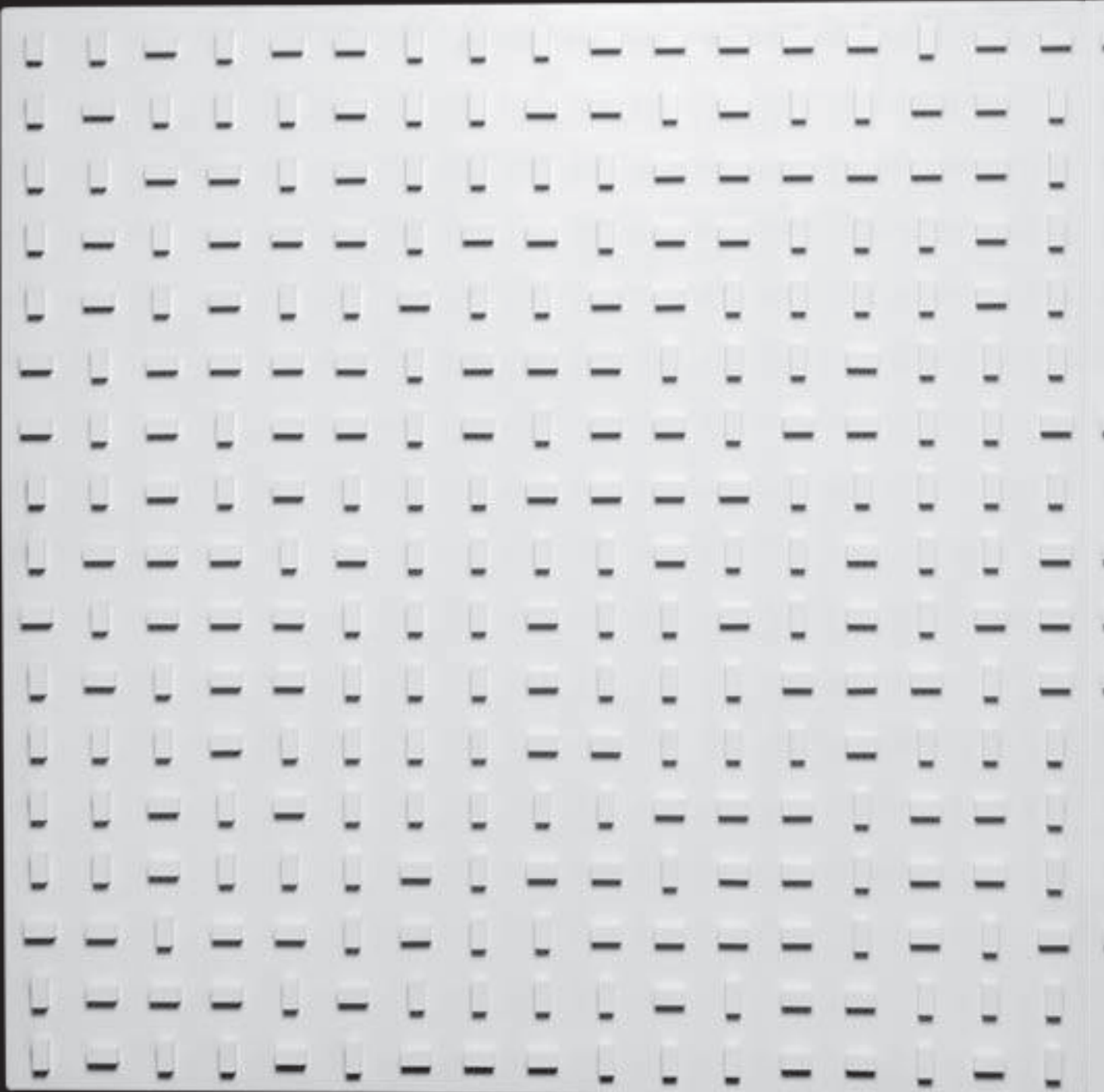
nion. De Vries wants to continue with the publication on his own, upon which Peeters hires an attorney. Peeters subsequently excludes De Vries from participating in the exhibition 'Nul65'. De Vries shows the work he had intended for this exhibition in the exhibition 'Atelier 2', held in the same year at the Stedelijk Museum.³ In the years that follow, he does take part, mainly at the invitation of the German artists, in national and international ZERO exhibitions. In his own view, De Vries always remains true to the principles of Nul.⁴

1 See also Cees de Boer, *herman de vries. oeuvreprijs 1998, beeldende kunst* (Amsterdam, 1998).

2 Ibid., 18.

3 'Nul65' took place from 15 April to 7 June 1965. The exhibition 'Atelier 2' took place in September. This included work by Jan Henderikse, who had also not taken part in 'Nul65'.

4 De Vries, interview with Colin Huizing and Tijs Visser, 12 May 2011, Eschenau, Germany.



nul = 0 / 0 = nul

Renate Wiehager

Zero / Nul / Azimut / Nouveaux Réalistes

**Meetings, Correspondence
and Cultural Influences
in the European ZERO
Avant-Garde of 1956-1962**

**Heinz Mack,
Otto Piene,
Jean Tinguely,
Daniel Spoerri,
Pol Bury and
Yves Klein,
c. 1957**

**Hermann
Bartels,
Henk Peeters,
Heinz Mack
and Armando
in Otto Piene's
studio,
Düsseldorf,
1960**



Timeframe: From a Visit by German artists to Yves Klein in 1956 to Henk Peeters' Obituary for Yves Klein in 1962

Historically, ZERO was a European movement that manifested itself in several nations: in Germany, France, the Netherlands and Italy. Affiliations were loose – ZERO was not a 'group' with unified stylistic features or explicit aims set out in a manifesto. ZERO was a movement that presented its shared artistic philosophy in collaborative exhibitions and in magazine articles between 1957 and 1966. In retrospect, Yves Klein and the German artists Heinz Mack and Otto Piene can be seen as the founders and spiritual impetus behind ZERO. The three men first met in 1956 in Paris, and again in 1957 in Düsseldorf, where Klein's 11 highly-regarded *The Blue Epoch* monochrome paintings were displayed in the Schmela gallery. Early art magazines were an important outlet for the movement, particularly Heinz Mack and Otto Piene's *ZERO* magazine. Three issues were published: issue 1 and issue 2 appeared in the spring of 1958 (with Klein contributing to the first of these) and issue 3 appeared in July of 1961. *Azimuth*, edited by Enrico Castellani and Piero Manzoni and published in Milan, was another important ZERO mouthpiece.¹

As I see it, two events define the timeframe for the most intensive developments of the European aspects of Zero/Nul/Azimuth/the Nouveaux Réalistes: the first meeting of German artists Mack, Piene and Salentin with Yves Klein in Paris in 1956 and Henk Peeters' obituary for Klein in 1962. Why? Heinz Mack summed it up perfectly:

In the restless and exciting early years of Zero, Yves Klein's philosophy was a kind of fixed star, high above an open horizon stretching in all directions – but its position was not the same for everyone, because all the constellations of stars were in motion and were constantly forming themselves, quite unexpectedly, into new combinations.²

In the same vein, Otto Piene said in 1962 that:

Yves Klein was perhaps the real driving force behind the rise of the Zero movement. His personal influence as a friend and his artistic energy were probably what caused us to direct our activities towards Zero in 1957 He owed his influence to his personal genius and his all-embracing concept of purity.³

During his journeys to the South of France, Günther Uecker met Arman and Martial Raysse at an early stage, and later met Yves Klein. He later recalled that: 'Arman and Klein challenged me to live and to experiment freely with art.'⁴

In an autobiographical sketch from 1997, Heinz Mack describes the intellectual and cultural situation for the German Zero movement artists in the early days, the critical influence of Yves Klein and his meetings with the French avant-garde of the time.

In 1950, my first foreign trip of the post-war years took me to Paris. Two experiences in particular made a great impression on me: a city without ruins (!) and the other was a bowl of oranges painted by Matisse, a picture that belonged to Picasso. Six years later, I returned to Paris, this time in the company of my friends, the painters Otto Piene and Hans Salentin, with a hundred doubts, questions, crises and problems. Again, there were two experiences that simultaneously impressed and irritated both myself and my friends. One of these was an exhibition by Antoni Tàpies . . . another was a meeting with Yves Klein at his studio. Yves was cosmopolitan and friendly, and expounded his monochrome style like a revelation Three years later, Klein published a very slender volume, entitled *Le dépassement de le problematique de l'art*. Reading this book made a great impression on me. My attitude to it was highly critical; all the same, it was as if I had been in a dark room and a door had finally opened to let in the light of insight. This philosophical and artistic discourse left all historical artistic definitions behind; this was literally a

cosmological worldview, and it opened up new horizons within me that I had never known existed! My meetings with Yves in Paris and subsequently in Düsseldorf became more frequent. At the same time, I became increasingly interested in the work of Tinguely (who had once changed the course of my life by opening the door to Brancusi's studio for me). I also increasingly came into contact with Arman, Soto, Spoerri, Christo and Agam. Alongside my circle of friends in Milan – particularly Fontana, Manzoni and Castellani – Paris was the second major focal point for my curiosity and enthusiasm. New York was as yet far from my thoughts.⁵

Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven, Heinz Mack, Günther Uecker and Armando during the opening of the exhibition 'ZERO-0-NUL' at the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1964

Henk Peeters begins his article in the *Haagse Post* of June 1962 with the words:

In the past week, on Thursday afternoon around 6 o'clock, the international avant-garde suffered a severe blow – one that has barely been mentioned in the Dutch press, but has devastated the inner circle. Yves Klein, who was 34 years old, died of a heart attack in his apartment on the Rue Campagne-Première. Only a few months previously, he had married the dark-eyed sister of German painter Günther Uecker, whose nail reliefs created an uproar at the 'Nul' exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum. . . . Yves Klein was better received in Germany: where his works of art were exhibited at the Schmela gallery in Düsseldorf several times, he also met with the Dutch 'Nullists' on a regular basis. His German friends used to speak of their fashionably dressed, energetic and enthusiastic colleague respectfully as 'der Yves'.⁶

Cultural Differences: Amsterdam – Paris – Düsseldorf – Milan

Around 1960, a radical re-evaluation of the traditional definition of an art work took place. Even today, after more than 50 years, it is hard to define or give a name to this re-evaluation. Instead of resulting in an artistic style, it fundamentally called into question the whole basis of artistic production, reception and presentation. This 'dethroning' of the traditional work of art was a project worked on by artists in different locations in Europe and America, sometimes with no knowledge of each other and with very different motivations. From this, one sees that it is questionable to take a number of different artists with different ways of working and different cultural backgrounds who were operating at a certain point in time and attach to them a concept of art and a traditional concept of the 'work of art', of the kind associated with names like da Vinci, Poussin, Dürer and Rembrandt (the great art names of Italy, France, Germany and the Netherlands, the four geographical centres of the European ZERO movement).

Speaking of Rembrandt: while delivering a speech at the opening of a Manzoni exhibition in 1969 Henk Peeters, a member of the Dutch Nul group, played a joke that perfectly summed up the issues at stake. In his introduction, he explained to the audience that he stood before them as a work of art, having officially become a work of art after Pierre Manzoni signed him in 1961. The signature had washed off over the years and was no longer visible, but at least he had the advantage of being able to speak about his existence as a work of art – unlike the figures in Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, for instance.⁷

This wide-reaching rejection of the fundamental concept of a work of art meant that the European ZERO artists had to discover a new authenticity, identity and originality. This new authenticity must not deny their cultural origins, but neither should it allow their works of art to be lumped together with traditional cultural production.⁸ What might be seen as the cessation of critical *engagement* with tradition in fact marked a fundamental *new relationship* to tradition, of an entirely new nature: by 1960, art was not pulling against tradition. In a previous age, Duchamp's bottle rack and urinal only functioned because they accepted the museum as the location: that is, they seek friction with the traditional context of art. Rather than seeking confrontation, however, these artists of the 1960s are interested in laying down new

Opening of the exhibition 'ZERO: schilders gekozen door de galerie', Galerie Ad Libitum, Antwerp, 1962

In the photo: Almir Mavignier, Heinz Mack, Günther Uecker, Henk Peeters and Truus Peeters, among others



principles, without making any compromises with the past. This was a global change of direction – with cultural variations.

This self-emancipation from tradition – this parting of the ways with traditional culture – was first and foremost a global phenomenon. This breaking out of the art establishment, this mass migration out of the petrified geography of traditional art institutions was often manifested in a very concrete way by artists departing from studios to seek other venues: scrap yards, flea markets and rubbish tips become the places to look for inspiration and to acquire materials (Arman, César, Tinguely, Armando and Henderikse), natural processes are embraced (Klein, Peeters) and artists go on rambles through the bathroom and cosmetics departments of the prosperous consumer world (Raysse). Some artists embark on ‘work in the field’ (Beuys 1956/57), artists found their own presentation and discussion forums (the *ZERO* magazine run by Mack and Piene and the *Azimat/Azimuth* gallery and magazine run by Castellani and Manzoni, 1959); a 7200-m-long line is temporarily buried, a *Socle du monde* (a pedestal for the world, Manzoni, 1960) is set up, a *Sahara Project* with light reliefs and light cubes in the desert is conceived (Mack, 1958), and a ‘Zero festival’ is celebrated on the Rheinwiesen in Düsseldorf (Mack, Piene, Uecker, 1961). A 1-km-long line was laid out in the Hochrhön (Franz Erhard Walther, 1964), and the first sketched Land Art project by Walter De Maria appeared in the same year. Günther Uecker, another prominent exponent of Land Art, stated the Land Art case in 1959:

A museum to house our concrete ideas of a new reality is unnecessary because these ideas can stand for themselves as new living spaces. There is no need to hang prospectuses of a more beautiful world on cave walls. What we really need to do is to realize these ideas and to make them habitable. We should get out of our buildings and transform our environment; we should transform ourselves and learn how to exist in a state of homelessness. Art exists where intellectual information is *historical*, where the intellectual information begins to become distanced from us. As long as things exist within current discourse, no art consciousness is attached to them; instead, people experience intellectual freedom as they take part in the discourse.⁹



This change of direction around 1960 is also revealed by the fundamentally new way in which artistic subjectivity is seen during this period. The shared focus of all the very varied artistic approaches is the ‘new authenticity’ issue. Some artists look back to their own countries’ previous art epochs that had been left behind as the middle class developed; one might say that they were driven by a yearning for a primal originality that they could no longer find in expressions of culture in their own time. Unlike Picasso and his contemporaries, who naively incorporated the stylistic features of African statues into their own work, post-1945 artists are driven by the question: Where can we find authenticity? They no longer look for authenticity in fleeting references to foreign cultures. Their reflections are of a dual nature; they are searching both for originality within themselves and for originality in the history of their own cultures.

Nul

In retrospect, how does the Dutch Nul group fit into this overview? Certain characteristics of their work suggest a conceptual link to the rational, practical principles of De Stijl and, further back in history, to Dutch genre painting of the seventeenth century: reducing the colours to the point of monochrome, concentrating on black-and-white, repetition, seriality, materials that are utilized in a very direct way and also have a very direct impact, minimizing of interventions, provocation and a radical search for a new relationship between art and reality. Armando represents the dark, sometimes ‘brutal’-seeming side of the Nul group circa 1960; his predominantly black pictures with barbed wire, bolts, car tyres, oil, and so forth look aggressive. Henderikse – the player, clown and anarchist of the group, impressed by Marcel Duchamp and the conception of the ‘readymade’ – was closest to the spirit

of the French Nouveaux Réalistes and their material assemblages. His creed: 'I appropriate simple items from everyday life and thereby elevate them to the status of art. They will lead a continued existence, with my name attached to them.' Schoonhoven could be described as the purist of the group, but his work also had a considerable sensual aura – particularly his plastic reliefs, whose sensual properties can only be vaguely sensed in a graphic medium. Henk Peeters is the group's experimenter and theoretician, with the result that the contents of his portfolio *Niet* (Not) looks like a visual compendium of the techniques used by ZERO artists all over the world to banish from the picture the individual expression and the individual outpourings that dominated Informal Art: fire, water, movement and playing with the material of the picture background.¹⁰

Azimut/Azimuth

I would like to put forward the theory that works by the Italian artists of the Azimut/Azimuth circle are fundamentally different from those of other artists belonging to the international ZERO movement in Germany, France and the Netherlands because of a qualitatively different, dialectic connection with a classical ideal of beauty. Italy, more than any other country, has never been able to 'shake off' the classicism of Renaissance philosophy and aesthetics. A classical concept of dimensions, proportions and harmony is an integral part of Italian culture – to rebel against it effectively, the artists would have to become outright barbarians. And Milan, where Castellani, Dadamaino, Fontana and Manzoni worked circa 1960, is also the Italian city where classicism has lived on most strongly.

This classical influence means that, while this in no way implies a judgement on the quality of individual works of art, Italian artists, even when they are *radical*, are never *savage*. When Günther Uecker drives his nails into pictures and objects, the result is different from the elegantly nail-studded pictures by Castellani, with fabric stretched over them. The concept of beauty articulated in the work of these Italian artists is only seen within art objects; it is expressed in the artistic impulse, in the structure and rhythm, in the harmonious balance of the whole and its parts. This characterization is palpably borne out by the severe and confident elegance of Fontana's neon ambient works of art and Manzoni's white *Achromes* and the way Castellani's *Superficie* rhythmically extends into space and time. Even Fontana's destructive gestures are not affective acts. They cause viewers to ask themselves: How can someone create so much beauty by the act of stabbing? It is as if we were standing around a murderer and his victim, struck down and lying on the ground, and, instead of being outraged by the despicable act, we were admiring the beauty of the murdered object.

On the other hand, the move away from the classical concept of a work of art circa 1960 and the search for authenticity is revealed particularly clearly in Italy by the fundamentally new status accorded to artistic subjectivity. Fontana's cut canvases and holes are radically subjective gestures – not in the sense of informal or biographical subjectivity, but in the sense of objectivised subjectivity – one could say emotionless subjectivity. Works by Piero Manzoni such as *Merda d'artista* (Artist's Shit) and *Fiato d'artista* (Artist's Breath), which are about individuality, about Manzoni as a 'subject', provide a counterbalance to his *Achromes*.¹⁰

Nouveaux Réalistes/Yves Klein

While one can arguably generalize about the works of the Italian ZERO artists and their work, no such generalization can be applied to the French exponents of the ZERO movement. Quite the reverse, in fact: the major characteristic of 'ZERO und Paris 1960' (in Esslingen 1997) is the heterogeneity of the positions adopted by Klein and the 'Nouveaux Réalistes'. On the one hand, there are Yves Klein's spiritual 'uplifts' into the 'void' (for him, a quasi-magical concept), his presentations of the 'immaterial' (which, however, can only be symbolized by the material – a contradiction that goes to the heart of modernism). On the other hand, there are the art works and objects based on heaps of scrap metal and assemblages of everyday objects, with



Christian
Megert and
Lucio Fontana
in Megert's
studio, Bern,
1964

their self-referential irony and extraordinary enthusiasm for 'accumulation' of real objects by the Nouveaux Réalistes – the term under which Pierre Restany tried to sum up many heterogeneous and ultimately irreconcilable artistic philosophies. Perhaps it was precisely their irreconcilable differences that created the mutual interchange of inspiration between the close friends Klein, Tinguely and Arman.

Yves Klein is still the artist who most clearly revisits his own cultural influences as a painter in order to discover a new originality. The painterly delicacy of the surfaces of his monochrome pictures (his *Monogold*, *Monopink* and *Relief planétaire*) are entirely in the spirit of classical French painting – the painterly elegance, sensibility and intellectualism that has such a peculiarly high value in the French tradition. In 1958, when Yves Klein contributed a text to the German magazine *ZERO* Vol 1 (edited by Mack and Piene) in which he stated his position – 'Meine Stellung im Kampf zwischen Linie und Farbe' ('My Position in the Battle Between Line and Colour') – he was entering into a heated and passionate discussion that first originated in the Paris Academy of Art in the second half of the seventeenth century and has gone down in the history of French art as the 'battle between Poussainistes and Rubenistes': the conflict between drawing and colour, the battle raging around the question of whether the 'dessin intellectuelle ou théorique' (Le Brun) was of more importance – that is, the intellectually determined delineation of the line, or the 'couleur'. This conflict's relevance to the work of Aubertin, César, Deschamps or Morellet would provide enough subject matter for a whole in-depth study. Simply, however, the pictures and objects of the French are aestheticized to a high degree, even when they are created using 'non-artistic' materials such as old cars put through the crusher for scrap brought into an art context. Even when the production process involves greasy overalls and dirty hands, the end result and the attitude it articulates are still very much in the tradition of French surrealism and its philosophy of discovering an aesthetic and poetry in the everyday and banal and in the repressed.

Jean Tinguely,
Yves Klein,
Iris Clert,
Werner Ruhnau,
Bro and Jesus
Rapael Soto,
at Galerie Iris
Clert, Paris,
1959

Zero

Heinz Mack described the legacy of the early phase of the Zero movement (circa 1960) in Germany in these words:

What remains is the memory of an adventurous, exciting time. Not only were we seeking a new beginning for art – we passionately desired a truly existential and essential dimension in art. The drama of Western art history and the drama of a post-war era marked by death and destruction in which a materialistic consumer society was beginning to establish itself was the background to our dreams and yearnings. In fact, we believed that art only has a meaning when it is identical with our lives, and we believed to the last that art can create a better world. We did not believe that *la condition humaine* would give way to a cosmic, immaterial dimension, and the quasi-religious properties evoked by Yves Klein and, subsequently, Joseph Beuys, seemed to us to be foreign to the nature of art. The purity of the colours, the purity of the light, the beauty of its spectrum and the beauty of purposeless movement in open spaces, pure feelings – they fulfilled our daydreams. The vibration on the retina of our eyes was in time with the rhythm of our hearts and the silence of our thoughts.¹²

In 1965, Otto Piene wrote the following on 'Position Zero' after the end of the war:

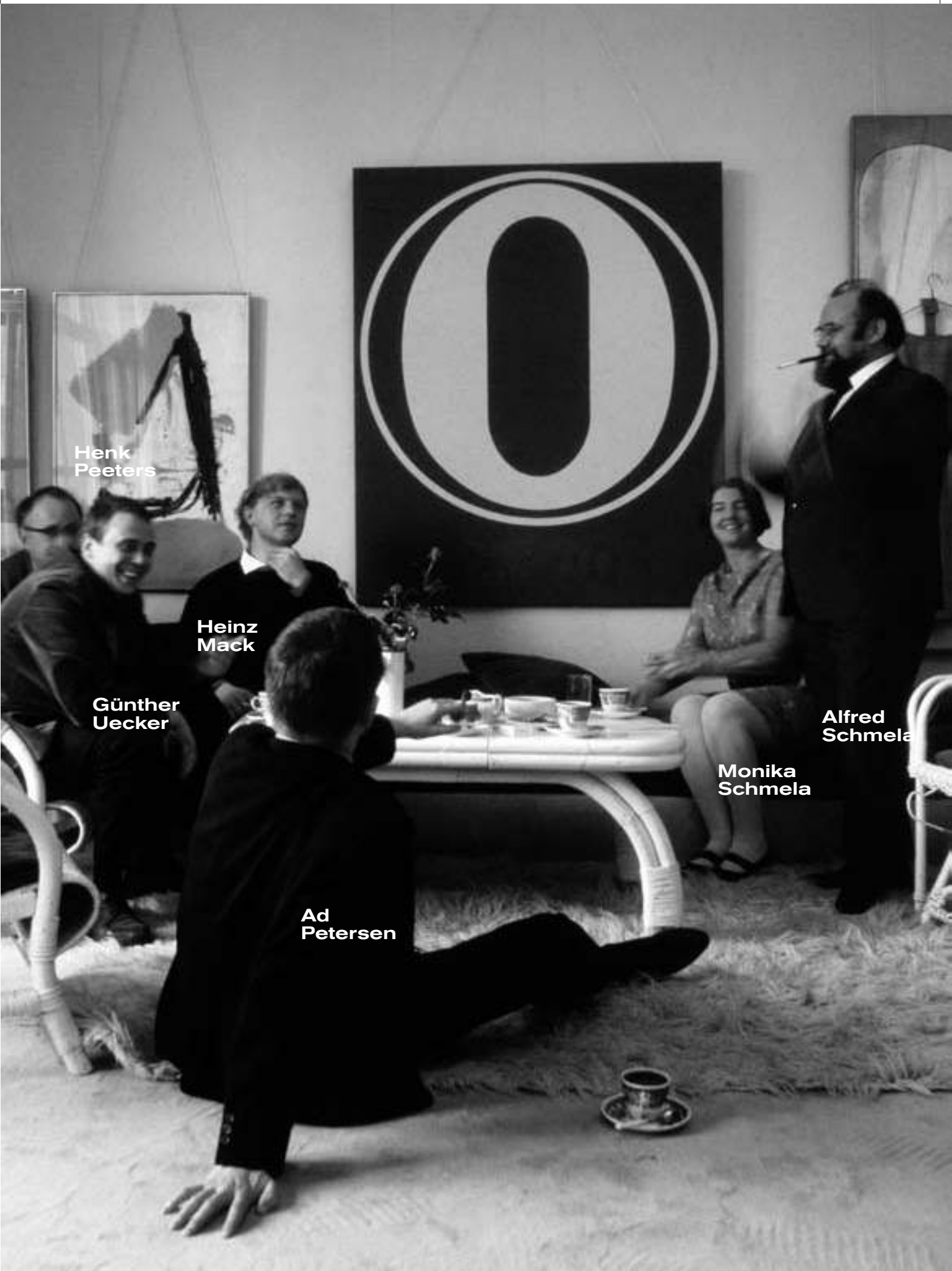
The post-war years taught us that we had to concentrate on values. We were raised in the classical German tradition, and looked on angrily as Germany was 'de-intellectualised' (*Entgeistung*, a monstrous word for a monster). We rejected the sentimental, pessimistic 'humanism' that dominated literature and visual art in the 1950s, when misery was the fashion. We felt contempt for the thin-blooded, melancholy aestheticism of the surviving 'middle generation' artists. . . . We chafed against them

as soon as their existential experience and their way of expressing it became an established fashion, a convenient intellectual convention.¹³

Zero in Germany signalled the beginning of a new concept of art. Zero was a proclamation of 'We live. We are for everything' and the countdown to another concept of artistic production, freed from all conventions. The keywords and verbal integratives of Zero were: trans-European communication, collaboration between artistic individuals or 'teamwork' between artist friends, works of art for spaces, places, cities, for the monochrome expanse of the Sahara and the deep blue of the sky, the achievement of a new, substantial unity of nature, human beings and technology in the medium of poetic imagination, experience and aesthetic information, light and movement, seriality and system, reflection and realization, visionary expansion and pure emotion as the new reality. A qualitatively new, politically motivated 'worldliness' of the works of art was the aim. It is the infectious spirit of a new beginning, the bold revolt against a calcified art establishment and, above all, the mixing of artistic media – light, movement, pictures, drawings, objects, space-related environments, collaborative works of art, magazines, demonstrations, happenings, films – that make Zero a phenomenon that is of more than historical interest, even (or especially) from a contemporary perspective. A look at Zero shows that the artists' works, campaigns, texts and manifestos express a euphoria, an enthusiasm to contribute through a new art to the creation of a 'new' world and a 'new' sensitive, sensible, aesthetically competent humanity, who would, of themselves and thanks to their primal sensibility, overcome the rigid boundaries between nature, technology and art.¹⁴ In their multimedia works of art, geared to be tangibly effective in society and in the environment, the Zero artists were designing a political and social utopia, although the artists themselves were never explicitly political.¹⁵

Henk Peeters,
Günther
Uecker,
Heinz Mack,
Ad Petersen,
Monika
Schmela and
Alfred Schmela
at Alfred
Schmela's
home, with
a work by
Robert Indiana
in the back-
ground, 1961

- 1 See also: Renate Wiehager, *Die holländische Gruppe Nul 1960-1065 und heute*, (Esslingen: Villa Merkel, 1993), German/Dutch; *ZERO Italien. Azimut/Azimuth in Mailand 1959/60 Castellani, Dadamaino, Fontana, Manzoni, und italienische Künstler im Umkreis* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 1996), German/Italian; *ZERO und Paris 1960* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 1997), German/French; *Zero aus Deutschland 1957 bis 1966* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 1999), German/English.
- 2 *ZERO und Paris*, op. cit. (note 1), 27.
- 3 Piene's speech at the opening of the Lucio Fontana retrospective, Krefeld 1962, printed in: *Zero aus Deutschland*, op. cit. (note 1), 246. On the significance of Yves Klein to the early days of the movement, see *ibid.*, 28.
- 4 Quoted from: Annette Kuhn, *Zero. Eine Avantgarde der sechziger Jahre* (Berlin: Propylaen Verlag, 1991), 26.
- 5 *ZERO und Paris*, op. cit. (note 1), 26.
- 6 Henk Peeters, *Haagse Post*, 12 June 1962. Reprinted in: *ZERO und Paris*, op. cit. (note 1), 214-215.
- 7 Henk Peters, Piero Manzoni, in: *Zero Italien*, op. cit. (note 1), 185.
- 8 See: Bazon Brock, 'Null und Nichtig? Identität? Erfahrung', in: *Zero – Internationale Künstler-Avantgarde der 50er/60er Jahre* (Düsseldorf: Museum Kunstpalast/Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 40 ff.
- 9 Günther Uecker, 'Begeben wir uns aus unseren Gehäusen' (1959), first published in the exhibition catalogue *Zero. Mack - Piene - Uecker* (Hannover: Kestner-Gesellschaft, 1965), 163; quoted here from: Günther Uecker, *Schriften*, edited by Stephan von Wiese (St Gallen: Erker, 1979), 102.
- 10 K. Schippers and Henk Peeters, *Niet* (Rotterdam: Galerie Bébert, 1986).
- 11 See also: Marco Meneguzzo, 'Tri con Zero', in: Marco Meneguzzo and Stephan von Wiese, *Zero 1958-1968 Tra Germania e Italia* (Sienna: Palazzo delle Papesse, 2004), 39.
- 12 *ZERO und Paris*, op. cit. (note 1), 28.
- 13 Otto Piene, 'Position Zero', original English version: 1965; German translation by the artist: 1992, in: *Zero. Eine europäische Avantgarde* (Essen: Galerie Neher, et al., 1992), 7 ff.
- 14 See also: Stephan von Wiese, 'The Degree Zero in Art', in: Meneguzzo and Von Wiese, op. cit. (note 11), 23 ff.
- 15 For a detailed analysis of the interactions of the different groups across Europe circa 1960, see Valerie L. Hillings, 'Die Geografie der Zusammenarbeit. Zero, Nouvelle Tendance und das Gruppenphänomen der Nachkriegszeit', in: *Zero*, op. cit. (note 8), 76-85. Also: Valerie L. Hillings, 'Pure Possibilities for a new beginning', and Catherine Millet, 'A Paradoxian Utopia', in the exhibition catalogue of Museum Kunst Palast (Düsseldorf, 2006); Mattijs Visser (ed.), *ZERO in NY*, Gallery Sperone Westwater, New York, in collaboration with the ZERO Foundation (Düsseldorf, 2008), 199 and 201 ff respectively.



Henk Peeters

Heinz Mack

Günther Uecker

Alfred Schmela

Monika Schmela

Ad Petersen



Yves Klein with his 'invisible' work at the exhibition 'Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision', Hesselhuis, Antwerp, 1959

Opening of the exhibition 'ZERO – Edition, Exposition, Demonstration', Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf, 1961

Opening of the exhibition 'Yves Klein, Propositions monochromes', Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, 1956

Encounters and Friendships between Artists

Today, we see ZERO as the first internationally visible art movement of the European post-war years – after expressionism and Bauhaus – because of the artists' own journeys, letters, collaborations, texts, exhibitions, publications, performances and lectures. Only later did gallerists, museum directors and art critics have an influence. For the purposes of this publication, the following chronology of major encounters and exhibitions held by the European ZERO artists between 1956 and 1966 is restricted to Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium and to the intellectual exchange between the artists.¹⁶

1956–1958

1956: Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Hans Salentin travel to Paris together and meet Yves Klein: 'Yves Klein was the end of all painting for us. After meeting him, we did not see any way we could continue to paint' stated Heinz Mack.¹⁷

January 1957. Lucio Fontana and Piero Manzoni visit Yves Klein's first solo exhibition 'Proposte monochrome, epoca blu' ('monochrome proposals, blue epoch') in the Apollinaire gallery in Milan (2-12 January). Fontana acquires one of his pictures. In the same year, Norbert Kricke exchanges work with Yves, and a little later Mack acquires his first picture by Klein. Kricke secures a first German solo exhibition for Klein in the Schmela gallery, and the commission to design the Gelsenkirchener Theater in collaboration with Tinguely, a project initiated by Kricke and Werner Ruhnau. In the years following 1957, it was primarily the exhibitions at Alfred Schmela's gallery in Düsseldorf that showcased ZERO as an interconnected international community. In the years between 1957 and 1966, Schmela (at the time considered a major gallerist of the same standing as Leo Castelli and Sidney Janis) regularly presented solo exhibitions of artwork by many prominent international exponents of ZERO. He brought the artists their first (admittedly modest) commercial successes and brought their exhibitions to an audience. Inspired by his pioneering work, the galleries Ad Libitum in Antwerp, Galerie A in Arnhem and studio f in Ulm, and the galleries of Hans-Jürgen Müller, Behr and Gänsheide in Stuttgart began holding regular exhibitions of work by artists from the ZERO scene from 1960 onwards.

In 1961, the ZERO critical and intellectual discussion relocated to Frankfurt with the activities of Rochus Kowallek (the Galerie dato from April, 1961 to April, 1962 and the

Galerie d from 1962 to 1965). This operation was based on the example and policy of Schmela in Düsseldorf.

In April 1958, Piero Manzoni takes part in exhibitions in Rotterdam (at the Rotterdam Kunstkring) and The Hague (at the De Posthoorn gallery), where he becomes acquainted with Henk Peeters, who later brings him into contact with the Dutch Nul artists. In retrospect, Heinz Mack has described Manzoni as the 'foreign minister or ambassador of the art world' in Europe circa 1960, fascinated by both real and imaginary cross-border incursions. 'Manzoni was probably the best-informed artist in London, Paris, Düsseldorf and Milan where it came to artistic meetings and cross-fertilizations . . .', Mack remembers.¹⁸ In November 1958, the Belgian painter Jef Verheyen travels to Milan to invite Fontana and Manzoni to take part in organizing a 'monochrome painting' exhibition.¹⁹

1959–1960

March 1959. The utopian spirit of the early days of the exchange of artistic ideas between Düsseldorf, Paris, Amsterdam and Milan can be seen in the recalled conversations between Mack, Piene and Yves Klein during a legendary 1959 road journey from Düsseldorf to Antwerp to attend the opening of the Hesselhuis exhibition 'Vision in Motion'.²⁰ According to Otto Piene in 1960, the artists' conversations revolved around visionary projects for non-art spaces.

The plan was to erect 'sculptures' in the public spaces of large cities that consisted of air, water, ice and fire and were constantly changing. They could also provide a form of climate control, making them a new and different form of 'memorial'. . . . We explored a plan to organize an exhibition of large objects with some elements created out of the landscape itself in the Antarctic: the whole operation would take place from the air, principally an exhibition without visitors, and the expansive spaces, limitless possibilities for design and freedom from pre-existing architecture would create the ideal situation.²¹

According to Mack:

The conversation was non-stop. It was inspired and inspiring to a high degree, eventually reaching hallucinatory heights and culminating in a creative fever. The unspoken, central question was: 'how and where can one drive back the boundaries of art?' Or, 'What ideas will shape the future?'²²

The fantasy of a 'ZERO-Park' was inspired by Yves Klein's plans for fire gardens criss-crossed by water fountains. The mobility and immateriality of such artistic designs for urban space and open landscape spaces was complemented by the 'ZERO travelling circus' and 'ZERO museum' ideas, which would have involved visitors sensually, physically and intellectually with swimming pools, light and dark spaces, light projections, etcetera.²³ The 'ZERO travelling circus' was intended to provide a counterbalance to the museum, which is a stationary experiential space, in the form of a 'nomadic' and frequently renewed collection of artistic projects that travels and overcomes cultural and national boundaries.

A carriage containing a ZERO exhibition (and, in particular, kinetic artworks) was to be attached to a different train every so often. The exterior of the carriage was to be spectacularly painted or covered with mirrors so that the landscape and the cities the train passed through would be dramatically reflected.²⁴

21 March 1959. The exhibition 'Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision' opens in Antwerp, Hessenhuis. It could be seen as a European 'proto-ZERO exhibition'.²⁵ The exhibition is based on an idea by Jef Verheyen, who included Piero Manzoni and Lucio Fontana in the preparatory work. However, none of these three artists ultimately take part. Participants include the Paris Mouvement artists Bury, Soto, Tinguely and Klein, the German artists Mack, Piene, Uecker and Diter Rot, Spoerri, the Belgian artists Breer and van Hoeydonck and the Italian artists Mari and Munari. Klein travels from Düsseldorf to Antwerp by car with Mack and Piene, and the concept for a 'school of sensibilities' is developed. 'Vision in Motion' is the first communal presentation of different European avant-garde trends (optical art, Kinetic, monochrome painting and Nouveau Réalisme).

Autumn 1959. Daniel Spoerri moves to Paris (occupying room no. 13 in the Hotel Carcassonne on the Rue Mouffetard 24) and founds the MAT production workshop (Multiplication d'Art Transformable, with a punning reference to 'material'). It is the first dedicated producer of the serial works of art later known as multiples. Agam, Albers, Arp, Bury, Christo, Duchamp, Gerstner, Rainer, Man Ray, Roth, Saint Phalle, Soto, Tinguely and Vasarély create works of art for MAT; 100 multiples of each are subsequently produced.

Jan Henderikse leaves The Hague for Düsseldorf and comes into contact with Zero and Nouveaux Réalistes artists. In 1961, he becomes a member of the Dutch Nul group.

4 December 1959. The first exhibition to feature Piero Manzoni's *Lines* takes place in the Azimut gallery at Via Clerici 2 in Milan (founded by Manzoni and Enrico Castellani). In a friendly collaboration with their 'spiritus rector' Lucio Fontana, Castellani, Manzoni and the young female artist Dadamaino organize a cycle of 12 exhibitions in quick succession, which ends with the gallery's closure in July 1960. These exhibitions feature Italian, German and French artists belonging to the international ZERO movement and the Nouvelles Tendances. Two issues of the magazine *Azimuth*, edited by Castellani and Manzoni, also appear at around this time. Milan becomes a confluence of progressive trends in Italian and European art circa 1960. The gallery and the magazine are melting pots for ideas, initiatives and discussions – making them, in the widest sense, a starting point for a kind of art that opens the way for the fundamental re-evaluation of the concept of a work of art discussed above.

4 January 1960. Piero Manzoni and Enrico Castellani invite a number of artists Manzoni had become acquainted with during his work on the 8th 'Abendausstellung' (Evening Exhibition) in Düsseldorf to exhibit in the exhibition 'La nuove concezione artistica' in the Azimut gallery. The list includes Kilian Breier, Oskar Holweck, Heinz Mack, Almir Mavignier and Yves Klein.

March 1960. Udo Kultermann, director of the Museum Schloss Morsbroich Leverkusen, opens the exhibition 'Monochrome Malerei' (Monochrome Painting), at which about 40 painters from Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Rumania, Russia, Japan and America exhibit, including a number of artists from the European ZERO scene. They meet in Leverkusen. Summer 1960. During a subsidized visit to Zagreb, Almir Mavignier becomes acquainted with a group of painters and architects, giving him contacts inside Germany. This results in the 'Nove Tendencije' exhibition in Zagreb in 1960, organized by Mavignier. This exhibition brings together Yugoslavian and German artists, plus the Parisian Groupe de Recherche d'Art visuel (GRAV) and the Italian Gruppo N. November 1960. The 2nd Festival d'Art Avant-Garde in Paris becomes a major concentration of artistic energy and a historic meeting of ZERO and the Nouveaux Réalistes group, which was officially founded in October of the same year.

Opening happening at the exhibition 'Expositie, demonstratie ZERO', Galerie A, Arnhem, 1961

Henk Peeters at the release of a balloon during 'ZERO – Edition, Exposition, Demonstration', Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf, 1961





Günther Uecker during 'ZERO Demonstration', Rheinwiesen, Düsseldorf, 1962

Heinz Mack, Günther Uecker and Otto Piene at the Carnival in Düsseldorf, 1964

'ZERO Demonstration', Rheinwiesen, Düsseldorf, 1962

1961–1962

February 1961. In the Netherlands, Armando, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters and Jan Schoonhoven found the 'Nul' group and discuss a plan for a large collaborative exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam with Mack, Piene and Uecker, the men having met in Leverkusen.

11 June 1961. Spoerri opens the week-long exhibition 'Der Koffer. Idee und Regie': Daniel Spoerri in the Lauhus gallery, Cologne. *Der Koffer* (the suitcase) had already been presented the previous evening at the private exhibition 'Der Geist der Zeit' in the apartment of architect Peter Neuffert in Cologne; this is the first communal manifestation of Nouveaux Réalistes art activity in Germany.

5 July 1961. Opening of 'ZERO - Edition Exposition Demonstration' in the Schmela gallery, Düsseldorf. In addition to the German Zero artists Mack, Piene and Uecker, artists taking part include Italian and Dutch exponents of the ZERO movement, Arman, Aubertin, Bury, Klein, Soto, Spoerri and Tinguely. Henk Peeters, a member of the Dutch Nul group, takes part in this first demonstration of ZERO in Düsseldorf and negotiates the transfer of the whole project to the Galerie A in the Dutch city of Arnhem, where the exhibition opens on 9 December 1961. Participants include Arman, Aubertin, Bury, Von Graevenitz, Holweck, Kage, Klein, Mack, Mavignier, Piene, Pohl, Rot, Salentin, Soto, Spoerri, Tinguely and Uecker. In 1961, Nam June Paik stood with Joseph Beuys in the dense crowd of people who watched the Zero demonstration in the Hunsrückenstrasse in front of the Schmela gallery with surprise and amusement, while the television cameras whirred. In 1995, Nam June Paik recalled his encounter with Piene's grid pictures and *Light Ballet* and the friendship that developed on this occasion at Schmela's gallery in 1960-1961 as one of the most important experiences of his life.²⁶ The final issue of the Zero magazine, *ZERO 3* (1961) is published to coincide with the Schmela gallery exhibition. In addition to Mack, Piene and Uecker, Fontana, Klein and Tinguely are the major contributors. The further 26 artists who contribute to the magazine are each given a single page, or at most four pages. *ZERO 3*, which contains texts in three languages, is read in Europe and America and significantly increases ZERO's international profile.²⁷

1962–1963

13 January 1962. The 'ZERO schilders gekozen door de galerie' exhibition opens at the Ad Libitum gallery in Antwerp, featuring works by Bury, Castellani, Dorazio, Fontana, Klein, Mack, Manzoni, Mavignier, Piene, Soto, Uecker and Verheyen.

18 January 1962. The 'Nieuwe tendenzen' exhibition in the Galerij OREZ, The Hague, is opened by Peter Iden and Hans Sleutelaar.

Spring 1962. Mack, Piene and Uecker organize a ZERO demonstration on the Rheinwiesen (the banks of the Rhine). This event is recorded by Gerd Winkler as part of a ZERO film entitled *0 x 0 = Kunst* ($0 \times 0 = \text{art}$) and is shown on German television on 27 June 1962 at 21.05.

9 March 1962. The 'Nul' exhibition, organized mainly by Henk Peeters, opens at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In addition to the Nul artists, it collects together the most significant artists from Germany, France and Italy.

24 March 1962. The 'Anti-peinture' exhibition in Hessenhuis, Antwerp, organized by Walter Leblanc, features works by artists including Manzoni, Morellet, Von Graevenitz and members of the groups T, N, Nul and GRAV.

5 May 1962. The major exhibition 'forum 62' in Ghent creates a dialogue between the ZERO movement, abstract expressionism and Art Informel.

9 June 1962. The Schindler gallery in Bern holds an exhibition of work by approximately 33 artists from the European ZERO scene.

6 December 1962. The 'Ponctuations et Vibrations' exhibition opens at the Ad Libitum gallery, Antwerp.

January 1963. An international gathering of the European avant-garde takes place in Paris under the title of 'Nouvelle Tendance, recherche continue'.

30 March 1963. In his Diogenes gallery in the Bleibtreustrasse Berlin, Günther Meisner opens the exhibition 'ZERO – Der neue Idealismus', featuring 45 artists from the international ZERO group.

25 May 1963. The Amstel 47 gallery in Amsterdam holds the 'Panorama van de nieuwe tendenzen' exhibition, featuring 28 artists.

9 July 1963. 'Europäische Avantgarde' exhibition at the Schwanenhalle des Römer, Frankfurt, with the subtitle: 'Monochrome. Achrome. Kinetics' (organized by Rochus Kowallek's Galerie d, which was to have a great significance to the young artists of the time). 47 European artists from the ZERO scene take part.

1 August 1963. The 'Nove tendencije 2' exhibition opens in Zagreb at the Galerija suvremene umjetnosti.

1964–1966

20 March 1964. The exhibition 'ZERO-0-NUL' is held in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, featuring Armando, Mack, Peeters, Piene, Schoonhoven and Uecker.

15 June 1964. 'ZERO' in the NVC (New Vision Centre) gallery in London, with 25 international artists taking part.

7 August 1964. 42 European ZERO artists appear in the exhibition 'mikro nul zero. mikro nieuw realisme', a touring exhibition that is displayed in the Delta gallery, Rotterdam, in Velp and in Amsterdam's Amstel 207 gallery.

30 October 1964. 'ZERO' in Pennsylvania, Institute of Contemporary Art, with a total of 30 artists taking part.

9 January 1965. The Gallery of Modern Art in Washington shows the exhibition 'ZERO: an Exhibition of European Experimental Art'.

16 January 1965. The exhibition 'aktuell 65', subtitled: 'neue tendenzen, arte programmata, anti-peinture, ZERO, null, recherche d'art visuelle, recherche continuelle' opens at Galerie aktuell in Bern.

27 March 1965. The exhibition 'Zero Avantgarde 1965' opens at the Fontana studio, Milan, featuring 29 artists representing a very wide cross section of the ZERO scene.

15 April 1965. Opening of 'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig' at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, which features Fontana, Castellani, Manzoni, Bury, Kusama, Klein, Soto, Peeters, Armando, Schoonhoven, Gruppo n and t, Haacke, Piene, Mack and Uecker.

3 July 1965. The exhibition 'Licht und Bewegung' (Light and Movement), featuring approximately 35 artists, goes on show first in Bern, then in Brussels and Baden-Baden. It is curated by Harald Szeemann.

15 April 1966. The opening of the 'Zero on Sea' exhibition on the Scheveningen pier is planned, but never takes place. It is initiated by Leo Verboon and Galerij OREZ in The Hague, with the intention of bringing together Zero, Nul and Gutai artists to complete major environment and architecture projects. The galleries display the artists' project sketches.

June 1966. 'Avantgarde Zero 1966', Galleria il Segno, Rome. An exhibition opens on 15 October in Brescia under the same title.

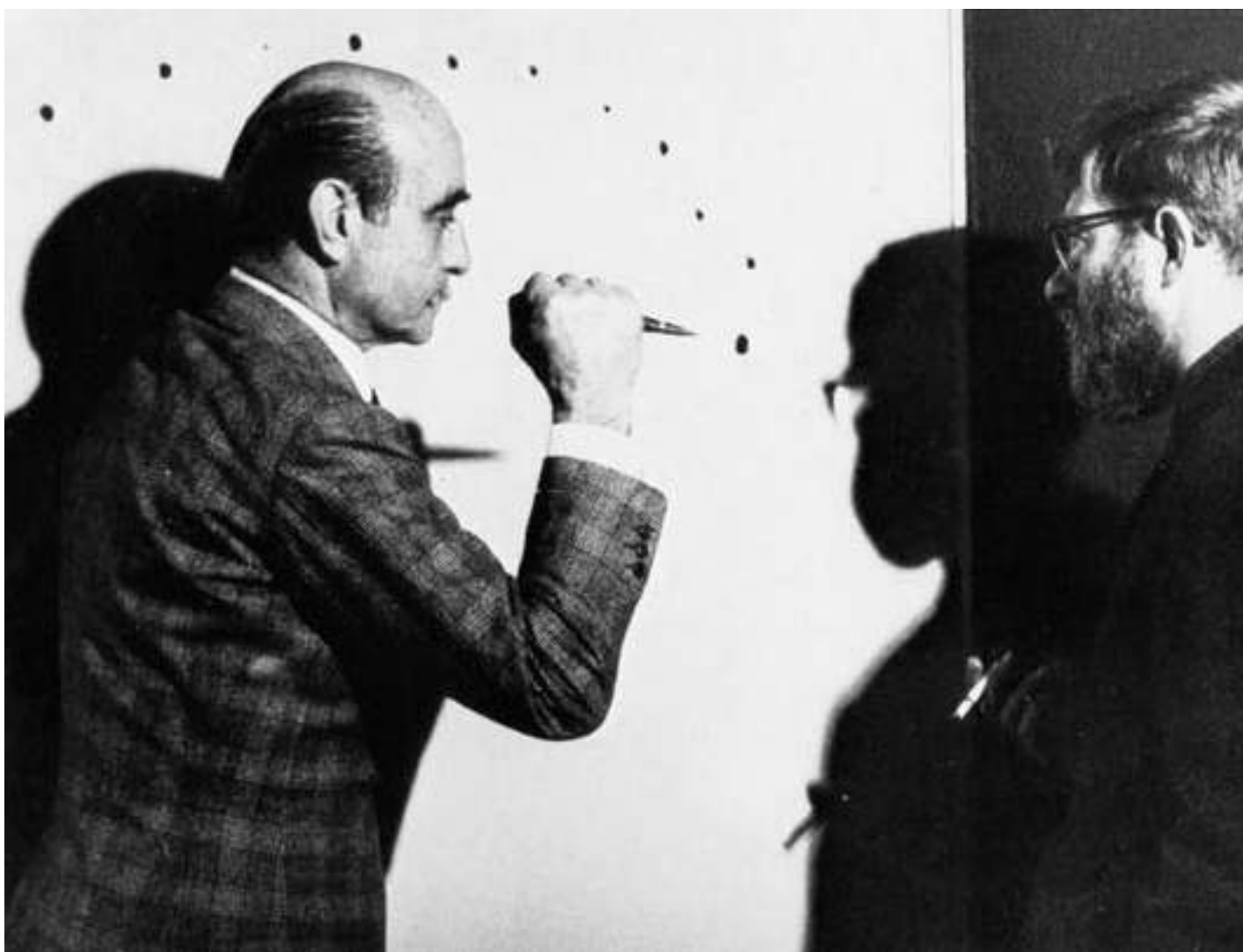
15 September 1966. The exhibition 'Kunst-LichtKunst' at the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven brings together works of art from the whole European spectrum of ZERO.

25 November 1966. The last exhibition by Mack, Piene and Uecker at der Städtische Kunstsammlung Bonn. The German Zero group is disbanded.

- 16 The chronology in the Düsseldorf catalogue on the major ZERO exhibition 2006 begins in Milan 1946, the year when the *Manifesto Bianco* by Lucio Fontana appeared. The catalogue links the early avant-gardes of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium with the developments in the Japanese Gutai group post-1950 and the exhibitions in Zagreb, Spain, etcetera. See: *Zero*, op. cit. (note 8), 258-285. See also: Annette Kuhn, 'Zero im Kontext der europäischen Avantgarden', in: *Zero*, op. cit. (note 13), 10-23. In their chronologies, Marco Meneguzzo and Alberto Biasi date the beginning of Italian-German Zero exchanges to the year 1955, when the 'Le Mouvement' exhibition opened at the Denise René gallery, Paris.
- 17 Heinz Mack, in: Kuhn, *Zero*, op. cit. (note 4), 20.
- 18 Heinz Mack, 'Das Kaleidoskop meiner Erinnerungen', in: *Zero aus Deutschland*, op. cit. (note 1), 179.
- 19 On the relationship of Jef Verheyen with Fontana, Manzoni and the Düsseldorf artists, see the magazine *ZERO Foundation* (Düsseldorf, 2010), no. 2 (2010).
- 20 See also: Heike van den Valentyn: 'Utopische, reale und lichtkinetische Räume der Zero-Zeit', *Zero*, op. cit. (note 8), 56 ff. On the role of Antwerp in the European ZERO scene, see the exhibition catalogue *Zero International Antwerp*, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunst (Antwerp, 1980), which contains a helpful illustrated 1957-1979 chronology.
- 21 Otto Piene, 'Vergangenes – Gegenwärtiges – Zukünftiges', in: *Das Einfache das Schwer zu machen ist* (Hannover: Galerie Seide, 1960), reprinted in: Otto Piene, *Texte* (Munich: Galerie Nota, 1961), 25 f. In his text 'Zero - Coda und Praeludium', written in 1998, Piene describes 'Theater im Himmel', 'ZERO-Park' and 'Wanderzirkus ZERO' as seeds of an authentic Zero poeology.
- 22 Heinz Mack, in a letter to the author dated 10 November 1999.
- 23 Otto Piene, 'Vergangenes – Gegenwärtiges – Zukünftiges', op. cit. (note 21), 27.
- 24 Heinz Mack, in a letter to the author dated 10 November 1999.
- 25 For more details, see: Gerhard Storck, 'ZERO neunzehnhundertneunundfünfzig' in: *ZERO Raum*, catalogue of the Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf 1973 (no page given).
- 26 Renate Wiehager, exhibition catalogue *30 Jahre (op) art galerie esslingen/Galerie Hans Mayer Düsseldorf* (Esslingen: Villa Merkel, 1995), 33.
- 27 The *ZERO* issues 1, 2 and 3 were reissued (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press/Cologne: DuMont Verlag, 1973). See also: *Zero*, op. cit. (note 8) and Visser, *ZERO in NY*, op. cit. (note 15).

'Zero ist gut für Dich', the last ZERO happening, a demonstration at the Rolandseck train station, Remagen, 1966

Lucio Fontana stabs holes into a painting by Jef Verheyen, 1962



Tijs Visser

Zero and/ or OREZ

Cover and pages from publication accompanying the exhibition 'ZERO', Rotterdamse Kunstkring, Rotterdam, 1959



The existence of a Dutch Zero group is shrouded in some initial confusion. Its founding 'coincides' with a visit to Rotterdam by Piero Manzoni. His arrival on 31 July 1958, for his first exhibition in the Netherlands, at Rotterdam's Groot Handelsgebouw art centre, turns into a disappointment: Kees de Voogd, the art centre's coordinator, decides Manzoni's new white paintings are not good enough to be exhibited and tells Manzoni to reimburse the transport costs and find himself another exhibition space.¹

After wandering around Rotterdam Manzoni ends up at the exhibition space of the Rotterdamse Kunstkring. Artist Gust Romijn is there and urges him to speak to the organizer in charge, Hans Sonnenberg. That same evening, Sonnenberg, Jan Schoonhoven, Gust Romijn and his wife Nelleke meet to discuss the idea of setting up an internationally oriented group. On Sunday 17 August, at Nelleke Romijn's suggestion, this group is christened Zero.

A month after Manzoni's first visit to Rotterdam, Sonnenberg organizes an exhibition of the works the artist left behind, 17 in all, at the Rotterdamse Kunstkring. Illness prevents Manzoni from attending the opening, and the results are disappointing. Hoping to sell the works, Sonnenberg contacts Frits Becht, owner of the gallery De Posthoorn in



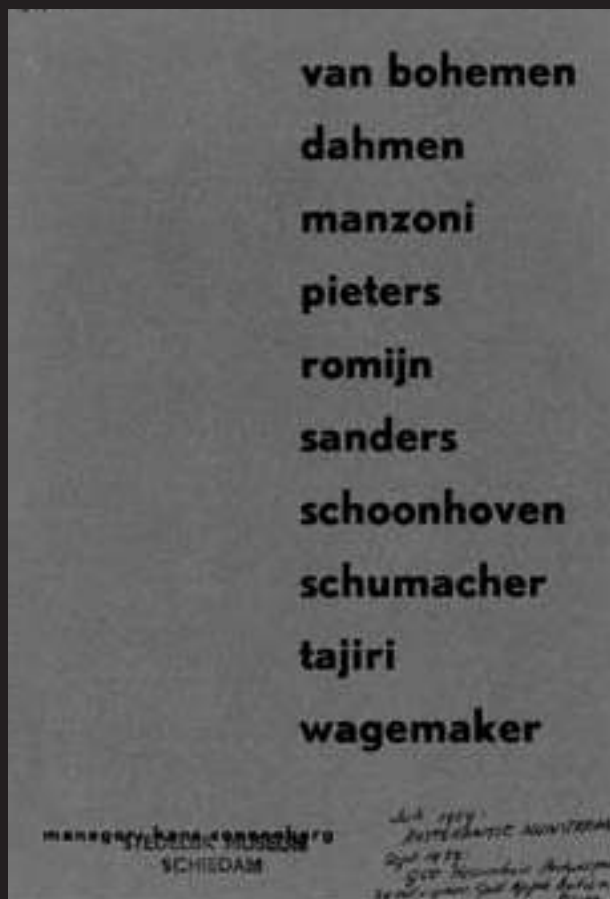


Poster Internationale
Galerij OREZ

The Hague, to set up a follow-up exhibition, but here too few sales are made. From Italy, however, where news has reached him of his purported success in the Netherlands, Manzoni insists he is determined to join the Zero group founded by Sonnenberg and to take part in the planned Zero exhibitions, starting on 1 July 1959 at the Rotterdamse Kunstkring, with subsequent openings at the Hessenhuis in Antwerp and the Galleria Appia Antica in Rome, where Manzoni himself exhibited several months earlier.

Shortly after the opening in Rotterdam, however, Sonnenberg receives an unsettling letter from the Düsseldorf-based Zero artists Heinz Mack and Otto Piene. They write that Manzoni has told them Sonnenberg has plans for further Zero activities.² In no uncertain terms, Mack and Piene state that Sonnenberg has been badly informed and call upon him, if he does not wish to be accused of plagiarism, to come up with another name for the group, since they have been working under the name Zero since 1958.

On 31 March 1960 Manzoni writes Sonnenberg that he has met a group of artists in Germany who have formed a group centred on a *ZERO* magazine. He feels very drawn to their ideas, he writes, because their theories are his: 'I am by nature obliged to collaborate.' Sonnenberg, however, manages to persuade Manzoni to remain a member of his group, which now goes by the name suggested by Jan Schoonhoven: OREZ (ZERO spelled backwards).³



- 1 Annotation, Hans Sonnenberg, *Revue integration*, no. 13/14, October 1972, Düsseldorf, ZERO Foundation archives.
- 2 Letter from Heinz Mack to Hans Sonnenberg, 27 July 1959, Düsseldorf, ZERO Foundation, Heinz Mack archive.
- 3 Jan Schoonhoven, annotation, July 1959, Düsseldorf, ZERO Foundation, Nanda Vigo archive.

Atsuo Yamamoto

**ZERO /
Gutai /
ZERO**

**Jiro Yoshihara
in his studio,
Ashiya, 1970**

**Saburo
Murakami
leaps through
panels with
paper stretched
over them,
second Gutai
exhibition,
Ohara Kaikan,
Tokyo, 1956**



The concept of 'zero' seems to exert an extraordinary fascination over artists. Many art movements founded in different epochs and nations have used it in their names.¹ The German Zero group and the Dutch group Nul are typical examples of this – and, in fact, both are indirectly connected with a further group under the name ZERO.

The Japanese ZERO group was active for only four years, between 1952 and 1955. When the European ZERO and Nul groups came into being, one shortly after the other, the Japanese movement had already changed its approach and moved over to another group that had formed around Jiro Yoshihara, an artist from Osaka. Apart from the motto that gave the group its name – 'The creativity of art must unfold from the point of absolute emptiness, of zero' – we really know very little. The group was founded in 1952, and its sole collaborative exhibition took place in 1954 in the shop windows of the Sogou Department Store in Osaka. There is also a lack of information concerning the approximately 15 members of the group; we only know that the core group consisted of Kazuo Shiraga, Sanburo Murakami, Akira Kana-yama, Atsuko Tanaka and Fujiko Shiraga (the wife of Kazuo Shiraga).²

Gutai was founded in 1954, but about half of the 17 founding members left the group only a short time afterwards. Thrown into a crisis that threatened its continued existence, the Gutai group survived by headhunting the prominent members of the ZERO group whose names are mentioned above. This hastened the break-up of the ZERO group, and caused Gutai to undergo a transformation. Aside from Shozo Shimamoto's 'hole' works, which are often compared to the work of Lucio Fontana, the group's artistic style had previously been loosely affiliated to the compositional and abstract representation that was popular at the time. The change that had taken place became evident at the 'Experimental Open-Air Exhibition "Modern Art challenges the high summer sun"' (July 1955), which was held shortly after Gutai absorbed the ZERO group.³

The association of ZERO with the emptiness that brings forth abundance inevitably reminds one of Eastern philosophy as represented in Zen. On this subject, however, we Japanese are generally wary of saying too much. For one thing, the current Westernized (or rather Americanized) Japanese society tends to place the emphasis on reality, and many people with a deep understanding of Zen abhor oversimplified verbalizations due to a respect for the inexpressible.

Jiro Yoshihara, Gutai's leader, was certainly a man who was wary of hasty verbalizations. It is true that his library provides no particular evidence of an interest in Eastern thought; in fact, Yoshihara, who tended towards modernism, collected a volume of Western art literature that was unusual for his day and age and for his financial means. However, when one looks at his work, certain aspects remind one of a priest. The Yoshihara family attended the Zen Buddhist Kaisei temple in Nishinomiya, a house of the Rinzaï community where a famous priest named Nantenbo once lived.⁴ There are many amazing stories about this priest, and some incredibly impressive calligraphy and ink paintings by him are preserved in the temple. It is said that in the case of some works of his that were painted with a huge brush, the ink stuck to the surface and the priest applied his foot to the brush in order to be able to complete the calligraphy. Nantenbo could be said to be a pioneer of Action Painting.

When Yoshihara saw Nantenbo's calligraphies for the first time in April 1952, the audacious sprays of ink intrigued him. 'This simple ink blot has the same magic exuded by the beautiful flow of Klein's ink and the blots of Pollock's enamels.'⁵ After the founding of the Gutai group, he and other members of the group visited the Kaisei temple, where they discussed the problem of temporality in spatial art. Nantenbo provided substance for this discussion; his works express the significance of materiality (*gutai* in Japanese) and action.

Yoshihara's Informal works of art can be seen as an attempt to take the problem of temporality from Eastern painting and to render it in picture form. He was the kind of artist who would not leave his work alone until every spray of ink expressed his intentions. Perhaps due to the generation



gap, his deconstruction of the conditions under which a work of art is realized is not as successful as that of other members of the group. After coming into contact with central Art Informel figure Michel Tapié in 1957, the Gutai movement suddenly turned away from a focus on action to address the picture itself. As other members of the group increasingly prioritized the picture, Yoshihara, who was plagued by major internal contradictions, was brought to a low point. This was not helped by the fact that despite his status as the leader of the group his own works of art were far from the best being produced within the group at the time.

By the time he presented his *Hard Edge Circle* to the public at the 16th Gutai art exhibition (October 1965), Yoshihara had finally broken free. Ironically, the temporality immanent in the picture was ultimately overcome by the one member of the group who had previously appeared unable to escape from this theme, and he achieved the feat by finding a way to hide the picture's temporality. Viewed superficially, the circular form references Zen Buddhism. In reality, however, *Circle* is the result of the artist's escape from the influence of Eastern painting. What led to this dramatic transformation was, in fact, the artist's discovery of artists and works of the international ZERO movement: the second international Nul exhibition, which was organized by Henk Peeters, took place in April of that year, and he asked to exhibit work from Gutai's early years, the mid-1950s. Jiro Yoshihara and his son Michio, who had also been a member of Gutai since the beginning, went to Amsterdam [with a briefcase full of concepts, sketches and instructions to reconstruct these works of art – eds.]. Jiro Yoshihara had shipped, at his own expense, a case containing recent paintings by air, just in case Henk Peeters would be interested to present these. But when the boxes were opened at the Stedelijk Museum, the ZERO artists present couldn't believe their eyes; what they were seeing was typical Informal painting.

The ZERO/Nul artists attracted attention with their rejection of corporeality and striking subjectivity, which could be said to be of an expressionist nature. This group painted pictures with patterned surfaces and were interested in light and movement, believing that the way forward for art lay in dethroning Art Informel. They had a high opinion of Gutai, seeing them as their own predecessors. Unsurprisingly, this new work was not exhibited, and Yoshihara himself never mentioned this incident.⁶

During this period, Yoshihara certainly suffered from working in the wrong age; after his return, the style of his own pictures changed. Gutai acquired a number of new members and the situation changed in crucial ways, and just as in Europe, most of the younger members developed more in the direction of optical art. Within Japan, the early Gutai group did not have a monopoly on combining expression and technology: at the 1970 World Exhibition in Osaka, the convergence of works of art in this spirit created a whole large-scale artistic environment. Technology was increasingly becoming a tool used by artists to give their plans space to unfold, and the works thus produced tended to smooth over the divide between idea and experiential reality and, in some cases, to become mere 'tricks'. One could perhaps say that Gutai's late work is not so much indirectly influenced by ZERO as a 'mistranslation' of it.

To return to Nantenbo: it is possible that Yoshihara applied Zen Buddhist methods to the early incarnation of the Gutai group, methods that contrasted with the visual methods he explored in his own work. Above all, he fundamentally rejected verbal thinking. Yoshihara emphatically turned away from the introduction of literary elements into art – entitling his own work, as a matter of principle, *Work* and *Untitled*. When young artists asked him to provide criticism, his comments were usually restricted to 'Hm' and 'Nonsense', or, occasionally, 'Don't imitate other people' or 'Do something that has never been done before'. He could not always be described as a polite leader – rather, his rejection of fixed terminology and his use of communication forms that encouraged artists to discover things for themselves are reminiscent of a brainstorming session in Zen Mondô form – a form of guidance that often appears irrational or absurd.



Michio Yoshihara produces Saburo Murakami's work for the exhibition 'Nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig', Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1965

First Gutai open-air exhibition, Ashiya, 1955

Fujiko Shiraga, with her work *Shiro Ita*, 1955



'Nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig', Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1965
Works by Michio Yoshihara, Saburo Murakami, Shozo Shimamoto, Sadamata Motonaga and Saburo Murakami

Second Gutai open-air exhibition, Ashiya, 1956

Akira Kanayama, with his work *Ashiato*, 1956



ZERO / Gutai / ZERO

However, we should be careful here. It would be wrong to say that Yoshihara made deliberate use of Zen. At the time, this philosophy was widely known, and was part of the cultural consciousness of Japan's academics. Modernists who placed a high priority on novelty may also have hoped that a new movement to overcome the spirit of the times could arise from Zen's rejection of logical consistency and pre-stabilized harmony.

Inspired by Yoshihara, the early Gutai artists developed a pictorial concept in which works of art emerged from the picture space, eroding the space of reality and opening a virtual space. Atsuko Tanaka's *Work Bell* (1955), for instance, is a rather daring experiment with the spatial properties of the work of art itself. In his *Please Come In* (1955), also known as *Red Logs*, Shiraga smashes the inner side of a walk of columns with an axe to give the viewer the impression of a 360°, endless surface. Then there is *Shiro Ita* (1955) by Fujiko Shiraga, which is often mistaken for a three-dimensional object. In fact, the intention is to make cracks in the sky, and it results in a magnificent two-dimensional work: a simple wooden plank about 10 m long, ripped open by a whipsaw over its full length. In this case, technical and financial limitations are by no means a disadvantage. The stark divide between the idea and the experiential truth itself is significant.

In late 1964, the Gutai group made contact with Henk Peeters, a member of the Dutch Nul group, in order to take part in the large Nul exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam the next year. In April of the following year, Sabiro Murakami travelled to The Hague for another planned international exhibition in the Galerij OREZ there. In the same year, he presented a plan for a work to be shown at the planned open air exhibition 'Zero on Sea', an exhibition that was to be held on the beach, the pier and at sea, but which never took place. In January 1972, the word was that Gutai was to take part in an open air exhibition at the Floriade in Amsterdam, but Yoshihara suffered an unexpected collapse during a telephone conversation with the Dutch consulate. One wonders: How would he have used his ideas to fill the empty spaces with art?⁷

With Yoshihara's death, the curtain fell on Gutai, after 18 years of the movement. He was buried at the Kasei temple – Nantenbo's temple. His posthumous name is: SHU TOKU ZEN IN EN RYO E KO JI.⁸



'Zero on Sea',
photo montage
by Henk
Peeters using
works by
Saburo Mura-
kami, Pol Bury,
Otto Piene,
Henk Peeters,
Gianni Co-
lombo, Hans
Haacke and
Akira Kana-
yama, 1965

Second Gutai
open-air
exhibition,
Ashiya, 1956

Sadamasa
Motonaga,
Sakuhin (Mizu),
1956



- 1 For instance, there was a ritual association in Japan named 'Dimension ZERO' that began in 1963 under the leadership of Yoshihiro Kato and Shinichi Iwata. There was also a group named 'Japan Kobe ZERO' (founded with Chu Enoki in mid-1970).
- 2 Kazuo Shiraga and Sanburo both studied with Tsuguro Itoh (who, like Yoshihara, had a studio in Ashiya) at the 'Association of New Art'.
- 3 'Experimental Outdoor Exhibition of Modern Art to Challenge the Midsummer Burning Sun' was not exactly a Gutai exhibition. It was an initiative by the Ashiya art association (directed by Jiro Yoshihara), but almost all of the Gutai members took part in it. The Gutai open air art exhibition took place in a grove of pines on the bank of the Ashiya in 1956, under the auspices of the Gutai group.
- 4 Originally named Toju Nakahara (1839-1925). Born in Karatsu, Saga prefecture, he was a

famous Zen priest of the Meiji period.

- 5 Symposium with Jiro Yoshihara, Kokuta Suda, Roshi Harumi, Keizo Asou, Yosakichi Yamada, Shiryu Morita and Kouho Arita (directorship) 'Die Kalligraphien Nantenbos', in: *Kunst der Tusche*, no. 14, 7 (1952). In the 1950s, Kansai was a locus of fusions between fine art, calligraphy, applied art and fashion design, and there was a lively exchange of ideas between young avant-garde artists. One example of this was the 'forum for contemporary fine art', or GenBi – from *Gendai* (present-day, contemporary) and *Bijutsu* (fine art).
- 6 Jiro Yoshihara, 'Collection of eccentric works', *Mainichi Shinbun*, 27 May 1965.
- 7 Ten unusually-shaped balloons were to be displayed along a 50-m expanse of the Amstel waterfront. Five works of art were to be displayed at ground level. There were also fairly concrete plans for the opening

on 30 March 1972. Sketches for this opening by some members of the group still exist.

- 8 Translator's note: In Buddhism, a person who has died is given a new name by a priest. Yoshihara's name denotes a noble, magnificent, good and wise man. It also contains 'Zen', 'circle' and 'house'. The meaning of this name is associative rather than literal.





Midori Yamamura

Kusama and Nul

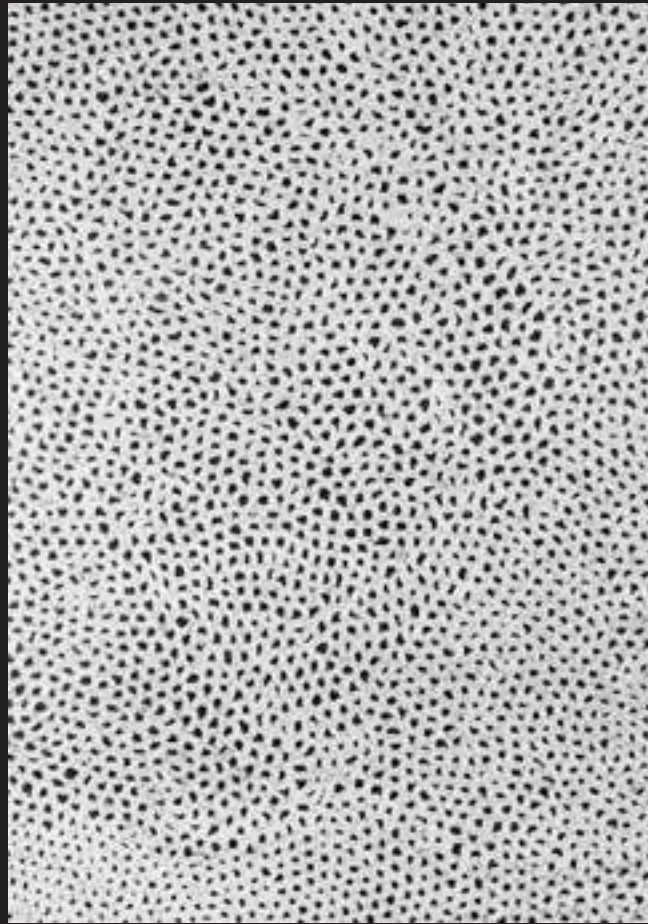
An International Crossroad of the Art of Social Engagement

What would 'Zero on Sea' have looked like, if it had been realized as planned? The exhibition at Scheveningen Pier was supposed to be Europe's pioneering site-specific art project, intended to offer a direct social engagement.¹ It would have been the most exciting destination for the experiments of New York-based Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. Frustrated, and sceptical of the governing principles of the former Axis alliance (Germany, Italy, Japan and their territories), most of the international participants of 'Zero on Sea' wanted to transcend old societies with their arts, by deploying new media and methods and by directly engaging the public. In this regard, the question should be rephrased: How would it have felt to experience 'Zero on Sea'?

An International Crossroad after the Second World War

Experience of the war led many artists in war-torn countries to remarkably similar thoughts. In Japan, disgusted by the rampant nationalism endemic to the war, Kusama imagined travelling overseas to 'communicate with a wider audience' through her art.² Henk Peeters, an underground anti-Nazi activist during the war, had similar thoughts and felt he had to go beyond 'dangerous nationalism'.³

Yayoi Kusama, *Untitled (Net painting)*, 1959, oil on canvas, 131.5 x 117 cm



Yayoi Kusama paints Jan Schoonhoven, at the opening of the art fair Balans at the Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam, 1967



In June 1961, Peeters wrote to New York Gallery Stephen Radich and asked about its advertisement in the art magazine *Cimaise*: 'I should [*sic*] like to know more about Yayoi Kusama.'⁴ Peeters was organizing Nul62, a grand-scale international exhibition for Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum that would focus on the 'new conceptions in art'. Most of the invited artists – including Kusama – had previously taken part in 'Avantgarde 61' at the Städtisches Museum in Trier, Germany. Peeters realized that affinities existed in this circle of artists.

Art That Heightens Self-Awareness

Mattijs Visser's recent observation of Peeters' early work that makes 'the viewer conscious of his environment', may have applied to Peeters' own experience of Kusama's *White XXA* (1961); her submission to Nul62.⁵ Measuring 254 x 594 cm, the ground for this so-called *Net* painting was prepared in black. Kusama then obsessively rendered small white arcs, each in a slightly different shape, until every square centimetre of the canvas was filled. She finished it by applying a thin layer of white that gave an 'initial impression . . . of no-show'.⁶ This required people to come closer, diminishing the divide between viewer and painting. Seen from up close, the broad fragile surface of the *Net* painting potentially induced a tension that gave the viewer a sense of his or her own scale and existence.

Kusama and Peeters would have agreed with the founders of German group Zero, Heinz Mack and Otto Piene, who were seeking a break from the universalistic way of thinking prevalent in fascism. In the first volume of *ZERO* journal (1958), Mack and Piene manifested their views towards European philosophy by citing art critic Franz Roh. Roh expressed his wish that contemporary painting would produce a 'view of reality' that could 'spiritually' influence its spectator.⁷ Art that heightened the spectators' self-awareness was necessary for them to acquire a view of reality that was not universalistic.

Nul62

During Nul62, three galleries of the Stedelijk Museum were converted into environments, entitled: *Salle de glace*, *Salle obscure* and *Salle de lumière*. These environments, like Kusama's *Net* painting, heightened the viewers' self-awareness. *Salle de lumière* by Mack, Piene and Günther Uecker demanded the viewers' participation by 'switching groups of lights and motors via a homespun switchboard'. The process heightened each spectator's self-awareness and transformed

him or her into an active creator. The maker of *Salle obscure* was the Dutch artist Armando, whose monumental work made of new Goodyear car tyres, overwhelmed the spectator with a penetrating smell of rubber in a completely darkened gallery. *Salle de glace* was a mirror-lined environment by Christian Megert. In possible allusion to Sartre's existentialism, spectators who entered the mirror room were immediately blinded by the harsh glare of a military floodlight, leading them to a moment when self-consciousness became pure self-identity.⁸

Locating Kusama's Issues

Megert's process of self-identity may be comparable to the way Kusama developed the *Net* paintings in her first environment, *Aggregation: One Thousand Boats Show*; her contribution to Nul65. Crucial to this development was her encounter with the psychoanalyst Yasuhiko Taketomo who offered her a new scientific interpretation of her work. In his opinion, her creativity was driven by her obsessive-compulsive disorder, which resulted in repetitive behaviours (compulsion). This explained why Kusama employed repetition and she began creating 'many collages of postage stamps, airmail stickers and paper dollars',⁹ and imaginatively expanded the scale of her collage into *Aggregation: One Thousand Boats Show*.¹⁰ The work consisted of one actual sculpture made out of a scavenged rowboat, covered with hundreds of phallus-like objects, surrounded by 999 photo-reproductions of the boat. In her *Net* painting, the repetitiveness implied her efforts to transcend her psychic limits and elevate her inner life to a higher state that would help to dissociate her from social conformity.¹¹

The *Boats Show's* uniform environment, on the other hand, suggests visualization of what Kusama described in an interview as 'the strangely mechanized and standardized' modern society where many 'psychosomatic problems' lay.¹² Kusama explained that her artistic expressions always grew from the aggregation of these problems. The uniformity of the environment can be interpreted as representing the standardization of modern society that causes psychosomatic problems in people, and in her case, led to obsessive-compulsive disorder.

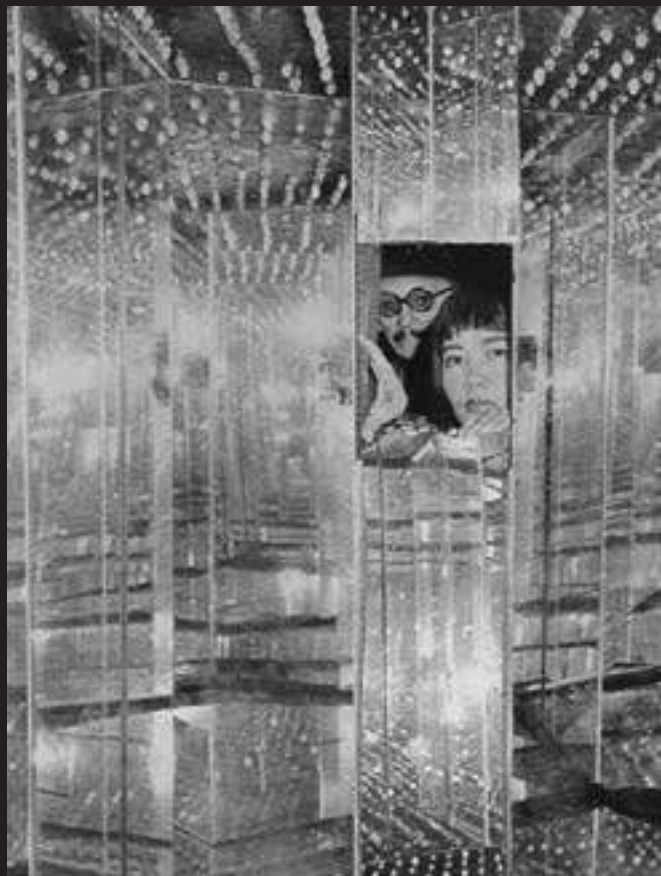
Kusama's interest in obsessive thoughts led her to probe deeply into her psyche for a feeling that Freud labelled 'uncanny'. What she encountered in this exercise was an image of the phallus, derived from her experience of being a woman in the male-dominant Japanese and later, US society.

She thus deployed this new idea, originally, in her *Accumulation series*, covering found objects, such as a sofa, a couch or shoes with countless stuffed sewn fabric protuberances symbolizing phalli. This then evolved into her first environment, *Aggregation: One Thousand Boats Show*.

Art, Science and Social Change

The 999 posters in Kusama's *Boats Show* anticipated the subsequent development of her work using mirrors. Similar to *Megert's Salle de glace*, Kusama began introducing mirrors in her work *Infinity Mirror Room* (November 1965), which was grounded in a viewer's intense process of self-exploration. By 1966, this had developed into *Love Forever*, her submission to 'Zero on Sea'. This was her first psychedelic art, intended to scientifically alter human perception, which could result in social transformation. Likely inspired by the ideas of psychologist Timothy Leary, Kusama incorporated flashing lights, mandalic reflections, and music in her proposed mirror-lined room. As Leary postulated, such multimedia effects would produce visions similar to those acquired through LSD and thus activate dormant parts of the human brain and scientifically change human perceptions of the world.¹³ Reinventing the environment with the sound and visual effects was the key to altering human behaviour, and would ultimately transform the ways in which society is organized.

Examining the works of the primary participants of 'Zero on Sea' would further reveal a distinct connective thread. From the post-war urgency of transcending nationalism and creating a new international community, art was then envisioned as a vehicle for active public engagement that would ultimately bring about social changes. If realized, 'Zero on Sea' could have set up a model for a participatory art project, which would have demonstrated that art can 'help in building, reshaping, [and] humanizing' society', as Piene phrased it in 1969.¹⁴



Yayoi Kusama
in her installation
*Infinity
Mirror Room,
New York,
1965*

Yayoi
Kusama,
Installation
*Aggregation:
One Thou-
sand Boats
Show, 1965*



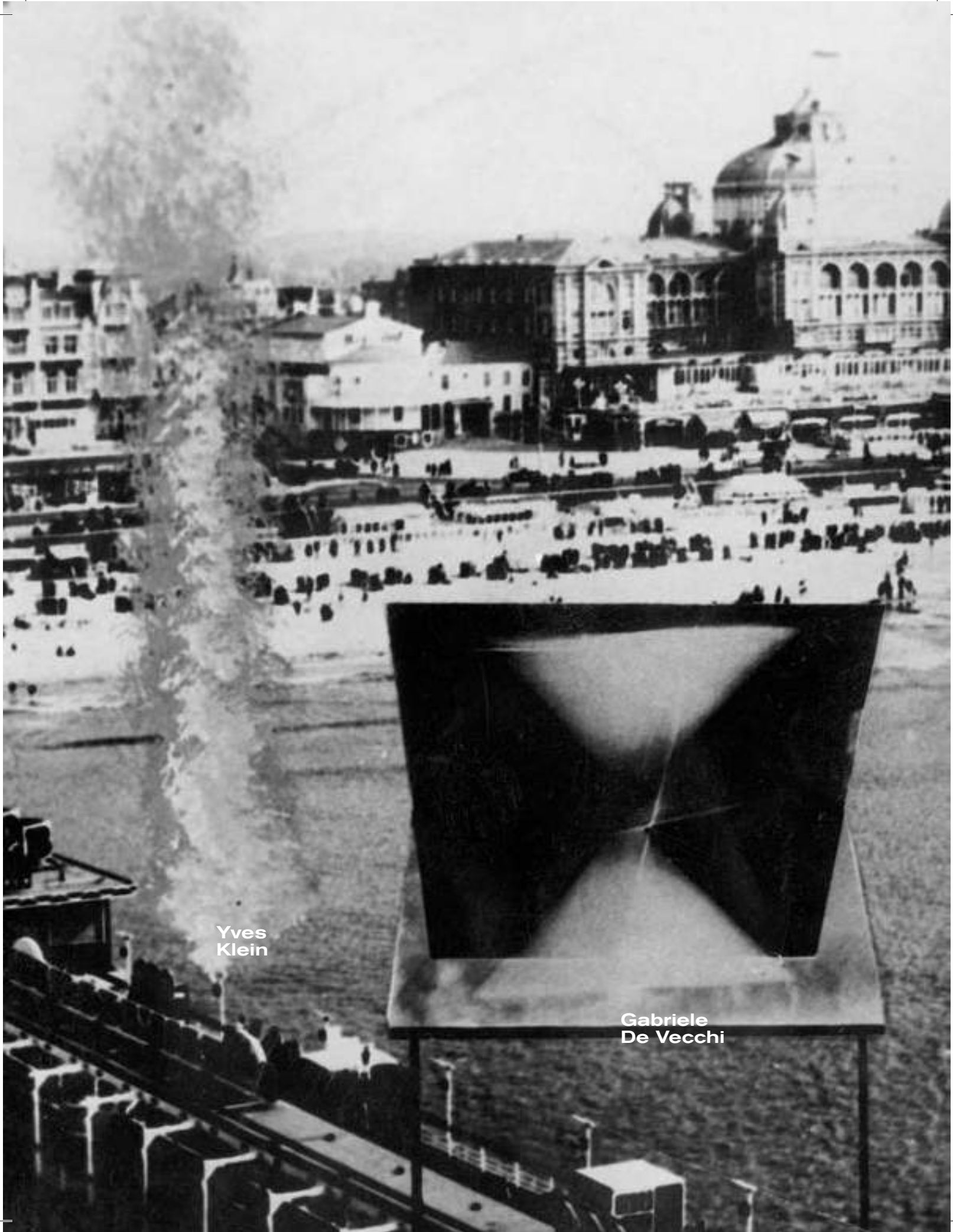
- 1 Albert Vogel and Leo Verboon, letter to Yayoi Kusama, 16 February 1966. Folder 'Orez', Kusama Papers, Kusama Yayoi Studio, Tokyo.
- 2 Yayoi Kusama, 'Tobei wo mae ni shite: Watashi no yume wa kakushite jitsugen suru' ('On the eve of departure for the USA: My dream is thus about to come true'), magazine clipping, folder '1957', Kusama Papers.
- 3 Henk Peeters, interview by author, 1 January 2007.
- 4 Henk Peeters, letter to Stephen Radich, 14 June 1961, folder 'Yayoi Kusama', box 5, Stephen Radich Papers, The Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.
- 5 Mattijs Visser, *0: Henk Peeters* (London: James Mayor Gallery, 2010), np.
- 6 E. Kerkam quoted in 'Brata', *Tenth Street Days: The Co-ops of the 50's* (New York: Pleiades Gallery and The Association of Artist-Run Galleries, 1977), np.
- 7 F. Roh, *Zero 1* (1958), in: H. Mack and O. Piene (eds.), *Zero 1, 2, 3*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973), 3.
- 8 Christian Megert used mirrors to reference J.-P. Sartre's existentialism. F. Megert (wife of C. Megert), e-mail to author, 28 March 2009.
- 9 Yayoi Kusama, 'Miss Yayoi Kusama: Interview Prepared for WABC Radio by G. Brown, Executive Editor of *Art Voice*', in *de nieuwe stijl/the new style 1* (interview, 1963; printed, 1965), 162.
- 10 '999' was conceptually important, as traditionally in Japan, 1000 marked a symbolic transcendence into the next stage of life.
- 11 Midori Yamamura, 'Transforming Infinity: Yayoi Kusama's *Net Painting*', in *Yayoi Kusama* (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 2009), 14-36.
- 12 Kusama, 'Miss Yayoi Kusama', op. cit. (note 9), 164.
- 13 Timothy Leary, 'The Molecular Revolution' (1966), in *Timewave Zero/A Psychedelic Reader* (Graz, Austria: Grazer Kunstverein, 2001), 24-25.
- 14 Otto Piene, cited in Valerie Hillings, 'Pure Possibilities for a New Beginning: Zero (1957-1966)', in *Experimental Artists' Groups in Europe, 1951-1968* (PhD dissertation, New York University, 2002), 194.

'Zero on Sea',
photo montage
by Henk Peeters
using works by
Akira Kanayama,
Heinz Mack,
Yves Klein and
Gabriele De
Vecchi, 1965

Yves Klein

Heinz Mack

Akira
Kanayama



Yves
Klein

Gabriele
De Vecchi

'Zero on Sea',
photo montage
by Henk
Peeters using
works by

Saburo Mura-
kami, Pol Bury,
Otto Piene, Henk
Peeters, Gianni
Colombo, Hans
Haacke, Gianni
Colombo and
Akira Kana-
yama, 1965

Saburo
Murakami

Pol
Bury

Otto
Piene



**Henk
Peeters**

**Gianni
Colombo**

**Hans
Haacke**

**Hans
Haacke**

**Gianni
Colombo**

**Akira
Kanayama**

**Caroline de
Westenholz**

Zero on Sea

**Announcement
of 'Zero on
Sea' in *Het
Vaderland*,
4 August 1965**

**'Zero on Sea',
proposal
(watercolour
drawing) by
Michio
Yoshihara,
1965**



July 1965, the Concept

In July 1965, Dutch newspapers aired the first rumours about an unusual art manifestation on Scheveningen pier called 'Zero on Sea'. It would launch on September 23d and last three weeks.¹ 'Zero on Sea' was to be a huge artistic event with about 50 participating artists from over ten countries. These included Lucio Fontana from Milan, Yayoi Kusama and George Rickey from New York, Günther Uecker from Düsseldorf, Jiro Yoshihara from Tokyo, Walter Leblanc from Belgium, Pol Bury and Armand from France, Jesús Rafael Soto from Venezuela and of course the Dutch Nul group, consisting of Armando, Henk Peeters, Jan Henderikse and Jan Schoonhoven. It was to be a happening in which the public would play an active part: 'For once, it doesn't need to approach art in a breathless whisper.'² In true ZERO spirit, the plans involved all the elements. Yves Klein's *climate room* was to be executed posthumously; a world premiere, the press boasted, which might stay forever in place.³ Yayoi Kusama wanted to decorate a 30-m-long corridor with her phallic objects, famous from the Nul65 Stedelijk Museum exhibition earlier that year. Armando 'annexed' the noises of the sea in order to amplify these and broadcast them all over the pier; also, he wished to 'paint the sea black', a reminiscence of his 1964 Black Water project. There were plans to launch ZERO fireworks, and to involve smell in some kind of way.

The initiator of the project was Reinder Zwolsman and his Exploitatie Maatschappij Scheveningen (EMS), the owner of the pier, who needed some publicity. In early 1965 the EMS got in touch with Leo Verboon of Internationale Gallerij OREZ, and a deal was struck. OREZ was an avant-garde gallery that specialized in the latest trends in the arts. The name was the reverse of ZERO (Nul, in Dutch), the art movement the gallery represented. As of 1964, OREZ was run by Albert Vogel en Leo Verboon, a flamboyant couple that turned OREZ into 'one of the best, perhaps the very best' gallery of the country at the time.⁴ In collaboration with Henk Peeters, the 'Zero on Sea' plan was developed.

Initially, the organizers estimated the costs at no more than 100,000 guilders. Half of that sum would be provided by EMS. Companies that produced materials with which ZERO artists liked to work were to sponsor the remainder. Five thousand visitors daily were expected.

The EMS starting capital allowed Vogel and Verboon to go on a three-week trip around the world in order to collect ideas. The trip led from Bangkok, Hong Kong, Formosa, Taiwan, Tokyo, via Hawaii to San Francisco and New York.

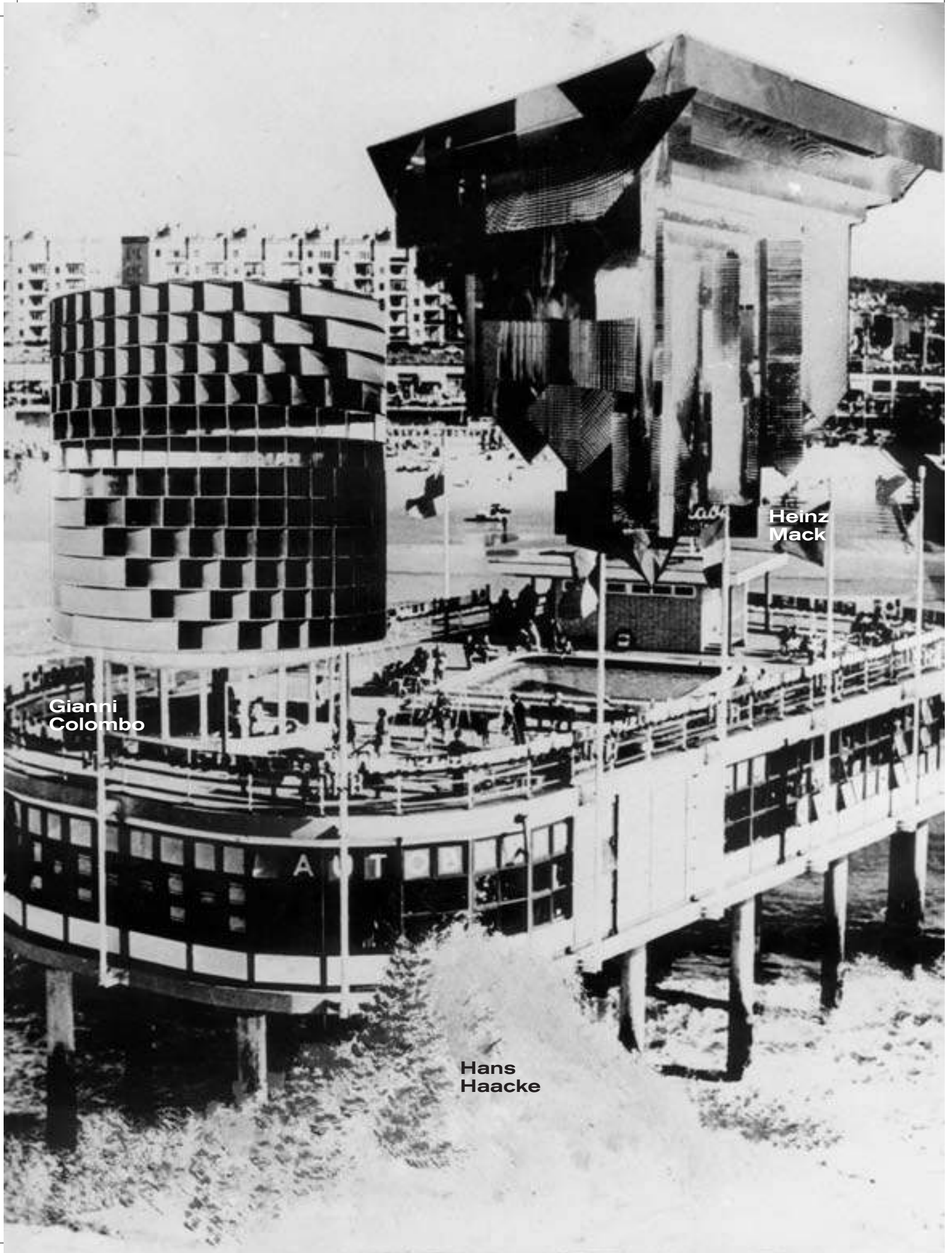


Unfortunately, 'Zero on Sea' was never realized. From the start, it was questionable whether the highflying constructions of the international ZERO artists would be able to withstand the harsh Dutch climate; in early April 1966, when the manifestation eventually was meant to take place, storms ravaged the North Sea coast. No insurance against possible claims in case of damage could be obtained. But Verboon mentioned another reason:

When we had collected all those plans, we started to calculate: the whole affair was going to cost several hundred thousand guilders. And Zwolsman was much more bankrupt than he realized, at that moment in time, so all we got out of him was a tiny amount of money.⁵

He was only too right: in 1966, the EMS paid its shareholders dividend for the last time. As off then, Zwolsman's imperium went downhill.⁶ A letter from Leo Verboon to Yayoi Kusama (which must, presumably, in some variation have been sent to artists around the world) explained all the reasons for cancellation, adding the fact that some projects were extremely expensive to set up, and would require a disproportional part of the budget.⁷

In April 1966, the plans for 'Zero on Sea' were exhibited in OREZ.⁸ The following year architecture magazine *Forum* published a selection of the designs.⁹ In 1970, the Amsterdam Art Historical Institute mounted an exhibition on the project, curated by Franck Gribling. The accompanying catalogue was, up till now, the major guide to 'Zero on Sea'.¹⁰ One year later,



Gianni
Colombo

Heinz
Mack

Hans
Haacke

'Zero on Sea',
photo montage
by Henk Peeters
using works by
Gianni Colombo,
Hans Haacke
and Heinz Mack,
1965

the Internationale Galerij OREZ ceased to exist. In the ensuing division of spoils, Vogel received the ten files with the original designs for 'Zero on Sea'.¹¹ The following reconstruction of the 'Zero on Sea' project is based on these files.

Zero on Sea: A Reconstruction

The earliest invitation to the artists that was found in the archive runs as follows (the original is in English):¹²

ZERO ON SEA.

In view of the overwhelming success of the exhibition 'Zero 1965' recently on view at the Municipal Museum in Amsterdam, the E.M.S. (Maatschappij Zeebad Scheveningen [sic]) begs to inform you of the following plan:

The Pier (a photo of which you will find enclosed) will be at the disposal of an exhibition: 'Zero on Sea' from 25 September – 15 October 1965. The organisation and the invitations for participation will be taken care of by the International gallery OREZ. This gallery promotes the interests of most of the artists concerned.

They ask you, in view of the very short time left us, to return as soon as possible the enquiry form [sic], but not later than 10 August.

After payment of the materials the work will be the property of the artist while the E.M.S. reserves the right of reproduction. The execution will be entrusted to an exhibition contractor.

For your requested presence travelling expenses will be paid and in Scheveningen you will be the guest of the E.M.S. For the execution of your work the Circus¹³ will be at your disposal.

On the occasion of this manifestation a book will be published called: 'Nul op Zee/Zero on Sea 1965', under auspices of the magazine 'De Nieuwe Stijl' (0=Nul).¹⁴

The cooperating group 'Nieuwe Poëzie' (Armando, Sleutelaar, Verhagen, Vaandrager) will participate with great activity [sic].

The organisation committee.

Internationale Galerij OREZ:

Albert Anthing Vogel

Leo Verboon

Magazine 'De Nieuwe Stijl':

Armando

Henk Peeters

Sleutelaar

This letter was accompanied by an enquiry form asking the artists to submit CVs, design and description of the proposed piece of work '... inclusive its lightening (with the possibility of very bad weather conditions must be reckoned)', dimensions, title, selling price, insurance value, and so forth. Henk Peeters was the great organizer. He made a series of photo montages consisting of bird's-eye views of the pier from various angles, into which he stuck photo's, cut from the Nul65 exhibition catalogue.

Gesamtkunstwerk

In October 1965, when Vogel and Verboon had returned from their trip around the world, a press conference was thrown. It featured all the latest news about the project. Literature, music and the theatre were now also to be included. A German Zero group would deliver ideas for a cabaret act.¹⁵ Speciality of the Dutch contribution was the combination of visual art and contemporary literature, because only in the Netherlands could a parallel be drawn between those two disciplines.¹⁶ Editors of *de nieuwe stijl* magazine Cornelius Bastiaan Vaandrager, Hans Sleutelaar and Hans Verhagen wanted to issue 'a literary light paper'.¹⁷ As poet Hans Sleutelaar explained: 'The wind will become visible by the use of smoke, the erection of mills and the flying of flags. When the sun is shining, reflectors must reflect the light all around.'¹⁸

The 'regular pier flaneur'¹⁹ must also be involved. In order to enjoy 'total poetry', a special cabin had to be built, in which continuous images and reactions of the public to the works of art could be seen and heard.

According to some, Scheveningen pier (built by modernist architects Maaskant, Dijk and Apon in 1961) was already a typical ZERO structure.²⁰ Much ZERO art felt 'captive' within museum walls; on the pier, out in the open, the elements, art and exhibition space would merge into one giant, anonymous *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art.

The Designs

In late 1965, the Internationale Galerij OREZ sent an urgent letter around the world:

It is very important that you should send in, as soon as possible, for the manifestations [sic] 'Zero on Sea' and the Pier exhibition a detailed drawing of your works of art, your plan to make (sic); with the detailed measurements given in centimeters.

We also need a very clear description of all the materials to be used, as this information is very important for the Pier's technical staff.

The official opening of this Pier exhibition will take place on April the 15th, 1966.

There are ten to fifteen days reserved for the building-up preparations, therefore could you please let us know how many days you think that you will need for making your own work of art.

For each working day you will receive fifty guilders. Travel costs will be paid in advance, you will receive a return ticket for your train, plane or bus journey.

During the preparation days, and for the opening day, you will be the guest of the Pier; this means that the hotel accommodations [sic] and meals will be paid and provided for.

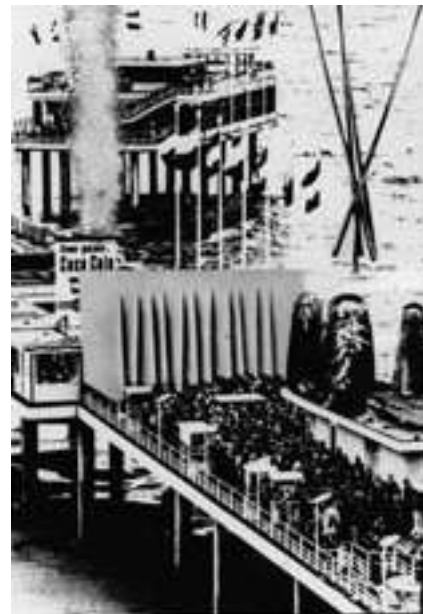
Awaiting a quick reply, we remain,

Yours sincerely,

Internationale Galerij OREZ

L.J. Verboon, Albert Vogel²¹

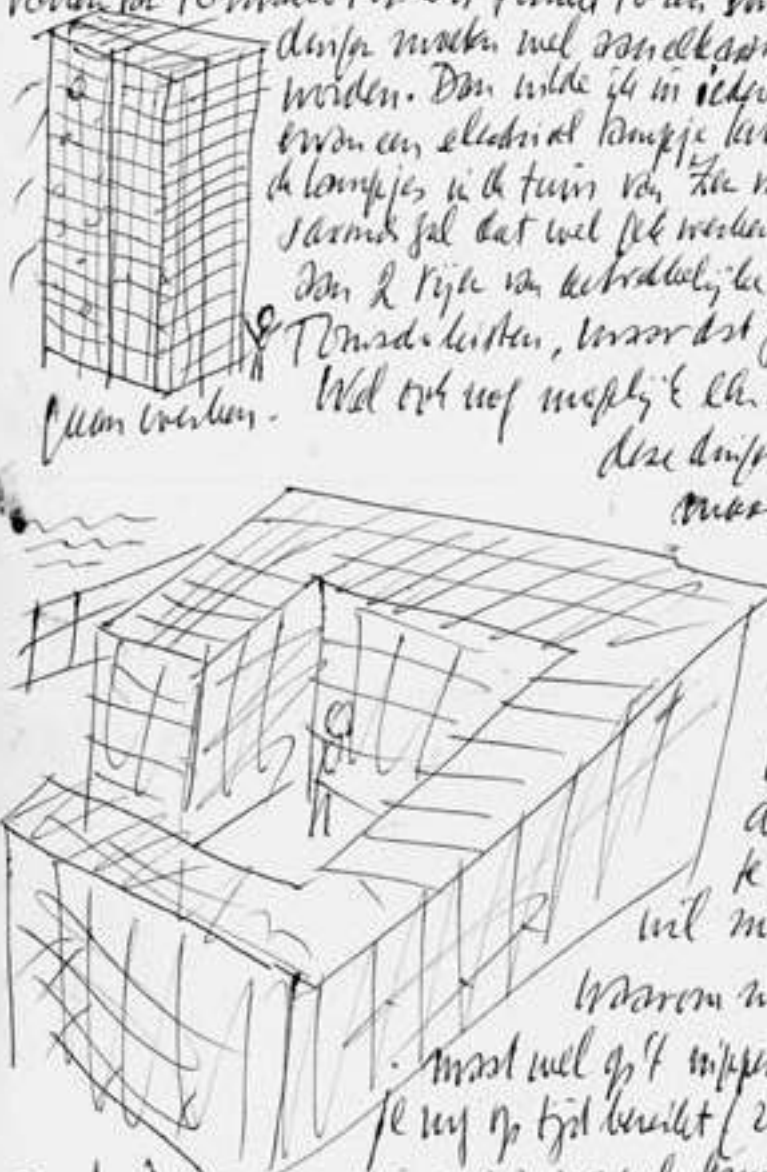
Over the winter, the designs began to arrive. Peeters made an inventory of the plans. The number of participating artists continued to grow, although some, like Jan Schoonhoven, withdrew their cooperation.²² *Forum Magazine* contains designs by Hans Bisschoffshausen, Gianni Colombo, Hans Haacke, Jan Henderikse, Yves Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Heinz Mack, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, George Rickey, Ferdinand Spindel, Günter Uecker, Nanda Vigo and nine members of the Gutai group.



Jan Schoonhoven

'Zero on Sea', letter by Jan Schoonhoven to Henk Peeters with suggestions for projects, 1965

Misschien trek mij wel hier en daar mogelijk, at de niet in
 omlij met gaten? En dan het ik ook mogelijk om Tomado
 vellen, of Tomado menden. Het en opstapeling van kubusjes
 vellen van Tomado tot een flinke toren, van flinke hoogte. Die
 dings maken wel van elkaar sprakel kunnen
 worden. Dan wilde ik in iedere aparte eenheid
 erin een elektrisch lampje laten draaien, zoals
 de lampjes in de tuin van Lee van Puta. Ondryen
 sarmid zal dat wel niet werken. Ook gedeelt
 dan 2 rijen van betredelijke hoogte van deze
 Tomado kisten, maar dat zal te overmatig zijn
 mijn denken. Wel tot het mogelijk de hele hal van
 deze dings met lampjes.
 Maar hier zullen
 misschien te veel
 Tomado dings
 met sprakel zijn.
 Het veel zal
 alles niet behoeven
 kisten of Tomado
 wil meenken En
 waarom niet. 't Is alle.
 moet wel op't nippertje als deze brief
 je mij op tijd bereikt / zal in expresse ver-
 zenden), maar misschien is er nog wel te verbeteren. Enrijen
 niet meer.
 Met vriendelijke groeten van huis tot huis - /
 Jan Schoonhoven

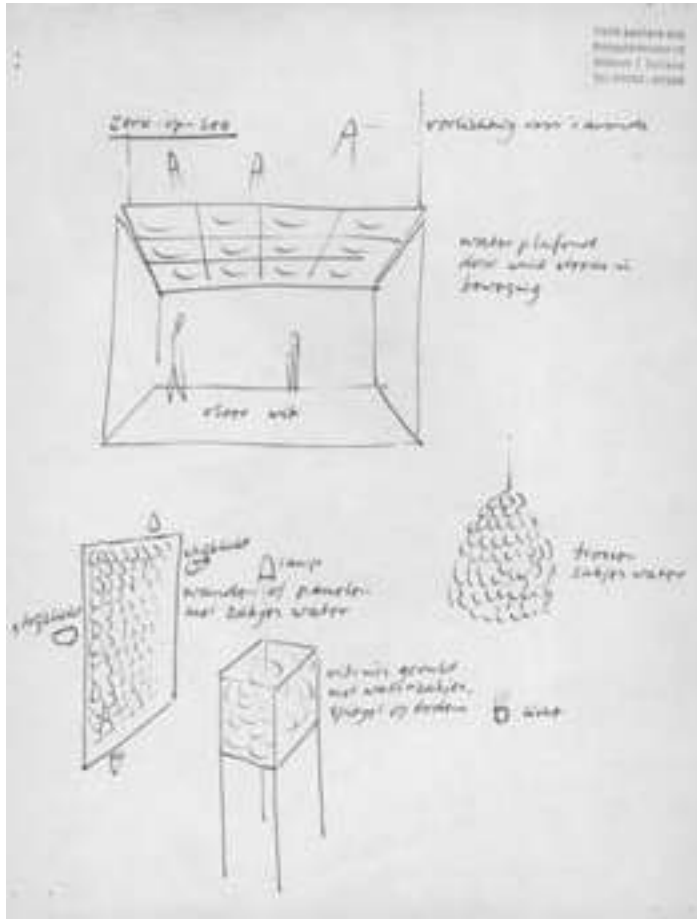


'Zero on Sea', photo montage by Henk Peeters using work by Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana, George Rickey and Günther Uecker, 1965

henk peeters v.o.l.
 hoogstedelaan 12
 arnhem / holland
 tel. 025103-27355

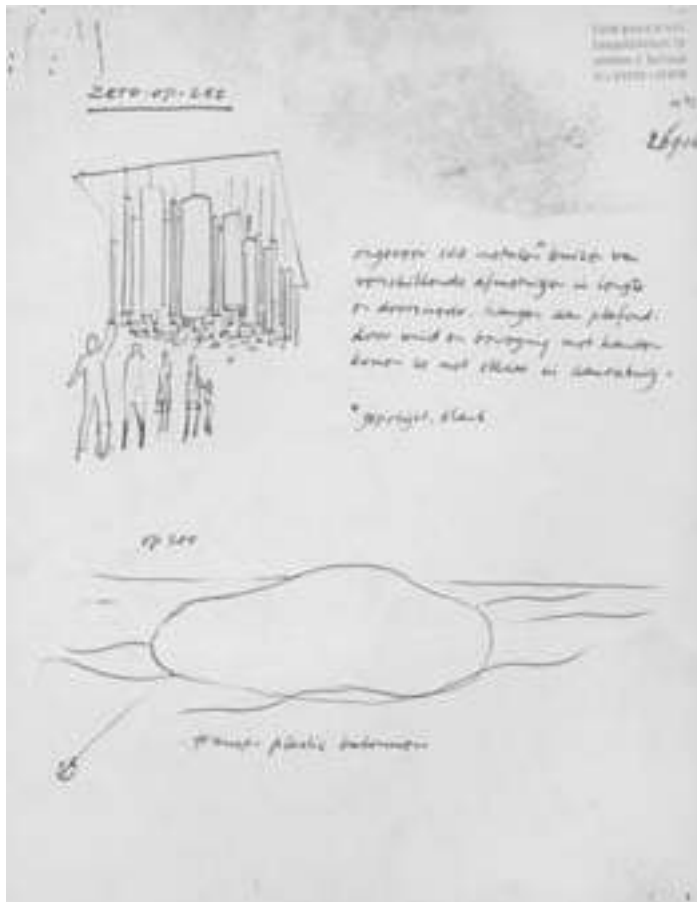
Henk Peeters

'Zero on Sea', six proposals by Henk Peeters, 1965



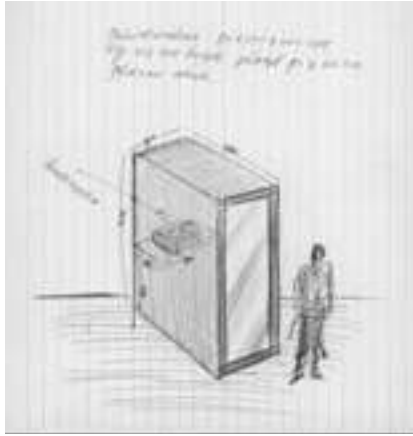
Armando

'Zero on Sea', proposal by Armando, 1965



Jan Henderikse

'Zero on Sea', proposal by Jan Henderikse, 1965



Participants

The Dutch Nul Group²³

Henk Peeters was the only Nul artist who had been actively experimenting with sound and movement. This is why 'Zero on Sea' had such a special appeal for him. He had so many ideas that this alone could fill an entire article, and he submitted 12 drawings, including a plan for 100 polished metal tubes of different sizes and diameter, hanging from a ceiling, to be moved by the wind or by hand, in order to produce a special sound; transparent plastic balloons to be anchored out at sea; pyramid shaped vessels with mirrors for bottoms, filled with water, hanging from the ceiling and lit by spotlights.²⁴ The latter was of course a variation on the water ceiling that Peeters had produced for the Nul65 exhibition.

Armando submitted a sketch of his sound cabin.²⁵ It was meant to measure 90 x 130 x 200 cm, have a glass door and to contain a tape recorder on a shelf. His idea was to 'annex' the noises of the sea in order to amplify these and broadcast them all over the pier.

Jan Henderikse wanted to create a room by piling crates with beer bottles up as walls and using glass plates as floors and ceilings. 'It seems so simple, but the execution must be fantastic because of the grandiose lighting, which shoots through the crates like a Broadway advertisement.'²⁶

The German Zero Group²⁷

The relationship nature/man/technology had been one of the leading subjects of *ZERO 3*, the third instalment of the German Zero magazine, published in July 1961.²⁸

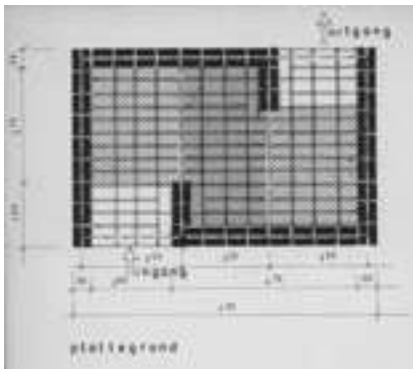
The core members of Zero, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker, had long declared the elements air, fire, water and earth to be the tools of their art. They wanted to re-harmonize the relationship between man and nature. Nature offers enormous impulses: the sky, the sea, the Arctic, the desert.²⁹ The combination was promising.

Although an original group letter and subsequent correspondence seem to have gotten lost,³⁰ there is sufficient evidence of the intentions of the German Zero group as a whole.

'My greatest dream is the projection of light into the vast night sky, the probing of the universe as it meets the light, untouched, without obstacles – the world of space is the only one to offer man practically unlimited freedom,' Otto Piene had written in *ZERO 3*. He went on to regret the fact that we have left it to war to dream up a naive light ballet of the night skies:

When will our freedom be so great that we conquer the sky for the fun of it, glide through the universe, live the great play in light and space, without being driven by fear and mistrust? . . . As a spectator of this astronautic theater, man would not have to take cover, he would be without fear, free, not bound by purpose. . . . Utopias have a largely literary worth. Utopias with a real basis are not Utopia. My Utopia has a solid foundation: light, smoke and 12 searchlights!³¹

At Scheveningen pier, Piene planned to achieve just that, although he limited himself to three searchlights only. He submitted designs of three giant balloons, in red, black and silver, to be filled with helium. The red one would give the impression of a red cloud in the sky, the black one that of a 'splendid large blackberry'. The silver balloon, the smallest one, must look like an artificial planet. The balloons were to be located over the different islands of the pier. During the day they should be 'standing' on smoke columns, achieved by burning oil in cans floating on the water, and at night they were to be lit by search lights from various angles.³² He submitted watercolour and ink sketches for both views.



Mack
40 East 10 Street
New York
N.Y.

10. April 1966

Sehr geehrte Herren!

Ich habe mich einmal - aller Voraussicht
z. B. über zu machen, so ist das

- 1) wird die relative Vorfahrt so
sein, wie ich
- 2) wird sie nicht so stark werden
kann
- 3) wird eine relative ungewöhnliche
Verkehrswirtschaft sowohl bei
Tag als auch bei Nacht
- 4) wird die technische Vorbereitung
auch in einem wirtschaftlichen
Abwägen mit möglich ist

Kommentar zu pkt. 1) & 2)

Die beiden Halbkreisbojen
die man überall im Weltweit in's
Belgien als Ankerbojen, von
ja-ist, sind genau - als ready
made - im Handel erhältlich.
Sollten in den Größen Kupfer
Ankerbojen für das man durch
eine 12 meter hohe Boje die
Korallenriffe, also können



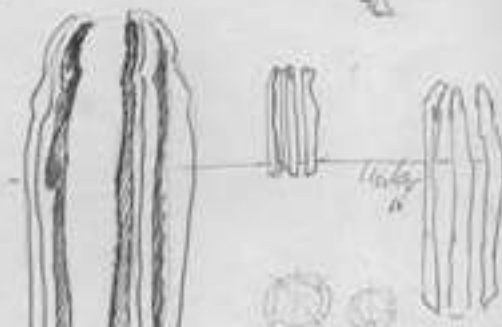

Heinz Mack

'Zero on Sea',
letter (1966)
and photo
montage
(2011) by
Heinz Mack

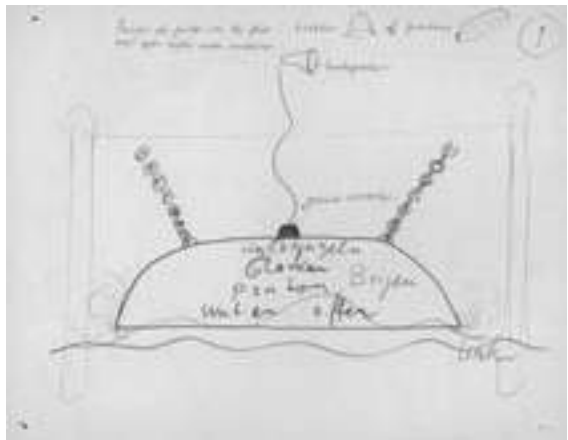
this montage is
from the sixties.
laat de datum weg.

aufgeschlitten
auf einem Inselplateau
an der Spitze
Kamm

erblocken
Kamm



g. Ergebnisse
von jedem beteiligten
Korallenriff
Schaufenster in 7-9 Teile oder mehr

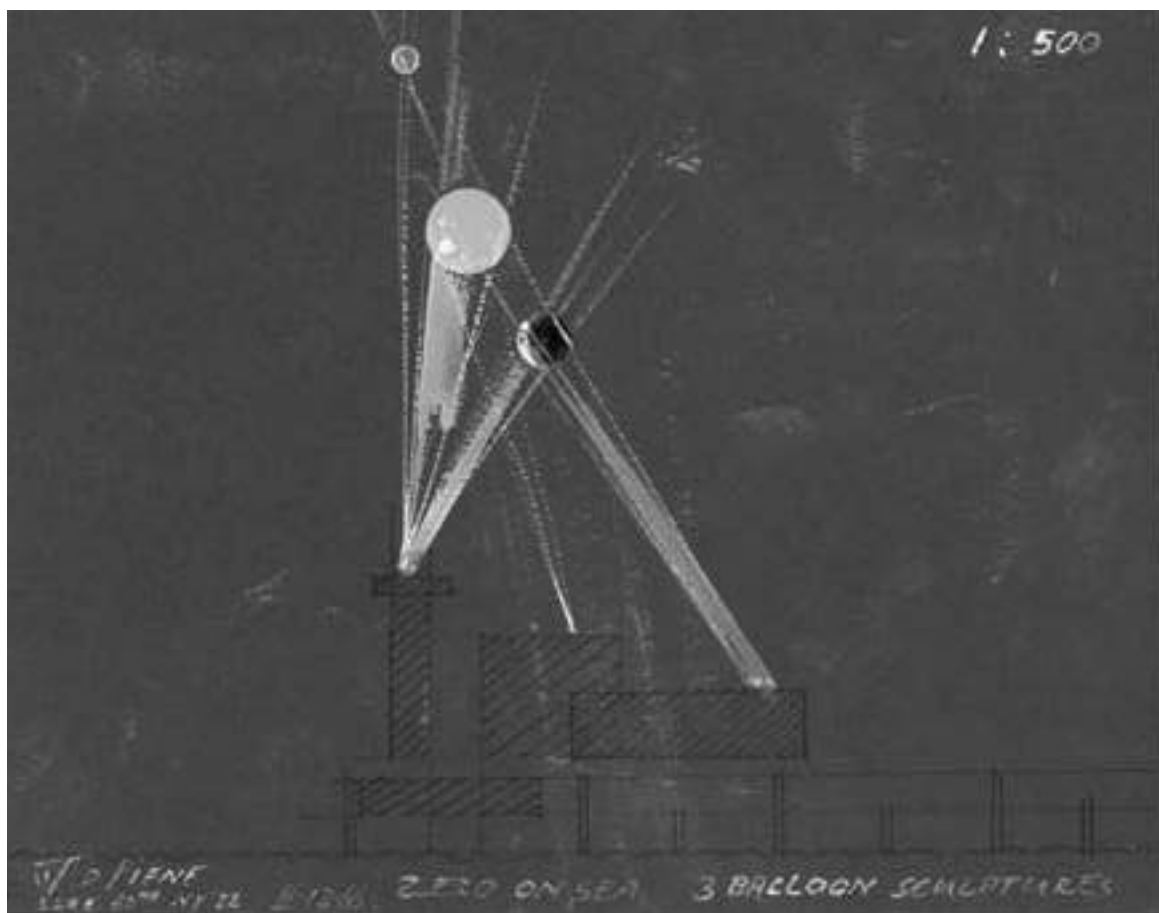
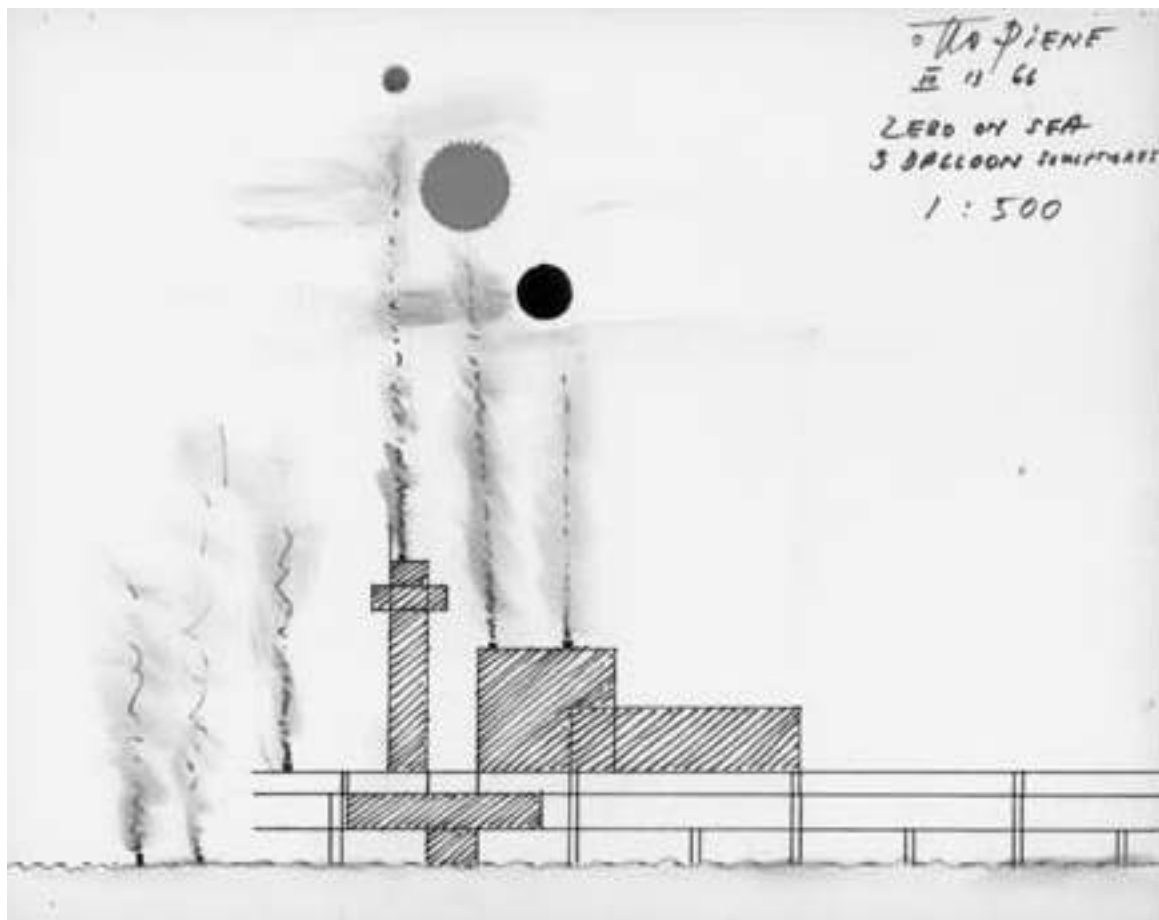


Günther Uecker

'Zero on Sea',
two proposals
by Günther
Uecker, 1965

Otto Piene

'Zero on Sea', two sketches by Otto Piene, 1966



Zero on Sea

Heinz Mack envisaged a vibrating mast of light, to be anchored to the bottom of the sea. Inspired by the many antenna masts he had seen in the Netherlands and Belgium, he suggested to acquire one such mast, paint it blue like the sky, and attach triangular sheets of metal or aluminium to it, to be moved by the wind.³³ 'This is the idea of a vibrating tower of light, which in its vertical tension and balance trembles and vibrates and fiercely reflects the light.'³⁴

Hans Haacke had a whole list of ideas.³⁵ He wanted to attach 15- to 20-m-long, white, nylon streamers to the two groups of seven flagpoles of the long pier bridge. Also, he would have liked to create a 'wall of balloons', to be moved by the wind (balloons on ropes of different lengths fixed closely together, and above each other). He suggested a 'bottle mail' which should be put out in the sea, a labyrinth of beach chairs on the beach, and a battalion of aluminium cannon balls, to be anchored between the islands of the pier; in the wash of the waves, where they would loosely bang against each other. Other ideas were: a swimming balloon sculpture on the surface of the water, an orange-coloured pole standing on top of a buoy, and jets of sea water squirting up into the sky, against each other or against the bottom of the pier islands. Next, Haacke wanted to throw washing powder into the sea, in order to make it foam properly. A small boat with the favourite food of sea gulls was to be dispatched in order to create a 'sea gull sculpture' in the sky. This idea was executed on Coney Island later that year, which secured 'Zero on Sea' an early mention in international art history.³⁶

Günther Uecker sent in a series of ten drawings with his plans. He wanted to hang huge pontoons between the legs of the pier. A loudspeaker on the pier itself should amplify the sound of the lapping of the waves underneath the pontoons. Next, he wished to extend horizontal sheets between flag poles, make plaster casts of all the participating artists and create an island of silver buoys and one of silver cloth (extended over a number of buoys); also, he thought of projecting a film onto buildings on the coast, or on the sea.³⁷

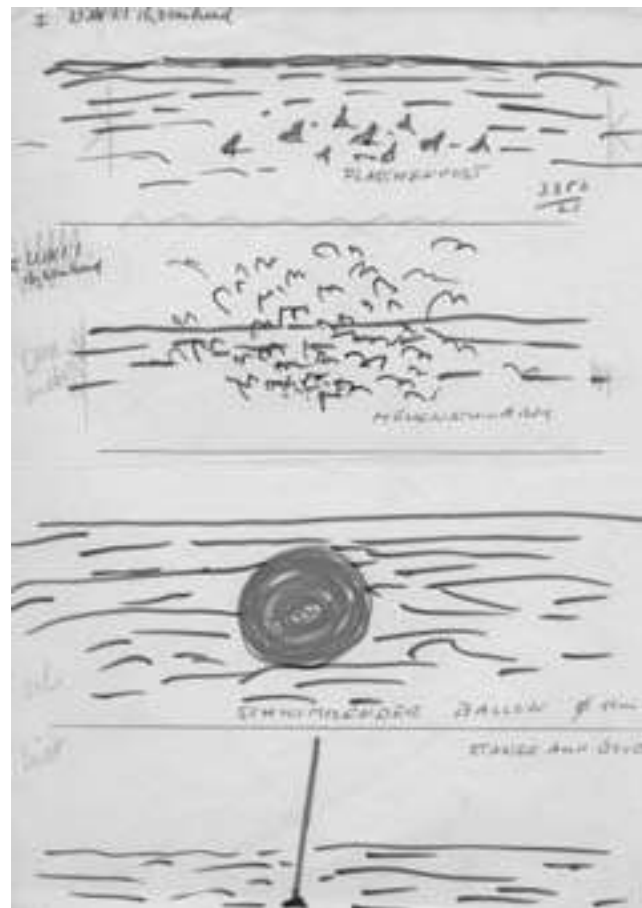
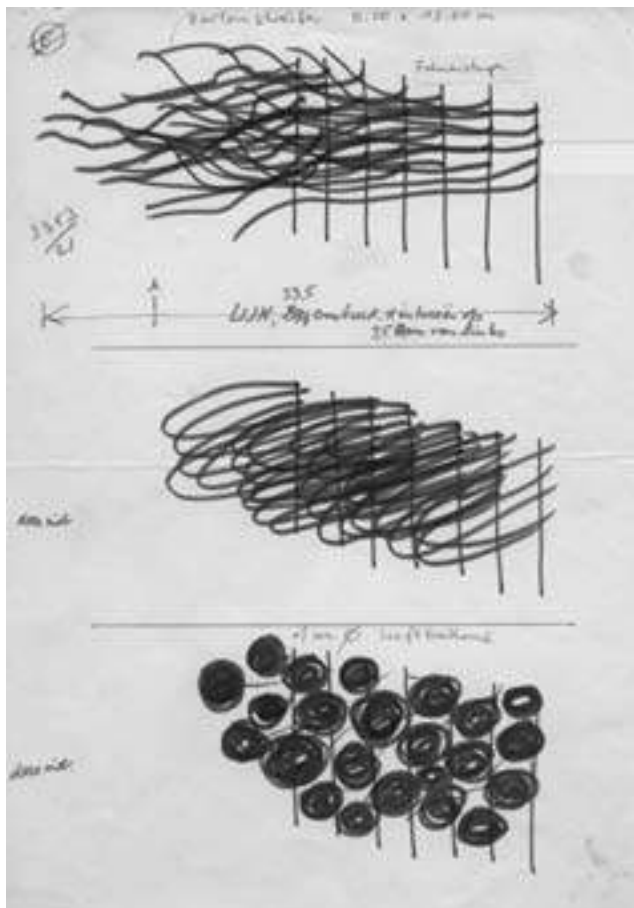
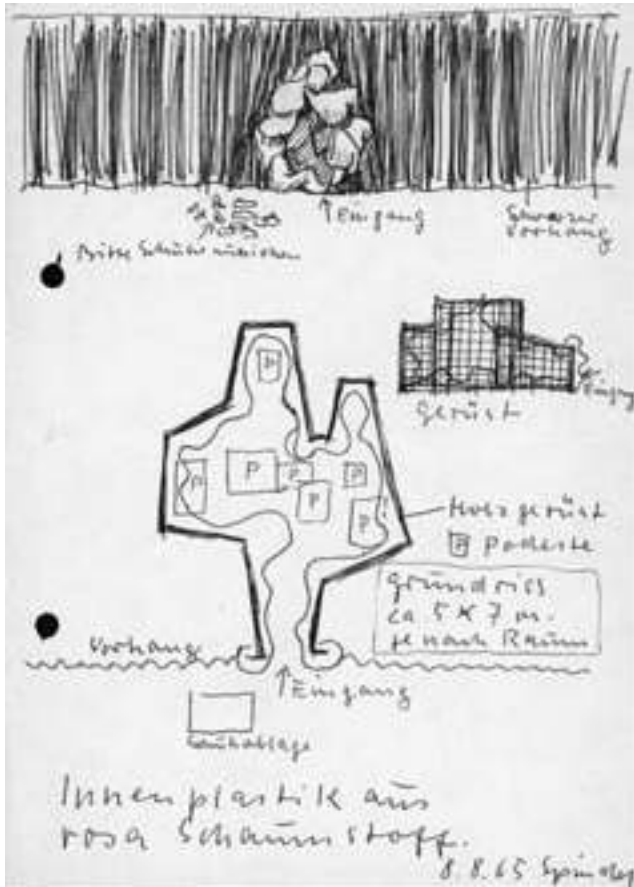
Ferdinand Spindel had a plan for a circa 50-m-long, dark grotto-like labyrinth, filled with foam plastic forms. The photos he sent of this idea remind one involuntarily of the sets in the German expressionist movie *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*. Also, he opted for foam plastic 'sea roses' floating on the sea.³⁸

Ferdinand Spindel

'Zero on Sea', proposal (sketch and photo) by Ferdinand Spindel, 1965

Hans Haacke

'Zero on Sea', seven proposals by Hans Haacke, 1965



Zero on Sea

The French³⁷

Apparently, the plans for the execution of Yves Klein's climate chamber were too ambitious. The plans in the 'Zero on Sea' archive include other ideas, edited by Henk Peeters, and all to do with the element fire. It was the intention to recreate Klein's wall of wall flowers by lighting a rack of gas burners. A ball of steam, made out of water jets, would evaporate over a gas flame. Finally, Peeters wanted to put gas flames out at sea. The execution of the latter idea can be seen on one of Peeters' photomontages. These ideas already featured in the plans for the 1962 Stedelijk Museum Nul exhibition:

Yves Klein wished to put flames on the terrace, near the restaurant. Those flames, which had to rise out of the earth, had to be blue. We had got quite far with that plan. I had approached Shell, which was to deliver the propane, for that was different to the gas used in the town of Amsterdam; that didn't have enough pressure. In Krefeld, such a flame has been realized. It cost fl. 100 per minute, but it looked wonderful. On the pavement outside the Stedelijk Museum we wanted to build racks with gas cooker rings, that can be done with city gas. At a certain distance from the windows it would not be a fire hazard, but the traffic would have experienced hinder from it.⁴⁰

Bernard Aubertin had an idea for a relief of a wooden triptych with 4000 cylinders.

One Swiss⁴¹ and One Austrian

Christian Megert intended to erect a mirror across the entire width of the pier. Three lorry loads of shattered mirror pieces had to be discharged in front of it. A loud speaker would amplify the sound of breaking glass.

Hans Bisschoffhausen had three ideas. Plan A consisted of a wall relief constructed out of prefabricated elements. Plan B, dating from 1963-1964 and called *Horizon with Black Interior*, concerned a 4 x 4 m wooden cube, which should be white on the outside and black on the inside. Plan C, a new concept called *relief au gré du vent*, consisted of a 10 x 10 x 1 m large frame with air bags such as in use at airports, standing on a plinth.⁴²

The Italians⁴³

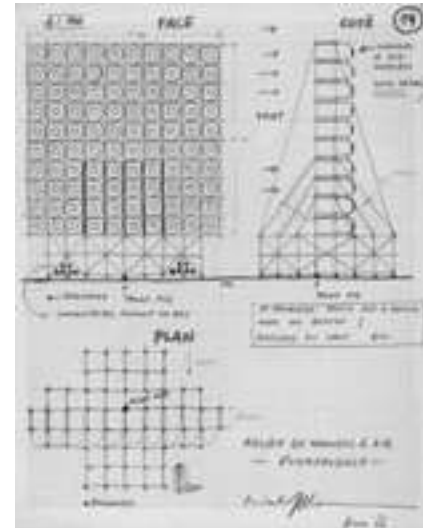
Gianni Colombo suggested making a cylinder consisting of six layers of segments, with a diameter of 1 m each. All layers were equal but each was a slightly rotated from the previous one, as if in a screw movement. This design looked very much like the one for the Nul65 exhibition that Henk Peeters used for one of his photomontages.

Lucio Fontana sent in a photograph of a ceiling relief with holes in it, entitled *Decorazione per un cinema* (Decoration for a Cinema), dating from 1951. The idea was to light it from behind in order to suggest the starry night sky. Unfortunately, no accompanying letters have survived.

Nanda Vigo wanted to install a so-called *Space Tube*, a concrete cylinder coated inside and out with aluminium. Glass windows and mirrors were installed inside. The visitor was meant to walk up and down between these.

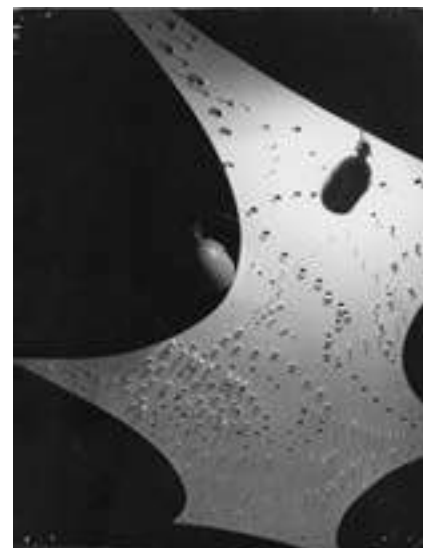
Hans Bisschoffs- hausen

'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Hans Bisschoffs-
hausen, 1966



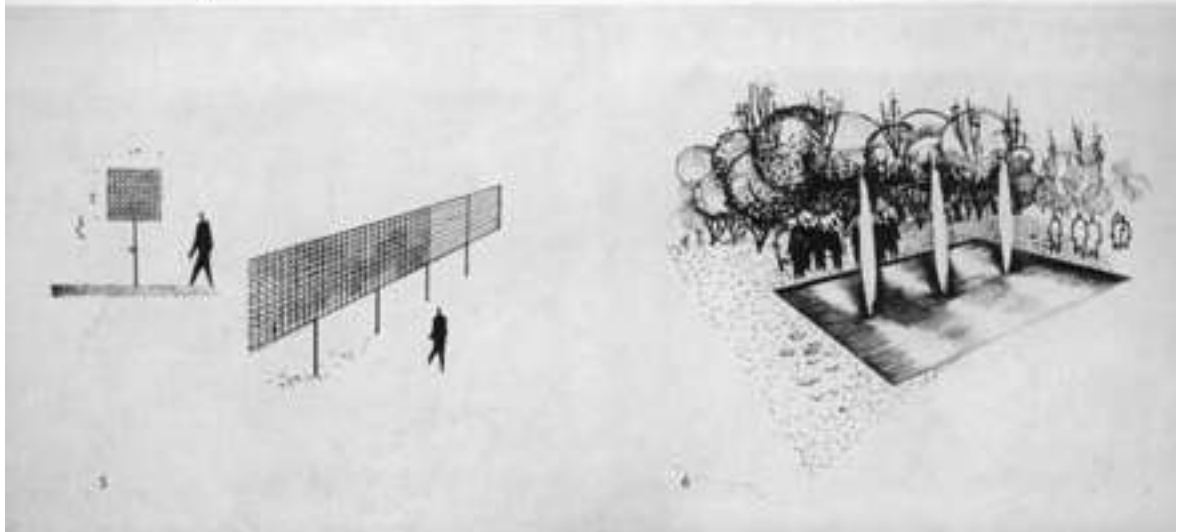
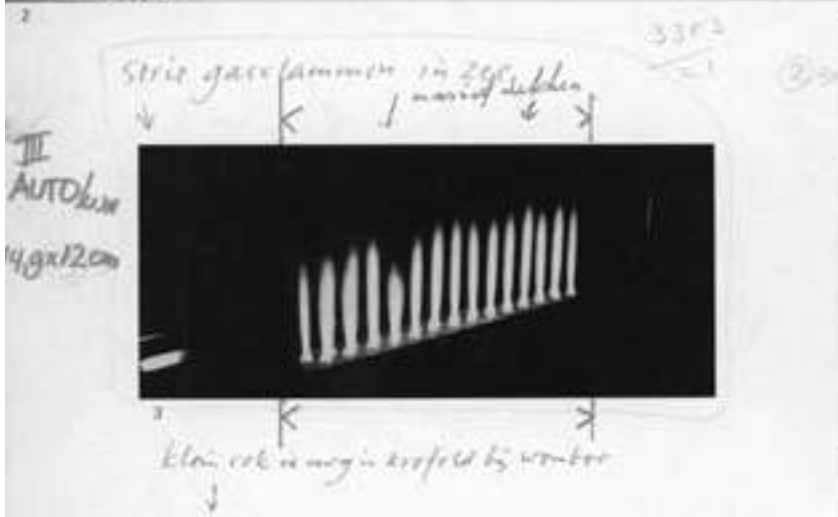
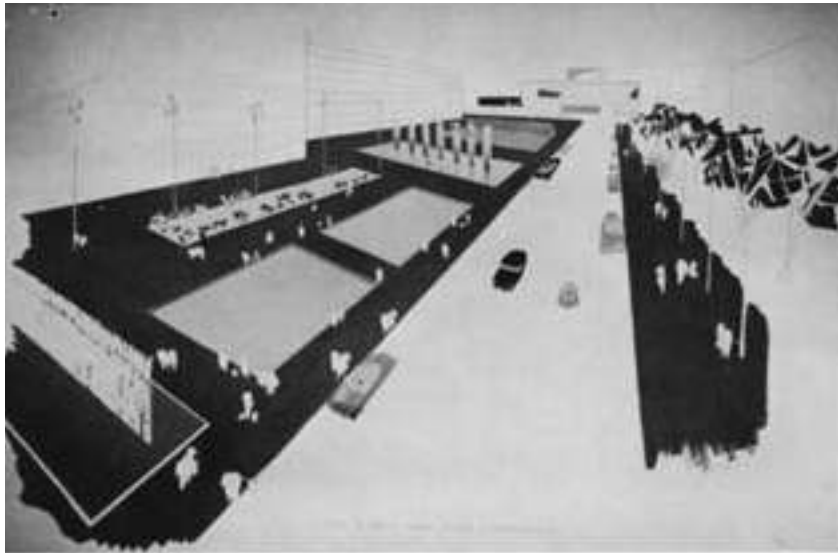
Lucio Fontana

'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Lucio Fontana,
1965



Yves Klein

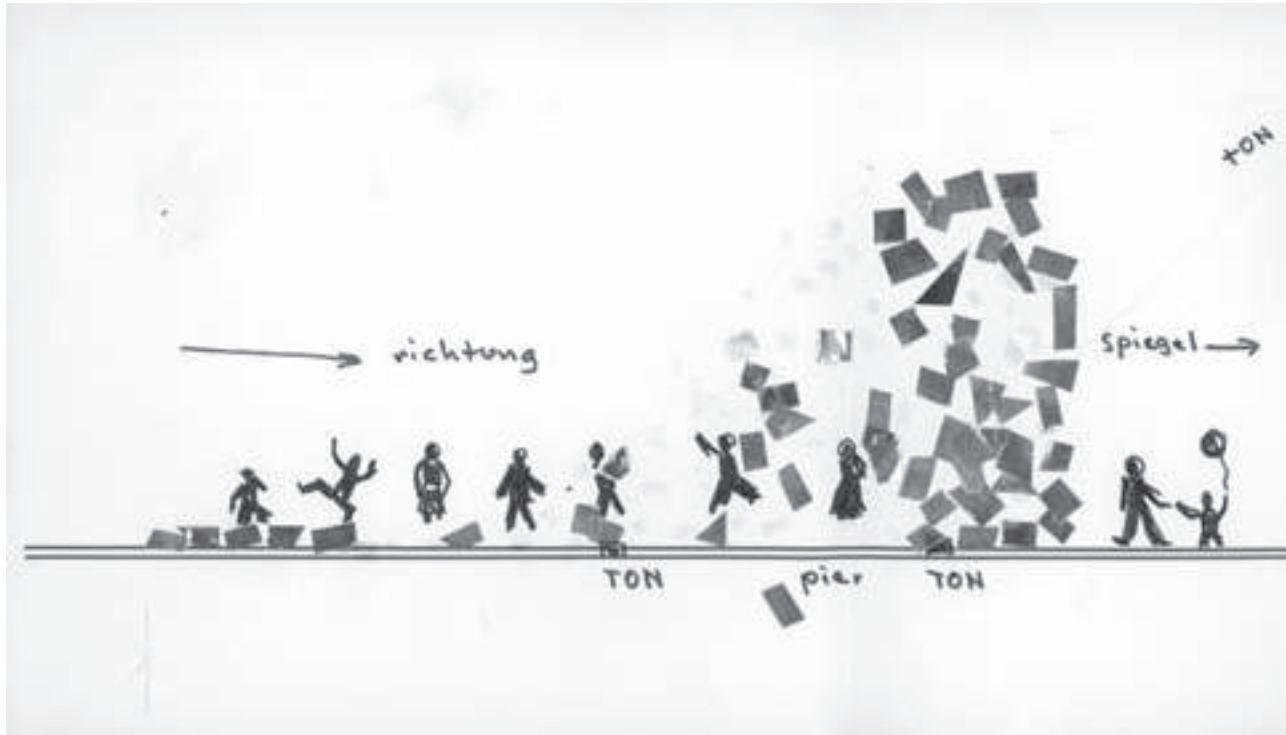
'Zero on Sea', proposal by Henk Peeters for assimilating work by Yves Klein, 1965



Zero on Sea

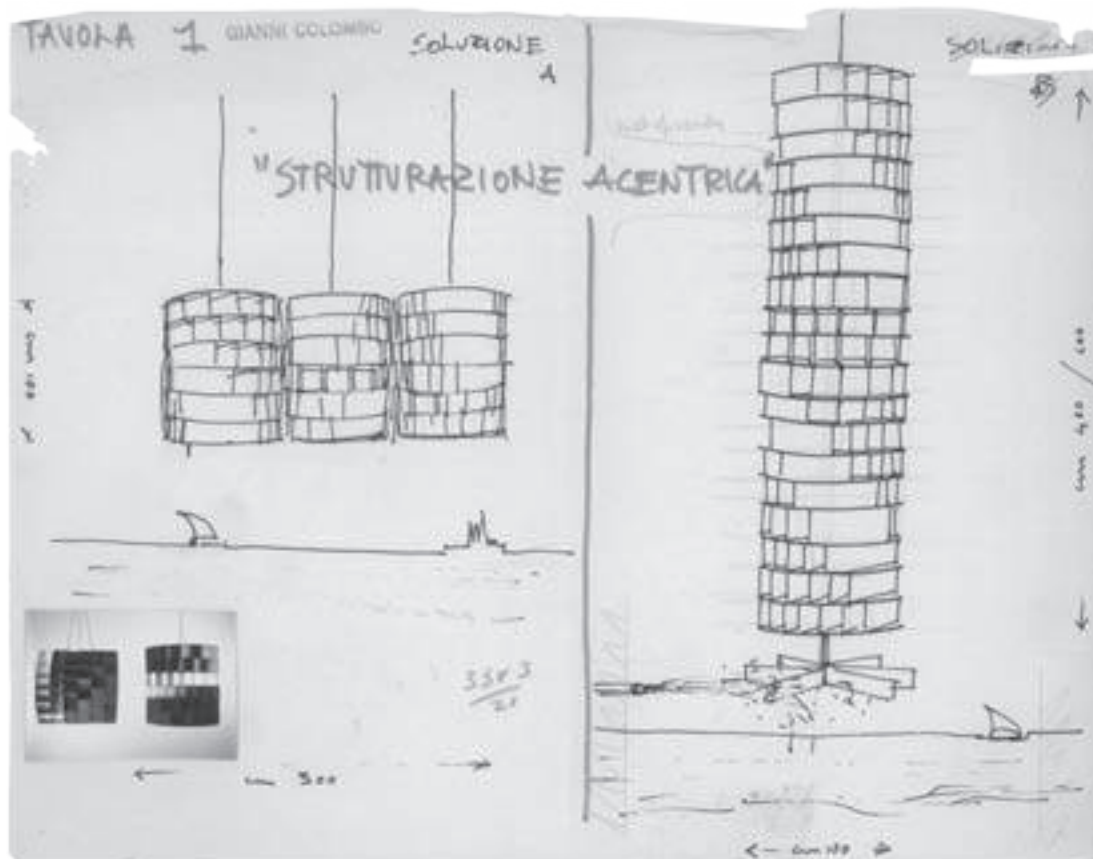
Christian Megert

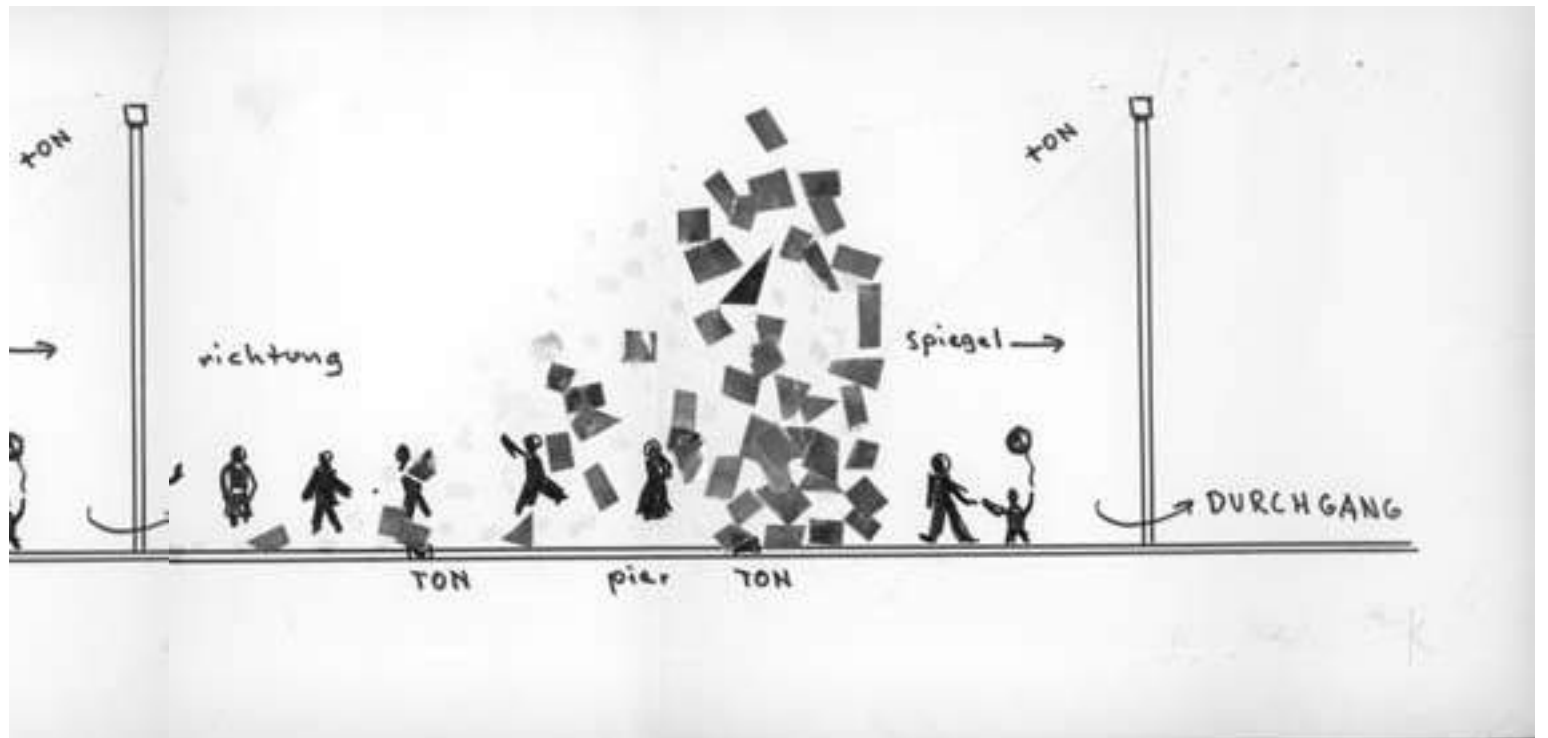
'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Christian
Megert, 1965



Gianni Colombo

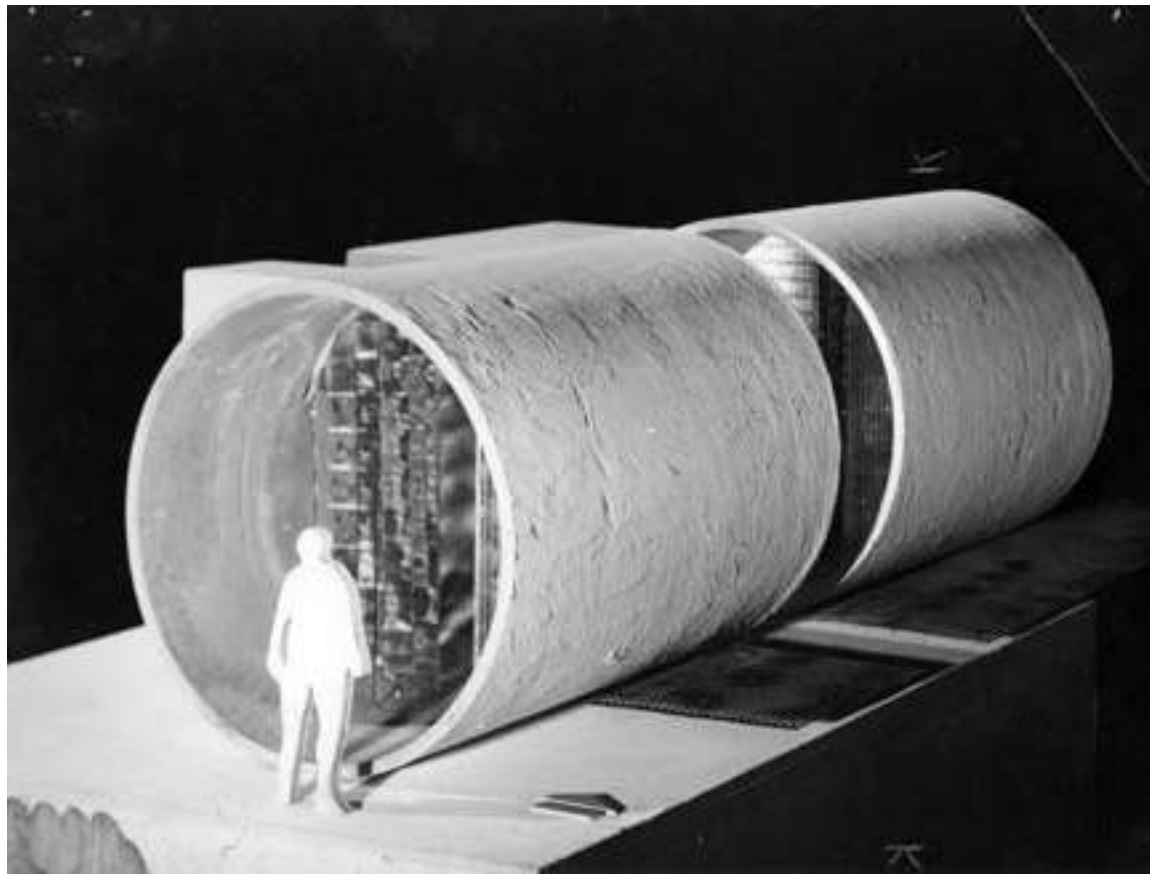
'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Gianni Colombo,
1965





Nanda Vigo

'Zero on Sea',
proposal (photo
of maquette)
by Nanda Vigo,
1965



Zero on Sea

The Gutai Group⁴⁴

By far the biggest contribution to 'Zero on Sea' was to come from the Gutai group. The Japanese planned a grand mix of all the elements provided.

Some Gutai members had sent in sketches of their 'classic' work, such as Sadamasa Motonoga and his plastic bags full of coloured water, which had to be placed in show cases against a white background, or Saburo Murakami, known for his series of paper covered frames, which he used to jump through; in this case, he suggested a man-high glass box, the sides of which had to be broken with a stick. Minoru Yoshida dispatched a photo and sketches of what he called a 'chain' of interlocked, triangular slabs, presumably made of metal, in red and blue, which could be displayed on the floor in various combinations, plus drawings of red and blue 'blinds' in a row. Toshio Yoshida sent in plans and photo's for bottles filled with detergent, connected to an air pump such as used in aquariums for tropical fish, which would produce all sorts of foam shapes.⁴⁵ Aine Kinashi had a option on an object made out of 189 blue and neutral electric light bulbs to be fitted into a white panel connected to a record-player turning shaft; this would produce lighting 'at varied positions'. Tsuyoshi Maekawa suggested a 3-m-high plastic tube filled with gold and silver snippets of paper, which were to be stirred into motion by a propeller. Shuki Mukai sent in a photograph of himself lying in one of his stripe- and dot-covered environments; considering his comment on the back of the photo, he intended to create something similar in Scheveningen.⁴⁶ Shozo Shimamoto had plans for polychromatic plastic sculptures that could move from within, and in one case, presumably produce music; some were formed like the interlinking bones of a skeleton.

Other members of the Gutai group delivered plans especially conceived for sea and pier, which would create an exchange between the works and their surroundings. Michio Yoshihara, for instance, sent in two watercolours with vivid designs. He wanted to extend a rope with tufts of red ribbon between two islands of the pier; also, he intended to put out a 50-m-long and 2-m-wide red 'carpet', stretching from one end of the watch tower island over the surface of the water, with a bunch of white ribbons at the other end, where it was to be anchored to the bottom of the sea. Tsuruko Yamazaki delivered a coloured sketch of curtains of cheap rayon linen cloths of ten to 15 different colours, 1 m wide and 12 m long, presumably to be hung from a high point of the pier, for the wind to play with. Norio Iami sent in drawings for five triangular rafts, which had to be anchored out in the sea and covered in red, blue, green, yellow and white vinyl; also, a sketch for a kind of pavilion with four layers of draped curtains against a green background, which could be raised and dropped in turns. Lamps placed behind the curtains would reveal different colour combinations. Finally, Iami's contribution contained a photo of a Perspex box that contained a plastic substance that could move like waves.

In retrospect – 40 years later – it has been suggested that perhaps Michio and Jiro Yoshihara sketched all the Gutai designs; Shimamoto, one of the few survivors of the group, now denies ever having made the sketches described above.⁴⁷ Be that as it may, the Gutai group contribution would have been a colourful one.

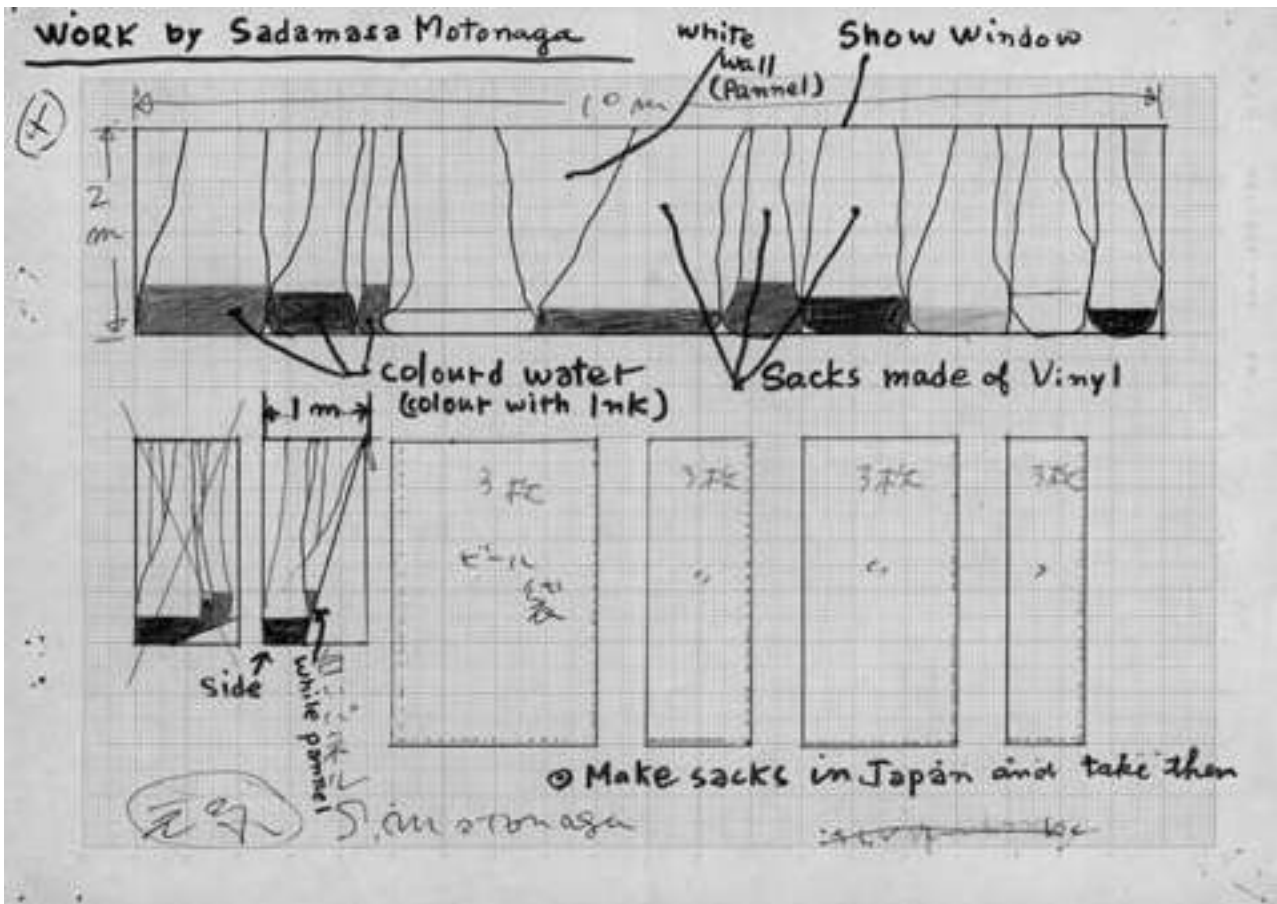
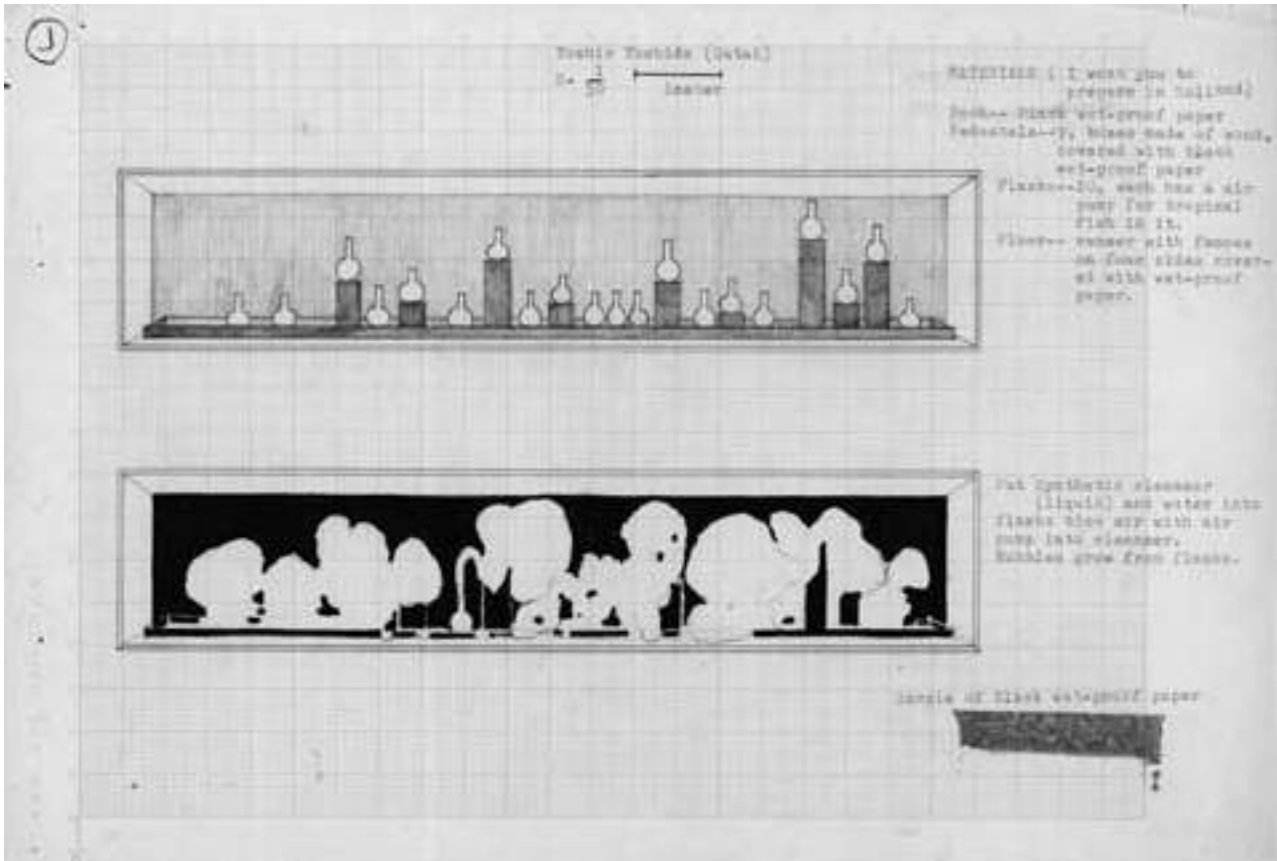
Jiro Yoshihara did realize it was perhaps a little too ambitious to demand that the complete Gutai group be flown in from Japan for the 'Zero on Sea' event. Possibly, this was the reason that some of the artists sent in photographs of more 'conventional' works of art that could simply be shipped from Japan and placed somewhere on the pier without needing special installation. This would explain the inclusion of *Red Fan* by Kazuo Shiraga, an unnamed object covered with what looks like multiple eye balls by Takesada Matsutani, and works by Kumiko Imanaka,⁴⁸ George Kikumani and Motonao Takasaki. A number of these did indeed travel to the Netherlands and were shown in the Gutai exhibition in Internationale Gallerij OREZ in September 1966,⁴⁹ and in Rotterdam Studio Experimental the following year.⁵⁰

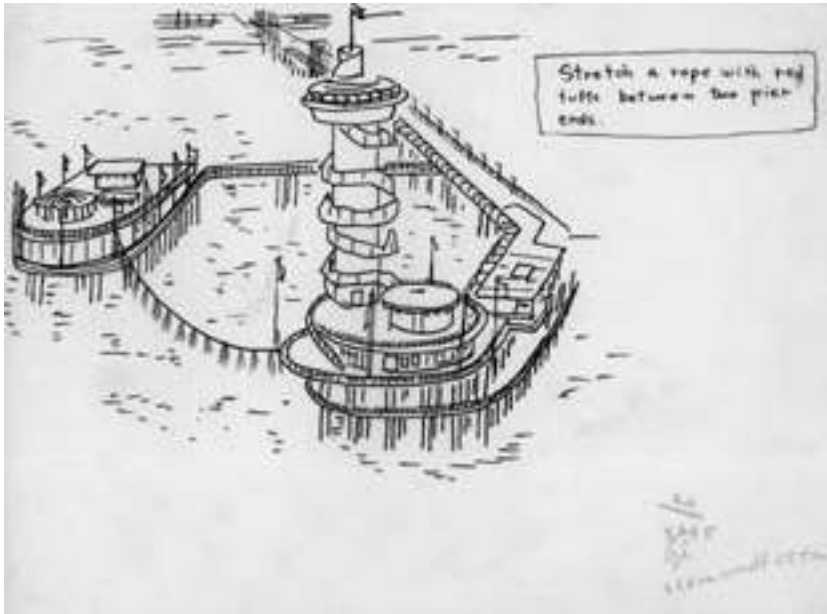
Toshio Yoshida

'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Toshio
Yoshida, 1965

Sadamasa Motonoga

'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Sadamasa
Motonoga,
1965



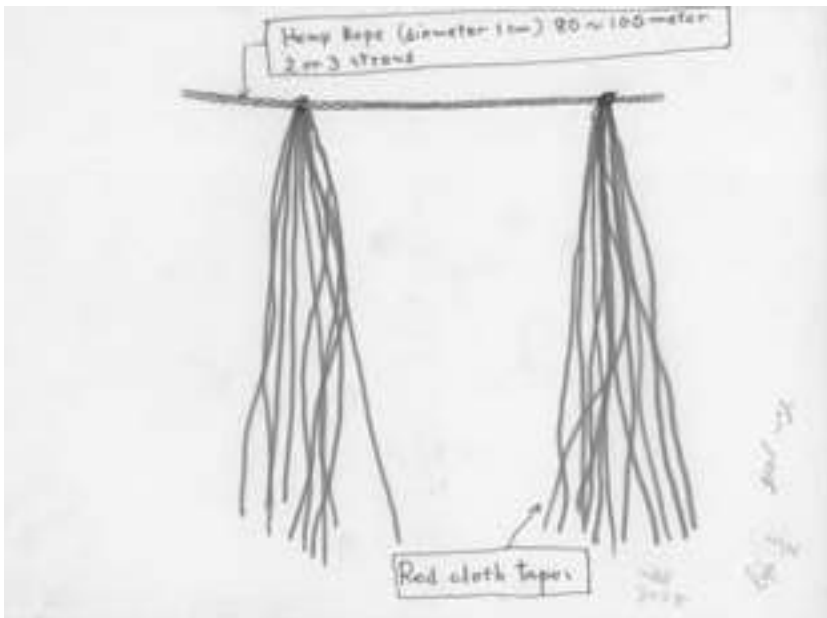


**Michio
Yoshihara**

'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Michio
Yoshihara,
1965

**Shozo
Shinamoto**

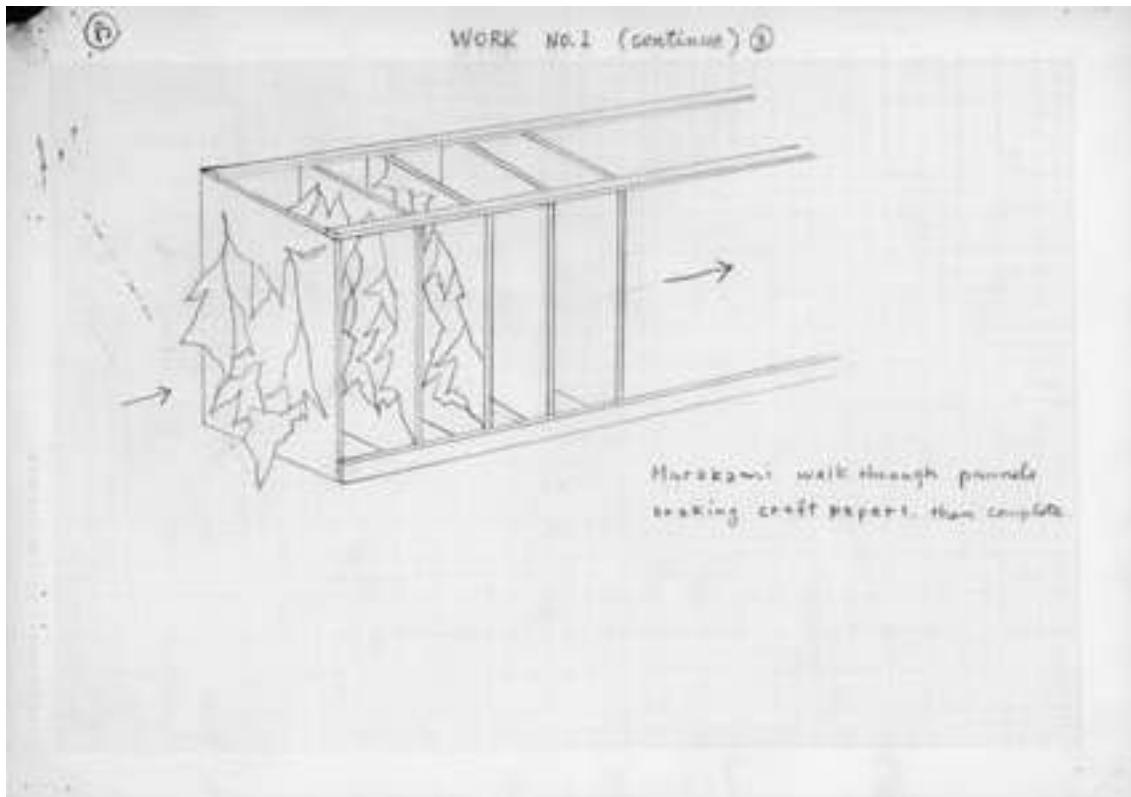
'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Shozo
Shinamoto,
1965



**Tsuruko
Yamazaki**

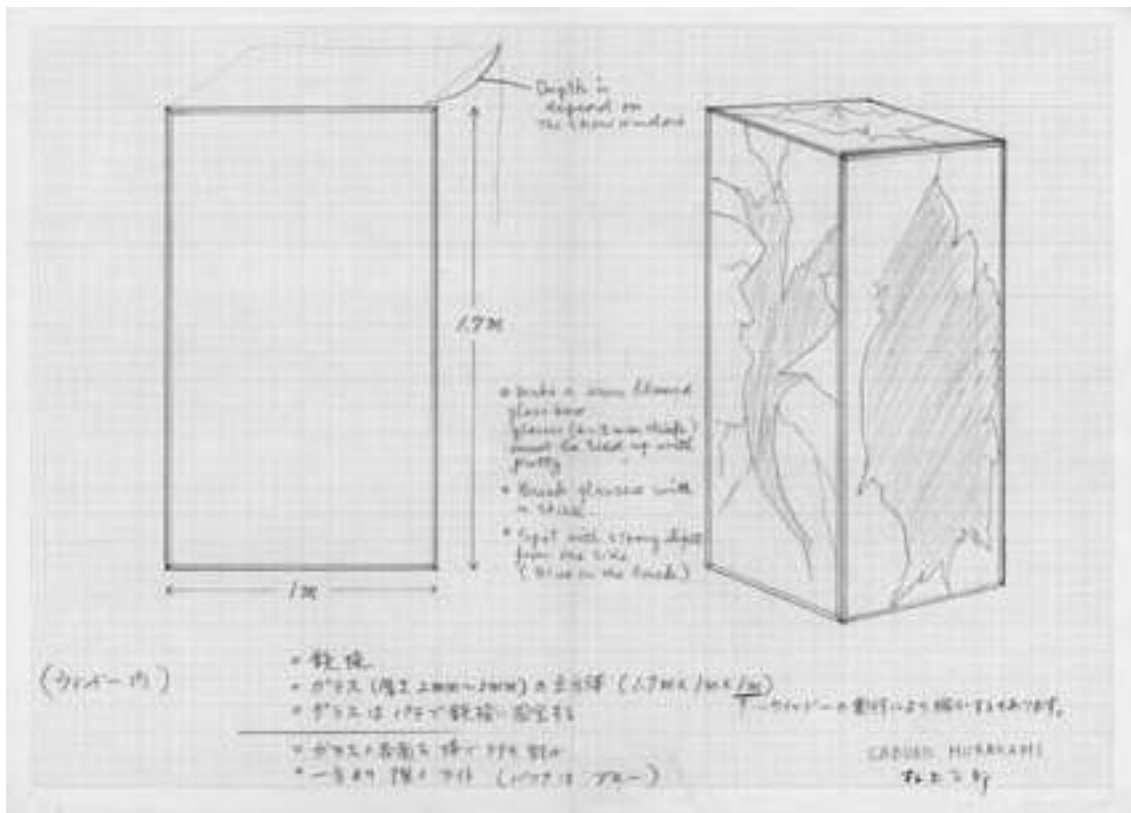
'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Tsuruko
Yamazaki,
1965

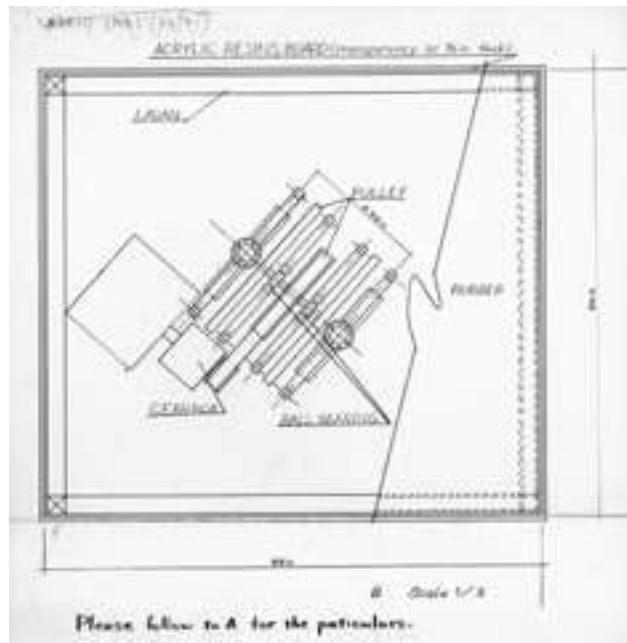




Saburo Murakami

'Zero on Sea',
two proposals
by Saburo
Murakami,
1965



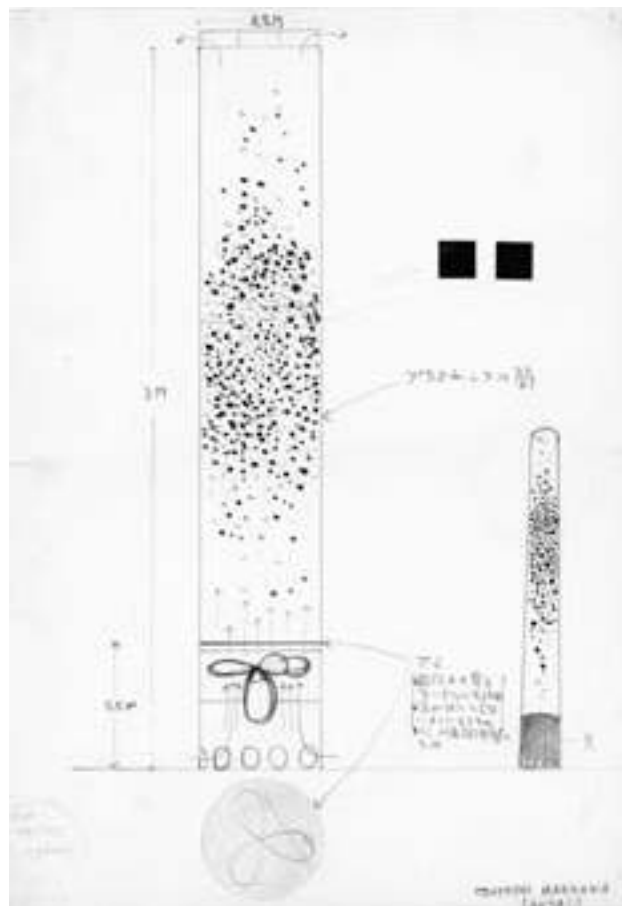


Norio Imai

'Zero on Sea',
proposal
(photos and
drawing of
mechanical
structure) by
Norio Imai,
1965

Tsuyoshi Maekawa

'Zero on Sea',
proposal by
Tsuyoshi
Maekawa,
1965



Zero on Sea

Yayoi Kusama

'Zero on Sea', proposal (excerpt from a letter and photo) by Yayoi Kusama, 1965

Can you get an electrician for me when I come to Holland?

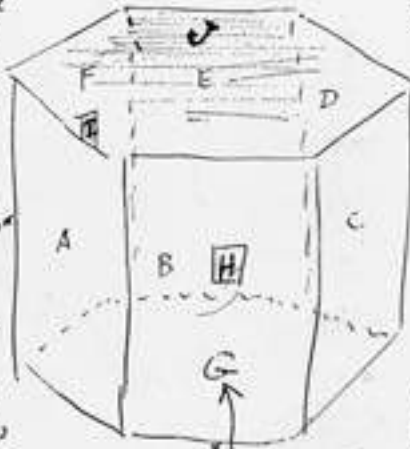
Since I will be in Holland only ten days before the opening, please have the material and the electrician ready for me when I come.

I hear that the exhibition will be permanent so please buy the mirrors.

I will send you the measurements tomorrow. I shall also send a photo. Thus, you will understand how to make it with the help of a carpenter.

Please send me an airplane ticket as soon as possible.

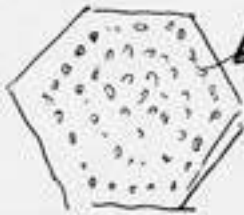
I need a tape records. I will bring tapes of Beattie's music. At my show I gave visitors a button reading "LOVE FOREVER" Kusama. Please make 1000 buttons like the sample I am sending, but, of course, the words in Dutch.



A, B, C, D, E, F, G = mirrors

H, I = deep holes (8" x 8") FOR PEOPLE TO LOOK INSIDE.

J = electric bulbs attached to ceiling.



CEILING covered with lights going on and off.

TITLE IS LOVE FOREVER Kusama

LOVE FOREVER
Kusama

George Rickey

'Zero on Sea', proposal by George Rickey, 1965



USA: Yayoi Kusama and George Rickey

Since she was living in New York and felt herself to be more part of the American art scene than the Japanese one at the time, we will consider Yayoi Kusama in this section.⁵¹

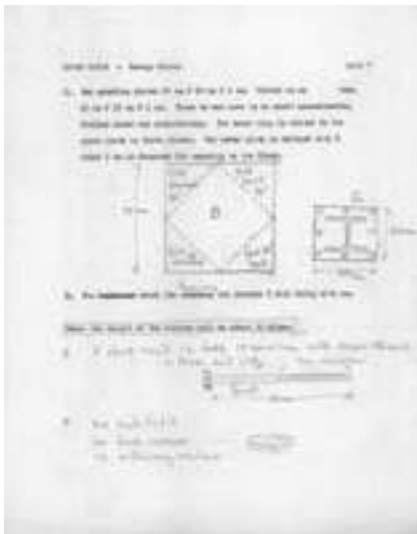
For 'Zero on Sea', Yayoi Kusama eventually suggested an environmental sculpture or Peep Show entitled *Love Forever*. This was a more extensive version of the show entitled *Kusama's Peep Show* that opened on 16 March 1966 at Richard Castellani Gallery in New York. The pier project plan consisted of a mirror-lined hexagonal room, larger than *Peep Show*, its ceiling embedded with small red, white, blue and green bulbs flashing on and off, and forming the words 'love' and 'peace'. Viewers were invited to walk inside the sculpture. During the opening, music by The Beatles should be played, and Kusama would distribute *Love Forever* buttons to the public.⁵²

George Rickey sent in a sketch for what he called a 'space churn', a kinetic sculpture consisting of seven concentric circles made of steel tubing, each turning on two pivots inside the next larger one. Fortunately, his design has been printed in *Forum Magazine*, for the original seems to have been lost.⁵³

Vernissage of 'Zero on Sea'

For the vernissage of 'Zero on Sea', Peeters drew up a list of suggestions in his specific Bauhaus style.⁵⁴ The plans had been developed together with Günther Uecker. In the *Zero onuitgevoerd* catalogue Peeters explained he would have liked to turn 'Zero on Sea' into a kind of theme park with fancy fair attractions.⁵⁵

1. have a 0 cent post stamp printed. + special stamp.
2. contest for amateur photographers. ask kodak or agfa for prizes.
3. essay contests.
4. invite circus and variety artists to the vernissage: jugglers, rope walker, fire eater, escapologist, bicyclist (high ones), white elephant, etc. etc. (snake dancer, weight lifter . . . ask an impresario. have these perform on different parts of the pier.
5. ballet of revue girls clad in Zero costume: white or silver (to be chosen by us)
6. smoke curtain at the vernissage
7. picture post cards of the exhibition
8. fire works coming from the sea. Many white star rains and big pauses between them, heavy bangs
9. street musicians, organs etc. much noise



Peeters also envisaged a 144-page catalogue that would contain interviews with all the participants, the history of Scheveningen pier, the historical development of Zero/Nul (with bibliography and biographies of the participants); and of course images of their work and that of likeminded artists, of the pier and the installation of the exhibition, and possibly, contributions by colleagues in literature such as Armando, Vaandrager, Verhagen and Sleutelaar. The texts were to be translated into English, French and German. A 'Zero on Sea' newspaper was to appear, a special press conference would be thrown.

Scheveningse pier wordt



NUL-festijn

IDEËËNMAN HANS GÖTZE:

'Zee zwart verven'

... van kunst en kunstenaars

... van kunst en kunstenaars

... van kunst en kunstenaars

27 JULI 1966

'Zero op zee' op Scheveningse pier

... van kunst en kunstenaars

... van kunst en kunstenaars

... van kunst en kunstenaars

Zero-kunstenaars op Noordzee Pier drie weken een „kunstwerk“

Zeegeluiden tweerklinken duizendvoudig over strand

... van kunst en kunstenaars

... van kunst en kunstenaars

... van kunst en kunstenaars

's Nachts moeten er onder de pier zeepbellen komen

... van kunst en kunstenaars

... van kunst en kunstenaars

... van kunst en kunstenaars

The End

As time went by, and the execution of all these fantastic projects drew nearer while nothing seemed to happen, some artists began to express doubts.

They were right. As said, 'Zero on Sea' never happened. The TV show *Uit Bellevue*, meant to advertise the event, now served to announce its cancellation. It was broadcast on 18 April 1966. Directed by Yayoi Kusama and Henk Peeters, Joop van Tijn interviewed a couple of Zero artists in German and English.⁵⁶

Only a short fragment of this programme has been preserved in the Dutch television archive. It features a bird's-eye view of Scheveningen pier, with the sounds of the breaking of waves on the shore and the shrieking of sea gulls in the background. A number of press clippings pass by on the screen, and we see the faces of some of the participating artists. It ends with an answer to the question: What happened to 'Zero on Sea'? 'Geen Zero, geen zier.'⁵⁷ A nice pun, in Dutch, which means so much as 'not a thing'. Nevertheless, it was a sad ending to a visionary project.

Despite or perhaps because of its utopian character, 'Zero on Sea' is important. It fits into a series of large-scale projects that were created at the time outside the museum space, the precursors of Land Art. It is also an early example of all-round manifestations in contemporary art, as developed in the 1970s.⁵⁸ Finally, the project is now generally considered to be the grand finale to the Dutch Nul movement and the international ZERO movement in general.⁵⁹ In its playfulness it fits perfectly in the spirit of the 1960s. As Janneke Wesseling concluded in her study of the Nul group: 'With Zero on Sea, the dream of homo ludens would briefly have become reality.'⁶⁰

Announcement of the 'Zero on Sea' project in various Dutch newspapers

- 1 Scheveningen is a beach resort situated to the west of The Hague.
- 2 L[eo] R[oo]est], 'De pier, nulpunt tussen kunst en commercie, *Het Vaderland*, 4 August 1965.
- 3 Various newspaper clippings, The Hague Municipal Archives, Albert Vogel Archive, inv. no. 709, file no. 1614 and RKD (Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague), Henk Peeters Archives, inv. no. HaRKD.0643, box 3.
- 4 According to Gerard Verdijk in TV programme *Bij Nul beginnen*, part 4 of the DVD with *Aat van Yperen, Frank Eerhart and Truus Gubbels* (eds.), *Onmetelijk optimisme. Kunstenaars en hun bemiddelaars in de jaren 1945-1970* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2007).
- 5 Jan Juffermans, '20 jaar OREZ – een zorgeloos galerie-verhaal', *Tableau*, no. 2 (November/December 1980), 479-480.
- 6 See: Cor Wijnbergen, 'Reinder Zwolsman', *Studio*, no. 26 (27 June – 3 July 1971), 16-19.
- 7 Letter IGO (Internationale Galerij OREZ), 3 April 1966, signed by Leo Verboon, Kusama papers, inv. nr. YK/3900.36. With thanks to Midori Yamamura.
- 8 The exhibition lasted until 4 May. See *Haagsche Courant*, 16 April 1966.
- 9 *Forum voor architectuur en daamee verbonden kunsten*, no. 20 (June 1967).
- 10 Henk Peeters, Franck Gribling, et al., *Zero onuitgevoerd* (Amsterdam: Kunsthistorisch Instituut, 1970).
- 11 After Vogel's death in 1982, the author inherited those files, and bequeathed them to The Hague Municipal Archives (HGA), where they are now open to the public. Albert Vogel archive, Zero on Sea documents: file nos. 1614-1623.
- 12 HGA, Albert Vogel Archive, file no. 1614.
- 13 It is not clear what is meant by this.
- 14 The third installment of *de nieuwe stijl* was meant to have been devoted to the 'Zero on Sea' project. Letter from Henk Peeters to Albert Vogel and Leo Verboon, 28 November 1965, HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1614.
- 15 'Scheveningen krijgt een nieuw soort manifestatie', various newspapers, 21 October 1965.
- 16 The *de nieuwe stijl* magazine was launched in March 1965. It included poems by New Style Poets and texts by members of the Dutch Nul group and international artists such as Yayoi Kusama.
- 17 R[oo]est], 'De pier', op. cit. (note 2).
- 18 's Nachts moeten er onder pier zeepbellen komen', *Trouw*, 25 October 1965.
- 19 The Dutch term for somebody who enjoys a leisurely stroll is *pierewaaier* (CdW).
- 20 'Zero op zee, onbegrensde fantasieën in Scheveningen', *Het Financiële Dagblad*, 1 November 1965.
- 21 HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1614.
- 22 Design by Jan Schoonhoven: see letter to Henk Peeters, 14 October 1965, reproduced in *Zero onuitgevoerd*, op. cit. (note 10), 11-12.
- 23 All designs and correspondence in HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1615.
- 24 Henk Peeters, 'Onuitgevoerde plannen Zero I' and idem, II, 'Fragmenten uit een gesprek met Henk Peeters', *Zero onuitgevoerd*, op. cit. (note 10), 6-8.
- 25 Undated letter from Armando to Leo Verboon at IGO [1966].
- 26 Letter from Jan Henderikse to Hans Götze of EMS, 4 September 1965.
- 27 All designs and correspondence in HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1616.
- 28 See reprint in Otto Piene and Heinz Mack, *ZERO 1, 2, 3* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1973), 52-330.
- 29 From: Otto Piene, 'The development of the Group "Zero"', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 3 September 1964, in: Piene and Mack, *ZERO 1, 2, 3*, op. cit. (note 28), XXIII. The first big ZERO project in this respect was Mack's Sahara project (conceived in 1959).
- 30 'In addition to the ZERO group letter that I wrote you a week ago and aside from my letter about your stay in New York that I wrote you yesterday, I think it is useful to give you a rough description of my personal intention for ZERO ON SEA.' Letter from Otto Piene to IGO, 24 July 1965. Also mentioned in the letter from Hans Haacke to IGO, 18 August 1965.
- 31 See: Piene and Mack, *ZERO 1, 2, 3*, op. cit. (note 28), 149.
- 32 Letter from Otto Piene to IGO, 15 March 1966, printed in *Forum*, op. cit. (note 8), 17 (the original is lost).
- 33 Letter from Heinz Mack to IGO, 10 March 1966.
- 34 In an e-mail to the author (10 October 2010) Mack mentioned that he also offered to reconstruct the light carousel of the Nul65 exhibition on the pier; the original had been damaged and destroyed. No such proposal has survived in Vogel's archives.
- 35 Letter from Hans Haacke to IGO, 18 August 1965, and six sketches.
- 36 'A 1965 project for a show at Scheveningen, Holland, involving sea gulls was executed in 1968 at Coney Island: *Living Sculpture* showed the birds diving for crumbs of bread.' Carla Gottlieb, *Beyond Modern Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976), 315.
- 37 See also *Uecker Zeitung 1* (1969), HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1616.
- 38 Letter from Ferdinand Spindl to IGO, 2 February 1966.
- 39 All documents in HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1618.
- 40 Henk Peeters in *Zero onuitgevoerd*, op. cit. (note 10), 6-7.
- 41 Letter from Hans Bisschoffs-hausen to IGO, February 1966.
- 42 Filed with the French artists, in HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1618.
- 43 All designs in HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1620.
- 44 All designs in HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1617.
- 45 The text on the accompanying photographs refers to the 15th Gutai Art Exhibition in Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka, Japan, in July 1965.
- 46 'Makai gathers scraps and materials himself in Holland, and draws and completes.'
- 47 E-mail from Tijs Visser to author, 23 July 2010.
- 48 Object by Kumiko Imanaka published in *Forum*, op. cit. (note 8), 30.
- 49 Exhibition 'Facets of New Tendencies', September 1966, showing the Gutai Group plus Yayoi Kusama. See: J.V., 'Kunsthandwerkers tonen producten in Galerij Orez', *Het Binnenhof*, 20 September 1966.
- 50 See: *Catalogue exhibition Experiment Studio Rotterdam Gutai Group Osaka Japan*, May 1967. Albert Vogel Archive, file no. 1617.
- 51 In the archives, however, her documents are filed together with those from the Japanese Gutai group. HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1617.
- 52 Letter from Yayoi Kusama to IGO, 23 March 1966.
- 53 In *Forum*, op. cit. (note 8), 22. Correspondence in HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1619.
- 54 Without capital letters.
- 55 *Zero onuitgevoerd*, op. cit. (note 10), 8. Original documents in HGA, Albert Vogel archive, file no. 1614.
- 56 '8.55 Uit Bellevue', *Televisier*, 19 April 1966; 'Werken van Nulgroep op scherm', *Brabants Nieuwsblad*, 18 April 1966; 'Zero-Nul géén kunst', *De Tijd*, 19 April 1966 and untitled in NRC, 19 April 1966.
- 57 Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, Hilversum, ref. no. 97543, tin no. K22688.
- 58 See: Cees de Boer, 'Bij Nul beginnen – de kunst van Informatie – Zero – Nul', in: *Onmetelijk optimisme*, op. cit. (note 4), 189-216.
- 59 See: Heike von den Valentijn, 'Utopische, reale und lichtkinetische Räume der Zero-Zeit', *Zero. Internationale Künstler der Avant-Garde der 50er/60er Jahre* (Düsseldorf: Museum das Kunstpalast/Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 56-67.
- 60 Janneke Wesseling, *Alles was mooi. Een geschiedenis van de Nul-beweging* (Amsterdam: Meulenhof/Landshof, 1989), 84.

Zero on Sea

Group Exhibitions 1957-1967

This abridged list of group exhibitions, held mainly in Europe, gives an idea of the network that was built by the German, French, Italian and Dutch artists between 1957 and 1967. It shows there were several important ZERO centres: in the Netherlands (The Hague and Rotterdam), Germany (Düsseldorf and Frankfurt) and Italy (Milan and Rome). From the beginning, the various artist collectives, including Zero and Azimut, made their own studios available to like-minded artists as exhibition and sale rooms. Gallery owners they befriended not only supported the artists' initiatives in their capacity as commercial institutions, but also provided assistance in setting up and expanding the network; they also initiated experimental exhibitions in various museums. In Germany, Udo Kultermann was one of the first, in 1960, to present several ZERO artists in a museum context; Willem Sandberg subsequently opened the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam to an initiative by Henk Peeters and the German Zero artists in 1962. The activities of the international ZERO movement reached as far as the USA and Japan.

1957 Düsseldorf

Atelier Gladbacher Str. 69
'1. Abendausstellung'
Hajo Bleckert, Peter Brüning, Horst Egon Kalinowski, Herbert Kaufmann, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Hans Salentin, Gerhard Wind



1958 Düsseldorf

Atelier Gladbacher Str. 69
'7. Abendausstellung. Das Rote Bild'
Hermann Bartels, Beckmann, Frédéric Benrath, Hajo Bleckert, Nico Boers, Hanne Brenken, Peter Brüning, Hal Busse, August Clüsserath, Karl Fred Dahmen, Engert Epple, Leo Erb, Klaus Jürgen-Fischer, Albert Fürst, Johannes Geccelli, Rupprecht Geiger, Gotthard Graubner, Gerhard Hoehme, Jürgen von Huendeberg, Herta Junghans-Grulich, Herbert Kaufmann, Konrad Klapheck, Yves Klein, Boris Kleint, Heinz Kreutz, Jupp Lückeroth, Heinz Mack, Georges Mathieu, Almir Mavignier, Neuenhausen, Karlheinz Overkott, Otto Piene, Diether Ritzert, Hans Salentin, Bernard Schultze, Jaroslav Serpan, Heinrich Siepman, Willi Spiess, Fred Thieler, Günther Uecker, Horst Egon Kalinowski

1958 Dordrecht

Galerie .31
'Jubileum tentoonstelling'
Armando, Kees van Bohemen, Rudolf Engers, Jan Henderikse, Will Leeuwen, Cor Nobel, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven, Fred Sieger, Emile Voeten, Gert de Weerd, Paul Weyenberg

1958 Paris

Galerie Iris Clert
'Vitesse pure stabilité monochrome'
Yves Klein, Jean Tinguely

1958 Delft

Technische Hogeschool
'Kunst in de Mensa: Informele Kunst'
Armando, Bram Bogart, Kees van Bohemen, Rik Jager, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven, Fred Sieger

1959 Düsseldorf

Galerie Gunar
'Niederländische Informelle Gruppe'
Armando, Kees van Bohemen, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven, Fred Sieger



1959 Antwerp

Hessenhuis
'Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision'
Robert Breer, Pol Bury, Yves Klein,
Heinz Mack, Enzo Mari, Bruno Munari,
Otto Piene, Diter Rot, Jesús Rafael
Soto, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely,
Günther Uecker, Paul Van Hoeydonck



1959 Rome

Galleria Appia Antica
Agostino Bonalumi, Enrico
Castellani, Piero Manzoni

1959 Rotterdam

Rotterdamse Kunstkring
'ZERO'
Kees van Bohemen, Karl Fred
Dahmen, Piero Manzoni, Jan Pieters,
Gust Romijn, Jan Sanders, Jan
Schoonhoven, Emil Schumacher,
Shinkichi Tajiri, Jaap Wagemaker



1959 Lausanne

Galerie Kasper
Agostino Bonalumi, Enrico Castellani,
Piero Manzoni

1959 Rome

Galleria Appia Antica
'Zero. Groupement International
de l'Art d'Aujourd'hui'
Kees van Bohemen, Karl Fred Dahmen,
Piero Manzoni, Wim Motz, Jan Pieters,
Jan Sanders, Jan Schoonhoven, Emil
Schumacher, Shinkichi Tajiri, Jaap
Wagemaker



1959 Wiesbaden

Galerie Renate Boukes
'Dynamo 1'
Pol Bury, Oskar Holweck, Yves
Klein, Heinz Mack, Almir Mavignier,
Herbert Oehm, Otto Piene, Diter
Rot, Jesús Rafael Soto, Daniel
Spoerri, Jean Tinguely

1959 Milan

Galleria Azimut
Giovanni Anceschi, Davide Boriani,
Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo,
Dadamaino, Gabriele De Vecchi,
Piero Manzoni, Enzo Mari, Manfredo
Massironi, Agostino Pisani, Alberto
Zilocchi

1960 Milan

Galleria Apollinaire Avanguardia
'Les nouveaux realistes'
Arman, Francois Dufrêne, Raymond
Hains, Yves Klein, Jean Tinguely,
Jacques de la Villeglé

1960 Copen- hagen

Galerie Köpcke

'Nederlandse Informele Groep'
Armando, Kees van Bohemen,
Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters,
Jan Schoonhoven

1960 Bern

Kellertheater

'Internationale Avantgarde 1960'
Armando, Karl Fred Dahmen,
Bram Bogart, Agostino Bonalumi,
Hsiao Chin, Jan Henderikse, Rudolf
Leuzinger, Silvano Lora, Piero Manzoni,
Christian Megert, Kees van Bohemen,
among others

1960 Lever- kusen

Städtisches Museum, Schloss
Morsbroich

'Monochrome Malerei'
Herman Bartels, Willi Baumeister,
Claude Bellegarde, Enrico Bordini,
Enrico Castellani, Serge Charchoune,
Piero Dorazio, Klaus Jürgen-Fischer,
Lucio Fontana, Johannes Geccelli,

Rupprecht Geiger, Ernst Geitlinger,
Raimund Girke, Raymond Grandjean,
Oskar Holweck, Nicolas Ionesco, Yves
Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Walter Leblanc,
Rudolf Leuzinger, Francesco Lo Savio,
Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Georges
Mathieu, Almir Mavignier, Christian
Megert, Herbert Oehm, Otto Piene,
Lothar Quinte, Arnulf Rainer, Mark
Rothko, Ralph Rumney, Salvatore
Scarpitta, Günther Wolfram Sellung,
Antoni Tàpies, Günther Uecker, Paul
Van Hoeydonck, Jef Verheyen, Mark
Verstockt, Hans Peter Vorberg

1960 Osaka

Takashimaya warenhuis

'International Sky Festival'
o.a. Lucio Fontana, Norio Imai, Akira
Kanayama, Albert Leslie, Sadamasa
Motonaga, Saburo Murakami, Antonio
Saura, Shozo Shimamoto, Kazuo
Shiraga, Yasuo Sumi, Toshio
Yoshida, Michio Yoshihara,
Jiro Yoshihara

1960 Lausanne

Galerie Kasper

'Groupe Informel Hollandais'
Armando, Kees van Bohemen,
Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters,
Jan Schoonhoven

1960 The Hague

Internationale Galerij Orez

'Openingstentoonstelling'
Kees van Bohemen, Daniel den
Dikkenboer, Karl Fred Dahmen,
Piero Manzoni, Wim Motz, Jan Pieters,
A. Rooskens, Gust Romijn, Jan
Sanders, Jan Schoonhoven, Emil
Schumacher, Shinkichi Tajiri, Jaap
Wagemaker, among others



1960 London

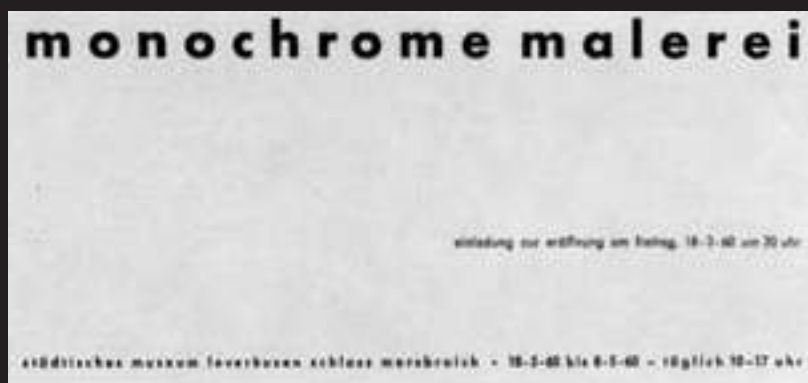
New Vision Centre Gallery

'Dutch Informal Group'
Armando, Kees van Bohemen,
Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters,
Jan Schoonhoven, Fred Sieger

1960 Antwerp

Hessenhuis

'Nederlandse Informele Groep'
New Vision Group, G58, Armando,
Kees van Bohemen, G 58 (Camiel
Van Breedam, Vic Gentils, Paul Van
Hoeydonck), Jan Henderikse, New
Vision Centre Group (Sicander Adams,
Denis Bowen, Leslie Candappa, Max
Chapman, John Coplans, Ahmed
Parvez, Ron Russell, Tony Underhill,
Aubrey Williams). Henk Peeters,
Jan Schoonhoven



1960 Grenchen (CH)

Galerie Bernard
'Exposition d'été'
Englebert van Anderlecht, Robert Crippa, Lucio Fontana, Henk Peeters, Mario Samona, Douglas Litterick Swan, Jef Verheyen

1960 Lausanne

Galerie Kasper
'Prix Suisse de Peinture
Abstraite 1960'
o.a. Armando, Kees van Bohemen, Edmondo Bacci, Renato Barisani, Jan Henderikse, Walter Leblanc, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters, Emilio Scanavino, Jan Schoonhoven, Enrique Tabara, Jef Verheyen

1960 Antwerp

Hessenhuis
'Nieuwe Europese school'
Achille Aperghis, Daniel Argimon, Armando, Edmondo Bacci, Renato Barisani, Herman Bartels, Bram Bogart, Agostino Bonalumi, Luis Bosch, Vlassis Caniaris, Raphael Canogar, Eugenio Carmi, Enrico Castellani, Condopoulos, Jorge Curós, Anja Decker, Karl Heinz Droste, Ducman (Nguyen Manh Duc), Fred Fathwinter, Jean Filhos, Maurice Haccuria, Jan Henderikse, Oskar Holweck, Irma Hünerfauth, Théo Kerg, Walter Leblanc, Rudolf Leuzinger, Denise Madin, Max Marti, Christian Megert, Mario Nigro, Henk Peeters, Claus Pfeiffer, Otto Piene, Rafols-Casamada, Herwin Rehmann, Mario Samonà, Emilio Scanavino, Willy Schoder, Jan Schoonhoven, Salvador Soria, Ferdinand Spindel, Jean Spyropoulos, Enrique Tabara, Joan Joseph Tharrats, Anna Thorwest, Piero Travaglini, Romá Vallés, Kees van Bohemen, Walter Vanermen, Jef Verbrak, Jef Verheyen, Mark Verstockt, Herman de Vries



1960 Milan

Galleria Azimut
'La nuova concezione artistica'
Kilian Breier, Enrico Castellani, Oskar Holweck, Yves Klein, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier



1960 Milan

Galleria Pater
'Miriorama 1'
Enrico Baj, Lucio Fontana, Gruppo T (Giovanni Anceschi, Davide Boriani, Gianni Colombo, Gabriele De Vecchi), Piero Manzoni, Bruno Munari, Jean Tinguely

1960 Bern

Galerie des Kleintheater
'Neue Malerei'
Armando, Bram Bogart, Kees van Bohemen, Agostino Bonalumi, Enrico Bordoni, Enrico Castellani, Rudolf Leuzinger, Piero Manzoni, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven, Walter Schoendorf



1960 London

New Vision Centre Gallery
'A New Artistic Conception'
Enrico Castellani, Piero Manzoni

1961 Amsterdam

Stedelijk Museum
'Zomeropstelling. De Nederlandse kunst 1960-61'
o.a. Nul (Armando, Kees van Bohemen, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven)

1961 Grenchen

Galerie Bernard
Robert Crippa, Lucio Fontana, Manuel Millares, Henk Peeters

1961 Leverkusen

Städtisches Museum
Schloss Morsbroich
Francesco Lo Savio, Ad Reinhardt,
Jef Verheyen



1961 Amsterdam

Stedelijk Museum
'Bewogen Beweging'
o.a. Yaacov Agam, Giovanni Anceschi,
Davide Boriani, Robert Breer, Pol Bury,
Alexander Calder, Gianni Colombo,
Carlos Cruz-Diez, Gabriele De Vecchi,
Marcel Duchamp, Raymond Hains,
Richard Hamilton, Jasper Johns, Allan
Kaprov, Heinz Mack, Frank Malina,
Bruno Munari, Julio Le Parc, Otto Piene,
Robert Rauschenberg, Man Ray,
George Rickey, Diter Rot, Niki de Saint-
Phalle, Jesús Rafael Soto, Shinkichi
Tajiri, Paul Talman, Vassilakis Tarkis,
Jean Tinguely, Luis Tomasello, Per Olof
Ultveldt, Grazia Varisco, Victor Vasarely,
Jean-Pierre Yvaral, among others



1961 Dordrecht

Galerie .31
Stanley Brouwn, Gianni Colombo,
Christian Megert

1961 Lausanne

Galerie Kasper
'Nouvel école européenne'
Achille Aperghis, Daniel Argimon,
Armando, Edmondo Bacci, Renato
Barisani, Herman Bartels, Bram
Bogart, Kees van Bohemen, Agostino
Bonalumi, Luis Bosch, Vlassis Caniaris,
Raphael Canogar, Eugenio Carmi,
Enrico Castellani, Condopoulos, Jorge
Curós, Anja Decker, Karl Heinz Droste,
Ducman (Nguyen Manh Duc), Fred
Fathwinter, Jean Filhos, Maurice Hac-
curia, Jan Henderikse, Oskar Holweck,
Irma Hünerfauth, Théo Kerg, Walter
Leblanc, Rudolf Leuzinger, Denise
Madin, Max Marti, Christian Megert,
Mario Nigro, Henk Peeters, Claux
Pfeiffer, Otto Piene, Albert Ráfols-
Casamada, Herwin Rehmann, Mario
Samonà, Emilio Scanavino, Willy
Schoder, Jan Schoonhoven, Salvador
Soria, Ferdinand Spindel, Jean
Spyropoulos, Enrique Tabara, Joan
Joseph Tharrats, Anna Thorwest,
Piero Travaglini, Romá Vallés, Walter
Vanermen, Jef Verbrak, Jef Verheyen,
Mark Verstockt, Herman de Vries



1961 Rome

Galleria La Salita
'Gruppo 0+0'
Yves Klein, Francesco Lo
Savio, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene,
Günther Uecker

1961 Frankfurt am Main

Galerie dato
'Exposition dato 1961'
Bernard Aubertin, Hermann Bartels,
Kilian Breier, Claus Carlfriedrich,
Enrico Castellani, Jürgen Claus, Lucio
Fontana, Hermann Goepfert, Jan
Henderikse, Oskar Holweck, Ed
Kiender, Yves Klein, Heinz Mack,
Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Henk
Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Arnulf
Rainer, Wolfgang Schmidt, Jan
Schoonhoven, Günther Uecker



1961 Düsseldorf

Galerie Schmela
'ZERO - Edition, Exposition,
Demonstration' (ZERO 3)
Marc Adrian, Arman, Bernard Aubertin,
Kilian Breier, Pol Bury, Enrico Castel-
lani, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana,
Gerhard von Graevenitz, Paul Van
Hoeydonck, Oskar Holweck, Manfred
Kage, Yves Klein, Boris Kleint,
Francesco Lo Savio, Heinz Mack, Piero
Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Ira Moldow,
Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl,
Arnaldo Pomodoro, Arnulf Rainer, Diter
Rot, Hans Salentin, Jan Schoonhoven,
Jesús Rafael Soto, Daniel Spoerri,
Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker

1961 Wolframs- Eschen- bach

Deutschordensschloss

'Internationale Malerei 1960-61'

o.a. Armando, Hermann Bartels, Hans Bischoffshausen, Hans J. Bleckert, Kees van Bohemen, Enrico Bordini, Peter Brüning, Enrico Castellani, Roberto Crippa, Karl Fred Dahmen, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Johannes Geccelli, Rupprecht Geiger, Raimund Girke, Hermann Goepfert, Jan Henderikse, Gottfried Honegger, Boris Kleint, Yayoi Kusama, Walter Leblanc, Adolf Luther, Piero Manzoni, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters, Arnulf Rainer, Mimmo Rotella, Antonio Saura, Francesco Lo Savio, Jan Schoonhoven, Sôfu Teshigahara, Fred Thieler, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen, Jiro Yoshihara, Herbert Zangs

1961 Zagreb

Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti

'Nove tendencije 1'

Marc Adrian, Alberto Biasi, Enrico Castellani, Ennio Chiggio, Andreas Christen, Toni Costa, Piero Dorazio, Karl Gerstner, EXAT 51, Gerhard von Graevenitz, Rudolf Kämmer, Julije Knifer, Edoardo Landi, Julio Le Parc, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Manfredo Massironi, Almir Mavignier, François Morellet, Gotthard Müller, Herbert Oehm, Ivan Picelj, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Diter Rot, Joël Stein, Paul Talman, Günther Uecker, Marcel Wyss, Walter Zehringer



1961 Trier

Städtisches Museum

'Avantgarde 61'

Armando, Bernd Berner, Hermann Bartels, Hans Bischoffshausen, Hajo Bleckert, Enrico Castellani, Mario De Luigi, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Rupprecht Geiger, Raimund Girke, Hermann Goepfert, Jan Henderikse, Oskar Holweck, Gottfried Honegger, Boris Kleint, Yayoi Kusama, Rainer Jochims, Klaus Jürgen-Fischer, Thomas Kaspar Lenk, Francesco Lo Savio, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Lothar Quinte, Arnulf Rainer, Günther Sellung, Jan Schoonhoven, Günther Uecker, Herbert Zangs

internationale galerie

arnhem, holland
rijnstraat 5-6
(naast artstijl)
werkdagen 10-18 uur
vrij toegang
9-31 december 1961
tentoonstelling
zero
werken van
arman
aubertin
breier
pol bury
castellani
fontana
von graevenitz
van hoeydonck
holweck
yves klein
boris kleint
mack
piero manzoni
mavignier
henk peeters
piene
uli pohl
s. pomodoro
rainer
diter rot
salentin
j. j. schoonhoven
soto
spoerri
tinguely
uecker

1961 Arnhem

Galerie A

'Expositie, demonstratie ZERO'

Arman, Bernard Aubertin, Kilian Breier, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Lucio Fontana, Gerhard von Graevenitz, Oskar Holweck, Manfred Kage, Yves Klein, Boris Kleint, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Arnulf Rainer, Diter Rot, Hans Salentin, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker



1961 Amsterdam

Galerie 207

'Internationale tentoonstelling van

Niets. Manifest tegen Niets'

Armando, Bazon Brock, Jan Henderikse, Arthur Köpcke, Carl Laszlo, Silvano Lora, Piero Manzoni, Christian Megert, Onorio, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven

1962 Paris

Galerie Iris Clert

'ZERO-Demonstration,

ZERO-Film $0 \times 0 = Kunst$ '

o.a. Bernard Aubertin, Hermann Goepfert, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker, Herman de Vries

1962 Antwerp

Galerie Ad Libitum

'ZERO schilders gekozen door de galerie'

Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Oskar Holweck, Yves Klein, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Otto Piene, Jesús Rafael Soto, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen



1962 The Hague

Internationale Galerij Orez

'Nieuwe tendenzen'

Arman, Jón Gunnar Árnason, Armando, Bernard Aubertin, Hermann Bartels, Stanley Brouwn, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Piero Dorazio, Klaus J. Fischer, Lucio Fontana, Raimund Girke, Hermann Goepfert, Gotthard Graubner, Gerhard von Graevenitz, Jan Henderikse, Paul Van Hoeydonck, Oskar Holweck, Gottfried Honegger, Yves Klein, Boris Kleint, Yayoi Kusama, Heinz Mack, Dadamaino, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Christian Megert, Franz Mon, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Arnulf Rainer, Diter Rot, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen, Herman de Vries, Rolf Weber



1962 Arnhem

Galerie A

'Accrochage 1962'

Armando, Jón Gunnar Árnason, Hermann Bartels, Stanley Brouwn, Vic Gentils, Raimund Girke, Hermann Goepfert, Gotthard Graubner, Jan Henderikse, Gottfried Honegger, Yves Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Dadamaino, Piero Manzoni, Christian Megert, Martial Raysse, Diter Rot, Jef Verheyen, Herman de Vries, Rolf Weber



1962 Amsterdam

Stedelijk Museum

'Nul' [Nul62]

Arman, Armando, Bernard Aubertin, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Dadamaino, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Hermann Goepfert, Hans Haacke, Jan Henderikse, Oskar Holweck, Yayoi Kusama, Francesco Lo Savio, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Jan Schoonhoven, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen, Herman de Vries

1962 Leiden

Leids Akademisch Kunstcentrum

'Nieuwe tendenzen'

Armando, Jón Gunnar Árnason, Hermann Bartels, Gianni Colombo, Lucio Fontana, Raimund Girke, Gotthard Graubner, Jan Henderikse, Paul Van Hoeydonck, Yayoi Kusama, Piero Manzoni, Heinz Mack, Almir Mavignier, Franz Mon, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Diter Roth, Jan Schoonhoven, Günther Uecker, Herman de Vries, Jef Verheyen, Rolf Weber

1962 Düsseldorf

Rheinwiesen

'ZERO Demonstration'

Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker

FONTANA

Manifiesto 1946 BLANCO

nota

NUL nove tendencije ZE HO

Fontana
KUSAMA
KUSAMA

PIENE

MACK

Piero Dorazio
DYNAMO

PIENE **KUSAMA**

Zona in three: revolute by her absolute subject!

DYNAMO DYNAMO DYNA

PINTURA MONOCROMATICA
ABEND AUSSTELLUNG

DEKAR HOEWEK
RUBIN WACE
ALVA MATHIEUS
OTTO PIENE
PROF. STIGMANN

nul

CONCRETE UNIFORMITY
NUL
NUL KEER NUL IS NUL

0

ZERO

MANZONI

ZERO

Decker

OD SLIKE DO OBJEKTA

ZERO

Proclamation
ZERO : wir loben
ZERO : wir sind für alles
ZERO : "ZERO"

dynamo 1

MEGERT

Handwritten text in a cursive script, possibly a manifesto or poem, starting with "Het culturele verleden..."

NUL

MANIFEST FOR SPIEL DU BLAS
KUNSTEN SPEEL - BOPHAGEN - 1957-58

HONNEGER
MEGERT
VERHEYEN
de Vries
DORAZIO
Schöonhoven

POHL POHL
LO SAVIO
ARMAN
Bury
MAYIGNIER
DORAZIO

HOLWECK
Mack
Manzoni
Mouvoener
Maino
Lecker
Peeters

PIENE

ARMAN

CASTELLANI

PIENE

Flora

NUL

BURY



1962 Antwerp

Hessenhuis

'G 58, Anti-peinture'

Armando, Alberto Biasi, Davide Boriani, Stanley Broun, Enrico Castellani, Ennio Chiggio, Gianni Colombo, Toni Costa, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Narciso Debouq, Maurice De Clercq, Gabriele De Vecchi, Erik Dietmann, Karl Heinz Droste, Wybrand Ganzevoort, Horacio Garcia-Rossi, Vic Gentils, Karl Gerstner, Hermann Goepfert, Jan Henderikse, Jochen Hiltmann, Edoardo Landi, Julio Le Parc, Walter Leblanc, Rudolf Leuzinger, Piero Manzoni, Manfredo Massironi, Christian Megert, François Morellet, Nikos, Alejandro Otero, Henk Peeters, Edgar Pillet, Martial Raysse, Hans Salentin, Jan Schoonhoven, Francisco Sobrino, Joël Stein, Paul Talman, Paul Van Hoeydonck, Gerhard von Graevenitz, Herman de Vries, Jean-Pierre Yvaral

1962 Ghent

St. Pietersabdij, Centrum voor Kunstambachten

'forum 62'

Enrico Castellani, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Vic Gentils, Yves Klein, Walter Leblanc, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Christian Megert, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Jesús Rafael Soto, Günther Uecker, Paul Van Hoeydonck, Victor Vasarely, Jef Verheyen

1962 Bern

Galerie Schindler

'Zero'

Arman, Bernard Aubertin, Hermann Bartels, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Siegfried Cremer, François Dufrene, Lucio Fontana, Hermann Goepfert, Gotthard Graubner, Raymond Hains, Jochen Hiltmann, Oskar Holweck, Yves Klein, Arthur Köpcke, Walter Leblanc, Rudolf Leuzinger, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Christian Megert, Otto Piene, Henk Peeters, Uli Pohl, Karl Prantl, Arnulf Rainer, Martial Raysse, Mimmo Rotella, Diter Rot, Jan Schoonhoven, Paul Talman, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen

1962 Klagenfurt

Galerie Wulfengasse 14

'Nul-groep aus Holland'

Armando, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven

1962 London

New Vision Centre Gallery

'Europe - 1962'

o.a. Armando, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven

1962 Rotterdam

Galerie Delta

Enrico Castellani, Piero Manzoni, Jan Schoonhoven



1962 Albisola Mare (I)

Galleria della Palma

'Punto 3'

Getulio Alviani, Kengiro Azuma, Bolognesi, Antonio Calderara, Hsiao-Chin, Dadamaino, Lucio Fontana, Vlado Kristk, Julio Le Parc, Li Yuen-Chia, François Morellet, Henk Peeters, Ivan Picelj, Giovanni Pizzo, Rostkowska, Mario Rossello, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto

1962 Frankfurt am Main

Galerie d

'Perspektiven 62 - Situation Zero'

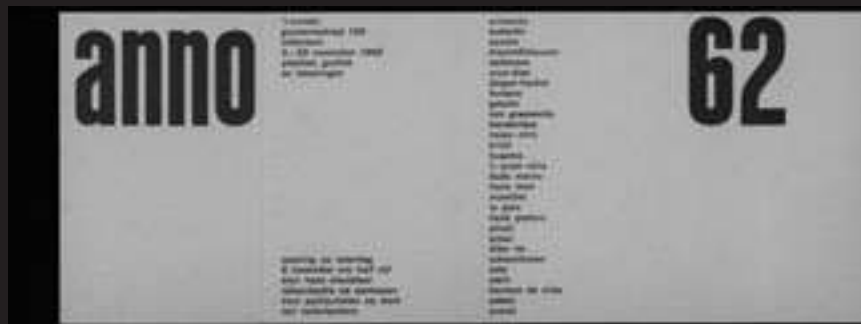
Hermann Bartels, Hermann Goepfert, Oskar Holweck, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker

1962 Rotterdam

Kunstcentrum 't Venster

'Anno 62, plastiek, grafiek en tekeningen'

Armando, Bernard Aubertin, Kengiro Azuma, Hans Bischoffshausen, Antonio Calderara, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Klaus J. Fischer, Lucio Fontana, Getulio Alviani, Gerhard von Graevenitz, Jan Henderikse, Hsiao-Chin, Vlado Kristk, Yayoi Kusama, Li-Yuen-Chia, Dadamaino, Franz Mon, François Morellet, Julio Le Parc, Henk Peeters, Ivan Picelj, Giovanni Pizzo, Diter Rot, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Joël Stein, Herman de Vries, Rolf Weber, Jean-Pierre Yvaral

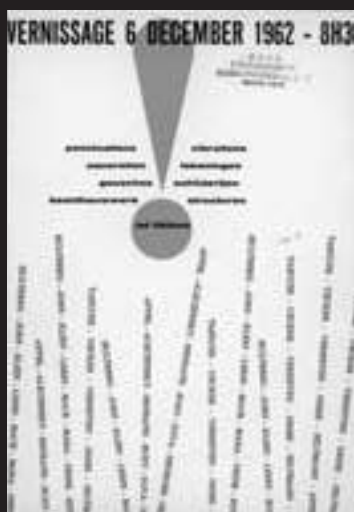


1962 Brussels

Paleis voor Schone Kunsten
'Dynamo'
Heinz Mack, Otto Piene,
Günther Uecker

1962 Antwerp

Galerie Ad Libitum
'Ponctuations et Vibrations'
o.a. Karel Appel, Pierre Alechinsky, Pol
Bury, Gianni Dova, Jan Dries, Georges,
Jochen Hiltmann, Asger Jorn, Yves
Klein, Fernando Lerin, Heinz Mack, Pol
Mara, Otto Piene, Jesús Rafael Soto,
Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen



1963 Copen- hagen

Galerie Hybler
'Esquisse d'un salon 2'
Getulio Alviani, Olle Baertling, Martha
Boto, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Equipo 57
(José Duarte, Angel Duarte, Augustin
Ibarrola, Juan Serrano), Gottfried
Honegger, Julio Le Parc, François
Morellet, Aurelie Nemours, Henk
Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Francisco
Sobrinho, Nicolas Schöffer, Joël Stein,
Jean Tinguely, Luis Tomasello,
Gregorio Vardanega, Victor Vasarely,
Jean-Pierre Yvaral

1963 Milan

Galleria Cadario
Nobuya Abe, Getulio Alviani, Enrico
Castellani, Francesco D'Arena, Otto
Piene, Lucio Fontana, Luciano Lattanzi,
Marcel Meylan, Gino Meloni, Carlo
Nangeroni

1963 Krefeld

Museum Haus Lange
Heinz Mack, Otto Piene,
Günther Uecker

1963 Paris

Galerie Denise René
'Esquisse d'un salon'
Getulio Alviani, Olle Baertling, Martha
Boto, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Equipo 57
(José Duarte, Angel Duarte, Augustin
Ibarrola, Juan Serrano), Gottfried Ho-
negger, Julio Le Parc, François Morellet

Aurelie Nemours, Henk Peeters, Otto
Piene, Uli Pohl, Nicolas Schöffer,
Francisco Sobrinho, Joël Stein, Jean
Tinguely, Luis Tomasello, Gregorio
Vardanega, Victor Vasarely, Jean-Pierre
Yvaral

1963 Berlin

Galerie Diogenes
'ZERO - Der neue Idealismus.
Poetisches Manifest'
Getulio Alviani, Bernard Aubertin,
Davide Boriani, Kilian Breier, Pol Bury,
Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo,
Dadamaino, Piero Dorazio, Günther
Drebusch, Lucio Fontana, Hermann
Goepfert, Matthias Göritz, Kuno
Gonschior, Gerhard von Graevenitz,
Gotthard Graubner, Heusser-Bohne,
Jochen Hiltmann, Oskar Holweck,
Manfred Kage, Yves Klein, Boris
Kleint, Adolf Luther, Heinz Mack, Piero
Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Christian
Megert, François Morellet, Bruno
Munari, Herbert Oehm Otto Piene,
Uli Pohl, Arnulf Rainer, Diter Rot,
Gerhard Rühm, Hans Salentin, Armin
Sandig, Wolfgang Schmidt, Jan
Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto,
Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, Jef
Verheyen, Franz Erhard Walther

1963 Milan

Galleria Cadario
'Oltre la pittura, Oltre la scultura,
Mostra di ricerche d'arte visiva'
Getulio Alviani, Giovanni Anceschi,
Alberto Biasi, Davide Boriani, Martha
Boto, Ennio Chiggio, Gianni Colombo,
Toni Costa, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Dada-
maino, Narciso Debourg, Gabriele De
Vecchi, Equipo 57 (José Duarte, Angel
Duarte, Augustin Ibarrola, Juan
Serrano), Horacio Garcia-Rossi, Karl
Gerstner, Gerhard von Graevenitz,
Rudolf Kammer, Vlado Kristl, Edoardo
Landi, Julio Le Parc, Heinz Mack,
Adrian Marck, Enzo Mari, Manfredo
Massironi, Almir Mavignier, François
Morellet, Bruno Munari, Henk Peeters,
Ivan Picelj, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Karl
Reinhartz, Francisco Sobrinho, Klaus
Staudt, Joël Stein, Paul Talman, Luis
Tomasello, Gregorio Vardanega, Grazia
Varisco, Jean-Pierre Yvaral, Walter
Zehring



1963 Amsterdam

Galerie Amstel 47

'Panorama van de nieuwe tendenzen'

Getulio Alviani, Armando, Jón Gunnar Árnason, Bernard Aubertin, Hans Bischoffshausen, Antonio Calderara, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Siegfried Cremer, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Dadamaino, Lucio Fontana, Jan Hendrikse, Yves Klein, Vlado Kristl, Yayoi Kusama, Julio Le Parc, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Christian Megert, François Morellet, Henk Peeters, Giovanni Pizzo, Diter Rot, Jan Schoonhoven, Francisco Sobrino, Jesús Rafael Soto, Joël Stein, Walter Thorn, Günther Uecker, Herman de Vries, Rolf Weber, Jean-Pierre Yvaral



1963 Trieste

Galleria La Cavana
Henk Peeters, Armando,
Jan Schoonhoven

1963 Ghent

St. Pietersabdij, Centrum
voor Kunstambachten
'Forum '63'

o.a. Englebert Van Anderlecht, Arman, Bram Bogart, Kees Van Bohemen, Pol Bury, César, Christo, Niki de Saint-Phalle, François Dufrêne, Vic Gentils, Raymond Hains, Paul Van Hoeydonck, Yves Klein, Walter Leblanc, Heinz Mack, Guy Mees, Manuel Millares, Otto Piene, Roger Raveel, Gust Romijn, Mimmo Rotella, Antonio Saura, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Daniel Spoerri, Antoni Tàpies, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen, Mark Verstockt, Jacques Villégé, Jaap Wagemaker

1963 Frankfurt am Main

Galerie d, Schwanenhalle
des Römers

'Europäische Avantgarde.

Monochromie. Achromie. Kinetik'
Getulio Alviani, Bernard Aubertin, Marianne Aue, Hermann Bartels, Kilian Breier, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Piero Dorazio, Jan Dries, Lucio Fontana, Wybrand Ganzevoort, Raimund Girke, Hermann Goepfert, Gotthard Graubner, Jochen Hiltmann, Paul Van Hoeydonck, Oskar Holweck, Ed Kiender, Yves Klein, Harry Kramer, Walter Leblanc, Wolfgang Ludwig, Adolf Luther, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Guy Mees, Christian Megert, Bruno Munari, Herbert Oehm, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Arnulf Rainer, Diter Rot, Hans Salentin, Walter Schmidt, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Traugott Spiess, Paul Talman, Filip Tas, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, Victor Vasarely, Wout Vercammen, Jef Verheyen, Herman de Vries

1963 San Marino

Palazzo del Kursaal

'IV Biennale internazionale
d'arte di San Marino'

Nobuya Abe, Getulio Alviani, Giovanni Anceschi, Arman, Alberto Biasi, Davide Boriani, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Christo, Dadamaino, Mario De Luigi, Gabriele De Vecchi, Piero Dorazio, Equipo 57 (José Duarte, Angel Duarte, Augustin Ibarrola, Juan Serrano), Klaus-Jürgen Fischer, Karl Gerstner, Gerhard von Graevenitz, Gotthard Graubner, Oskar Holweck, Walter Leblanc, Julio Le Parc, Heinz Mack, Enzo Mari, Manfredo Massironi, Fabio Mauri, François Morellet, Bruno Munari, Henk Peeters, Ivan Picelj, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Martial Raysse, Mimmo Rotella, Hans Salentin, Tajiri Shinkichi, Jan Schoonhoven, Francisco Sobrino, Daniel Spoerri, Paul Talman, Günther Uecker, Grazia Varisco, Jean-Pierre Yvaral

1963 Zagreb

Galerija suvremene umjetnosti

'Nove tendencije 2'

Marc Adrian, Getulio Alviani, Giovanni Anceschi, Vojin Bakic, Alberto Biasi, Davide Boriani, Martha Boto, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Ennio Chiggio, Andreas Christen, Toni Costa, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Hugo Rudolfo Demarco, Gabriele De Vecchi, Piero Dorazio, Equipo 57 (José Duarte, Angel Duarte, Augustin Ibarrola, Juan Serrano), Héctor Garcia-Miranda, Karl Gerstner, Gerhard von Graevenitz, Horacio Garcia-Rossi, Dieter Hacker, Rudolf Kämmer, Julije Knifer, Vlado Kristl, Edoardo Landi, Julio Le Parc, Heinz Mack, Enzo Mari, Manfredo Massironi, Almir Mavignier, François Morellet, Gotthard Müller, Herbert Oehm, Henk Peeters, Ivan Picelj, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Karl Reinhartz, Vjenceslav Richter, Francisco Sobrino, Helge Sommerrock, Aleksandar Srncic, Klaus Staudt, Joël Stein, Miroslav Sutej, Paul Talman, Luis Tomasello, Günther Uecker, Grazia Varisco, Gabrielle de Vecchi, Ludwig Wilding, Jean-Pierre Yvaral, Walter Zehring



1964 London

McRoberts & Tunnard Gallery
Lucio Fontana, Walter Leblanc,
Otto Piene, R. Wills

1964 Frankfurt am Main

Galerie d
'Dokumentation 6, Poesie und Film'
Jan Bruyndonck, Ivo Michiels, Jos
Pustjens, Jef Verheyen, Paul de Vree

1963 Gelsen- kirchen

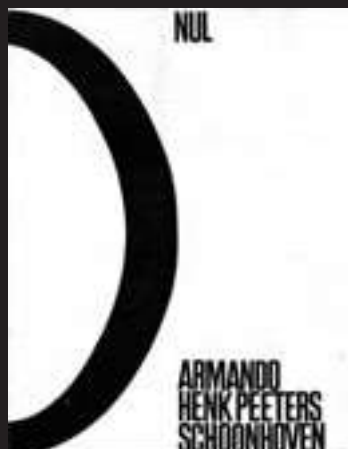
Halfmannshof
'ZERO in Gelsenkirchen'
Pol Bury, Siegfried Cremer, Hermann
Goepfert, Hans Haacke, Oskar
Holweck, Adolf Luther, Heinz Mack,
Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Hans Salentin,
Günther Uecker

1964 Leverkusen

Städtisches Museum, Schloss
Morsbroich
'Neue Tendenzen'
Marc Adrian, Getulio Alviani, Vojin
Bakic, Hajo Bleckert, Martha Boto,
Enrico Castellani, Andreas Christen,
Carlos Cruz-Diez, Hugo Rudolfo
Demarco, Piero Dorazio, Equipo 57
(José Duarte, Angel Duarte, Augustin
Ibarrola, Juan Serrano), Hector Garcia-
Miranda, Horacio Garcia-Rossi, Karl
Gerstner, Gerhard von Graevenitz,
Dieter Hacker, Rudolf Kaemmer, Julije
Knifer, Walter Leblanc, Julio Le Parc,
Heinz Mack, Enzo Mari, Almir Mavig-
nier, François Morellet, Gotthart
Mueller, Herbert Oehm, Ivan Picelj,
Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Ad Reinhardt,
Karl Reinhartz, Vjenceslav Richter,
Francisco Sobrino, Helge Sommer-
rock, Aleksander Srnec, Klaus Staudt,
Joël Stein, Miroslav Sutej, Luis
Tomasello, Günther Uecker, Gregorio
Vardanega, Herman de Vries, Ludwig
Wilding, Jean-Pierre Yvaral, Walter
Zehringer

1964 The Hague

Gemeentemuseum
'ZERO - 0 - NUL'
Nul (Armando, Henk Peeters, Jan
Schoonhoven), Zero (Heinz Mack,
Otto Piene, Günther Uecker)



1964 Osaka

Gutai Pinacothek
Giuseppe Capogrossi, Lucio Fontana

1964 New York

Howard Wise Gallery
'On the Move, Kinetic Sculptures'
o.a. Yaacov Agam, Alexander Calder,
Enrico Castellani, Ivan Chermayeff,
Julio Le Parc, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene,
George Rickey, José de Rivera,
Vassilakis Takis, Jean Tinguely,
Günther Uecker

1964 The Hague

Gemeentemuseum
'Nieuwe Realisten'
o.a. Arman, Enrico Baj, Christo, Gerard
Deschamps, Francois Dufrâne, Vic
Gentils, Paul Van Hoeydonck, Raymond
Hains, Jan Henderikse, Robert
Indiana, Jasper Johns, Yves Klein,
Roy Lichtenstein, Marisol, Claes
Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg,
Martial Raysse, Mimmo Rotella,
Jacques Villeglé



1964 London

I.C.A.

0 x 0 = Kunst

film with Bernard Aubertin, Hermann Goepfert, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker, Herman de Vries and others, and lecture on Nul-ZERO by Henk Peeters and Nanda Vigo

1964 London

McRoberts & Tunnard Gallery

'Group Zero: Mack, Piene, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker

1964 Kassel

Fridericianum

'documenta III'

Yaacov Agam, Pol Bury, Piero Dorazio, Rupprecht Geiger, Hermann Goepfert, GRAV (Horacio Garcia-Rossi, Julio Le Parc, François Morellet, Francisco Sobrino, Joël Stein, Jean-Pierre Yvaral), Paul Van Hoeydonck, Yves Klein, Harry Kramer, Norbert Kricke, Heinz Mack, Almir Mavignier, George Rickey, Jesús Rafael Soto, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, among others

1964 London

New Vision Centre Gallery

'ZERO'

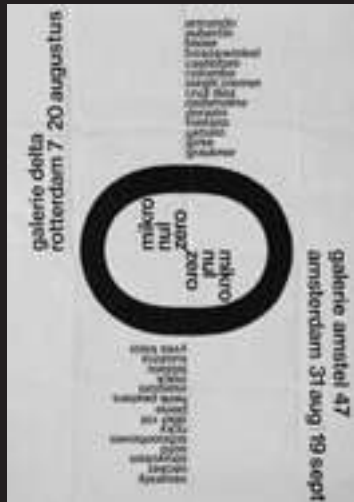
Armando, Pol Bury, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Enrico Castellani, Dadamaino, Agenore Fabri, Lucio Fontana, Hermann Goepfert, Hans Haacke, Oskar Holweck, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Diter Rot, Hans Salentin, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Günther Uecker, Victor Vasarely, Jef Verheyen, Nanda Vigo, Herman de Vries

1964 Rotterdam

Galerie Delta

'mikro nul zero'

Arman, Getulio Alviani, Armando, Bernard Aubertin, Ay-o, Peter Boezewinkel, Stanley Brouwn, Miguel-Ángel Cárdenas, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Christo, Siegfried Cremer, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Dadamaino, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Gotthard Graubner, Hans Haacke, Jurjen de Haan, Jan Henderikse, Yves Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Walter Leblanc, Roy Lichtenstein, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Christian Megert, Herbert Oehm, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Martial Raysse, George Rickey, Diter Rot, Wim T. Schippers, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Daniel Spoerri, Peter Struycken, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, Victor Vasarely



1964 Klagenfurt

Galerie Wulfengasse 14

Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker, Nanda Vigo

1964 Philadelphia

Institute of Contemporary Art,

University of Pennsylvania

'ZERO'

Armando, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Hermann

Goepfert, Gotthard Graubner, Hans Haacke, John Hoyland, Oskar Holweck, Robert Indiana, Yves Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Francesco Lo Savio, Adolf Luther, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Hans Salentin, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Ferdinand Spindel, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen, Nanda Vigo

1964 New York

Howard Wise Gallery

'Zero'

Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker

1964 Antwerp

Kunstcentrum Deurne

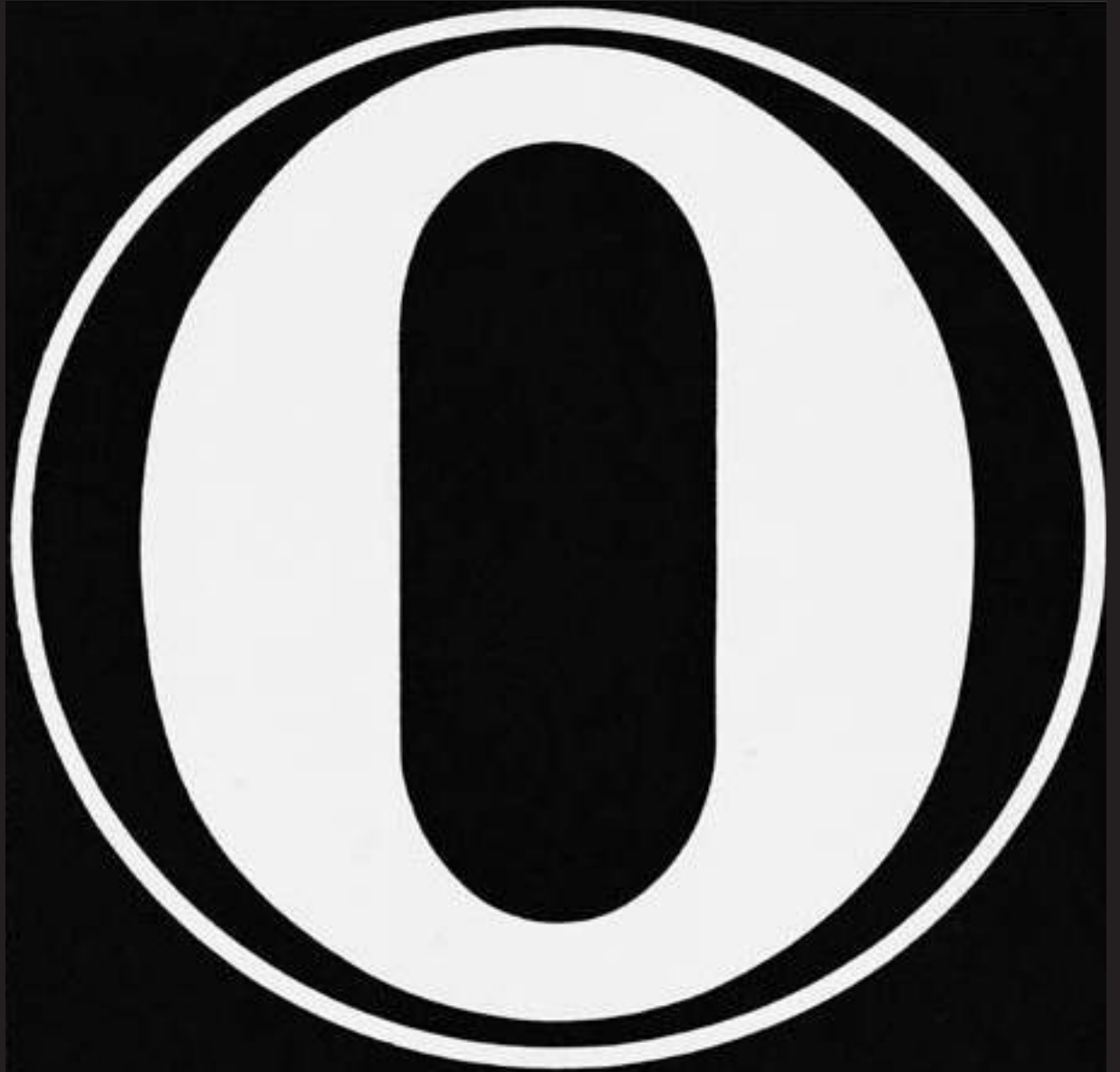
'Integratie 64'

Renaat Braem, Wolfgang Döring, Lucio Fontana, Hermann Goepfert, Ulrich Graf, Oskar Hansen, Zofia Hansen, Oskar Holweck, Hans Jochen Kirshberg, Yves Klein, Heinz Mack, Christian Megert, Sebastian Paquet, Otto Piene, Werner Ruhnau, Günther Uecker, Victor Vasarely, Jef Verheyen, Nanda Vigo

1965 Washington D.C.

The Washington Gallery of Modern Art
'ZERO: an Exhibition of European Experimental Art'

Armando, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Hermann Goepfert, Gotthard Graubner, Hans Haacke, John Hoyland, Oskar Holweck, Robert Indiana, Yves Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Francesco Lo Savio, Adolf Luther, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Hans Salentin, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Ferdinand Spindel, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen, Nanda Vigo



ZERO

**AN EXHIBITION OF EUROPEAN
EXPERIMENTAL ART**

January 9 through February 14, 1965

The Washington Gallery of Modern Art

1503 Twenty-first Street, N.W., Washington 6, D.C. • telephone: 667-5221



1965 Milan

Atelier Fontana

'Zero Avantgarde 1965'

Nobuya Abe, Armando, Hans Bischoffshausen, Agostino Bonalumi, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Piero Dorazio, Hermann Goepfert, Hans Haacke, Oskar Holweck, Yves Klein, Walter Leblanc, Adolf Luther, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Christian Megert, Kurt Mees, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Jan Schoonhoven, Turi Simeti, Jesús Rafael Soto, Paul Talman, Erwin Thorn, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen, Nanda Vigo, Herman de Vries

1965 Amsterdam

De Bezige Bij

'De nieuwe Stijl'

Yaacov Agam, Giovanni Aneschi, Armando, Bernard Aubertin, Hans Bischoffshausen, Davide Boriani, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Siegfried Cremer, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Dadamaino, Gabriele De Vecchi, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Hans Haacke, Yves Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Walter Leblanc, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Guy Mees, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, George Rickey, Paolo Scheggi, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, Ferdinand Spindel, Günther Uecker, Grazia Varisco, Jef Verheyen, Nanda Vigo

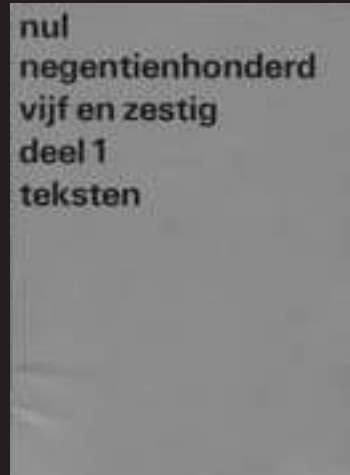


1965 Amsterdam

Stedelijk Museum

'nul negentienhonderd vijf en zestig' [Nul65]

Getulio Alviani, Giovanni Aneschi, Arman, Armando, Davide Boriani, Pol Bury, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Gabriele De Vecchi, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Hans Haacke, Akira Kanayama, Yves Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Sadamasa Motonaga, Saburo Murakami, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, George Rickey, Jan Schoonhoven, Shozo Shimamoto, Jesús Rafael Soto, Atsuko Tanaka, Günther Uecker, Grazia Varisco, Nanda Vigo, Tsuruko Yamazaki, Jiro Yoshihara, Michio Yoshihara



1965 Gelsen- kirchen

Halfmannshof

'Gruppe Nul'

Armando, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven

1965 Bern

Kunsthalle Bern

'Licht und Bewegung'

Yaacov Agam, Giovanni Aneschi, Antonio Asis, Frères Baschet, Alberto Biasi, Davide Boriani, Martha Boto, Pol Bury, Alexander Calder, Lygia Clark, Gianni Colombo, Siegfried Cremer, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Hugo Rudolf Demarco, Marcel Duchamp, Equipo 57 (José Duarte, Angel Duarte, Augustin Ibarrola, Juan Serrano), Bendicht Fivian, Horacio Garcia-Rossi, Hermann Goepfert, Gerhard von Graevenitz, Hans Haacke, Piotr Kowalski, Harry Kramer, Bruce Lacey, Walter Leblanc, Walter Linck, Heinz Mack, Frank Malina, Enzo Mari, Christian Megert, François Morellet, Bruno Munari, Erik H. Olson, Abraham Palatnik, Julio Le Parc, Otto Piene, Man Ray, George Rickey, Marcello Salvadori, Nicolas Schoeffer, Francisco Sobrino, Jesús Raphael Soto, Vassilakis Takis, Paul Talman, Marcel van Thienen, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, Gregorio Vardanega, Grazia Varisco, Victor Vasarely, Gabriele de Vecchi, Maria Vieira, Herman de Vries, Jean-Pierre Yvaral, Willy Weber, Herbert Zangs, Walter Zehringer

1965 Zagreb

Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti
'Nova tendencija 3'

Marc Adrian, Getulio Alviani, Giovanni Anceschi, Marina Apollonio, Umbro Apollonio, Giulio Carlo Argan, Marianne Aue, Vittorio D'Augusto, Antonio Angelo Barrese, Mica Basiccevic, Ernst Benkert, Giorgio Benzi, Ueli Berger, Augusto Betti, Alberto Biasi, Hartmut Böhm, Paolo Bonaiuto, Bob Bonies, Davide Boriani, Martha Boto, Palma Bucarelli, Milan Cankovic, Flavio Casadei, Ivan Cizmek, Inge Claus-Jansen, Gianni Colombo, Waldemar Cordeiro, Dadamaino, Gabriele De Vecchi, Elisa Debenedetti, Juraj Dobrovic, Angel Duarte, Cam Estenfelder, Michel Fadat, May Fasnacht, René Feurer, Vladimir Petrovic Galkin, Guisepe Gatt, Karl Gerstner, Gerard von Graevenitz, Jürgen Graf, Alfonso Grassi, Davor Grünwald, Dieter Hacker, Francis Hewitt, Tom Hudson, Reimer Jochims, Rudolf Kämmer, Ed Kiender, Hans König-Klingenberg, Edward Krasinski, Gianfranco Laminarca, Georgij Ivanovic Lopakov, Lucia di Luciano, Wolfgang Ludwig, Frank Malina, Alberto Marangoni, Kenneth Martin, Manfredo Massironi, Edwin Mieszkowski, Abraham Moles, François Molnar, François Morellet, Bruno Munari, Koloman Novak, Lev Voldemirovic, Victor Vladimirovic Stepanov, Fedora Orebic, Pino Parini, Henk Peeters, Helga Philipp, Ivan Picelj, Otto Piene, Giovanni Pizzo, Lothar Quinte, Karl Reinhartz, Vjenceslav Richter, Bridget Riley, Christian Roeckenschuss, Diter Rot, Giorgio Scarpa, Paolo Scheggi, Turi Simeti, Ed Sommer, Helge Sommerock, Klaus Staudt, Rudi Supek, Zdenek Sykora, Sandor Szandai, Giulio Tedoli, Erwin Thorn, Gianni Valentini, Mario Valentini, Antonio Valmaggi, Gregorio Vardanega, Grazia Varisco, Emilio Vedova, Nanda Vigo, Aldo Villani, Herman de Vries, Ante Vulin, Rolf Wedewer, Ludwig Wilding, Walter Zehringer

1965 Düsseldorf

Galerie Schmela
'Weiss-Weiss'

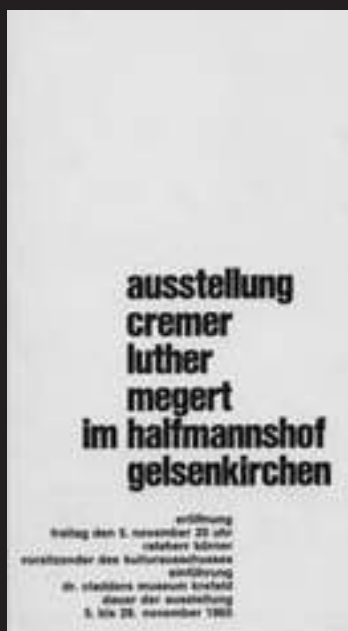
Joseph Beuys, Bram Bogart, Agostino Bonalumi, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Serge Charchoune, Lucio Fontana, Gotthard Graubner, Oskar Holweck, Yves Klein, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Christian Megert, Blinky Palermo, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Jan Schoonhoven, Jésus Rafael Soto, Ferdinand Spindel, Antoni Tàpies, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, Jef Verheyen, Herman de Vries

1965 Frankfurt am Main

Galerie Loehr
Herman Goepfert, Jef Verheyen, Lucio Fontana

1965 Lincoln

De Cordova Museum
'White on white'
Hermann Bartels, Lucio Fontana, Raimund Girke, Paul Van Hoeydonck, Oskar Holweck, Yayoi Kusama, Walter Leblanc, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Paolo Scheggi, Jan Schoonhoven, Günther Uecker, Herman de Vries



1965 Gelsen- kirchen

Halfmannshof
Siegfried Cremer, Adolf Luther, Christian Megert

1965 Paris

Galerie Stadler
'GUTAI Art Association'
Akira Kanayama, Tsuyoshi Maekawa, Masatoshi Masanobu, Takesada Matsutani, Sadamasa Motonaga, Shuji Mukai, Saburo Murakami, Yuko Nasaka, Shozo Shimamoto, Kazuo Shiraga, Yasuo Sumi, Atsuko Tanaka, Teruyuki Tsubouchi, Chiyu Uemae, Yozo Ukita, Tsuruko Yamazaki, Toshio Yoshida, Jiro Yoshihara, Michio Yoshihara

1965 Bern

Galerie Aktuell
'aktuell 65. neue tendenzen, arte programmata, anti-peinture, ZERO, null, recherche d'art visuelle, recherche continue'
Getulio Alviani, Marina Apollonio, Armando, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Equipo 57 (José Duarte, Angel Duarte, Augustin Ibarrola, Juan Serrano), Benedicht Fivian, Jan Henderikse, Yayoi Kusama, Walter Leblanc, Wolfgang Ludwig, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven, Turi Simeti, Herman de Vries

1966 Rotterdam

Kunstcentrum 't Venster
'licht en beweging'
Bernard Aubertin, Davide Boriani, Niño Calos, Gianni Colombo, Siegfried Cremer, Equipo 57 (José Duarte, Angel Duarte, Augustin Ibarrola, Juan Serrano), Hermann Goepfert, Adolf Luther, Frank Malina, Christian Megert, Gabriele de Vecchi, Jef Verheyen, Nanda Vigo, Herman de Vries, among others

1966 The Hague

Internationale Galerij OREZ
'Nul 1966 Art Exhibition'
Sadaharu Horio, Norio Imai,
Kumiko Imanaka, Georg Kikunami,
Shigeki Kitani, Takesada Matsutani,
Shuji Mukai, Michimasa Naohara,
Senkichi Nasaka, Yuko Nasaka,
Minoru Onoda, Kazuo Shiraga,
Satoshi Tai, Teruyuki Tsubouchi,
Toshio Yoshida, Minoru Yoshihada,
Michio Yoshihara

1966 The Hague

Galerie Alveka
'Licht en beweging, anno 1966'
Bernard Aubertin, Davide Boriani,
Nino Calos, Gianni Colombo, Siegrid
Cremer, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Gabriele De
Vecchi, Equipo 57 (José Duarte, Angel
Duarte, Augustin Ibarrola, Juan Ser-
rano), Hermann Goepfert, Adolf Luther,
Frank Malina, Christian Megert, Nanda
Vigo, Herman de Vries



1966 Scheve- ningen

'Zero on Sea' (cancelled)
Armando, Bernard Aubertin, Hans
Bisschoffshausen, Stanley Brouwn,
Gianni Colombo, Lucio Fontana, Hans
Haacke, Jan Henderikse, Norio Imai,
Kumiko Imanaka, Yves Klein, Yayoi
Kusama, Heinz Mack, Tsuyoshi
Maekawa, Christian Megert, Sadamasu

Motonaga, Shuji Mukai, Saburo
Murakami, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene,
George Rickey, Shozo Shimamoto,
Hans Sleutelaar, Alfred Spindel,
Nanda Vigo, Toshida Yoshida, Günther
Uecker, Jiro Yoshihara (Internationale
Galerij OREZ in The Hague exhibited
the sketches and concepts.)

1966 Frankfurt am Main

Galerie Loehr
'Recherches'
Gianni Colombo, Herman de Vries

1966 Eindhoven

Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum
'KunstLichtKunst'
Yaacov Agam, Siegfried Albrecht,
Stephen Antonakos, Billy Apple, Ben
Berns, Martha Boto, Livinus van den
Bundt, Nino Calos, W. Christian
Sidenius, Chryssa, José Maria Cruxent,
Sandu Darie, Hugo Rudolfo Demarco,
Milan Dobes, Dvizdjenje (Lev V. Nus-
berg, Vladimir Akulinin, Boris Diodorov,
Equipo 57 (José Duarte, Angel Duarte,
Augustin Ibarrola, Juan Serrano), Dan
Flavin, Lucio Fontana, Gerhard von
Graevenitz, Vladimir P. Galkin, GRAV
(Horacio Garcia-Rossi, Julio Le Parc,
François Morellet, Francisco Sobrino,
Joel Stein, Jean-Pierre Yvaral), Gruppo
Enne (Alberto Biasi, Manfredo Massi-
roni, Edoardo Landi), Gruppo T (Gianni
Colombo, Giovanni Anceschi, Davide
Boriani, Gabriele de Vecchio, Grazia
Varisco), Gruppo MID (Antonio
Barrese, Alfonso Grassi, Gianfranco
Laminarca, Alberto Marangoni),
Francisco A. Infanté, Anatolij Krivcikov,
Georgij I. Lopakov, Rimma Saggir-
Janevskaja, Viktor V. Stepanov, Vladi-
mir Scerbakov), John Healy, Robert
Indiana, Gyula Kosice, Bernard Lassus,
Frank Malina, Enzo Mari, Preston
McClanahan, Hans Walter Müller,
Bruno Munari, Abraham Palatnik, Henk
Peeters, Leo Rabkin, Martial Raysse,
Marcello Salvadori, Nicolas Schöffer,
W. Soya, Thomas Tadlock, USCO
(Michael Callahan, David Stern,
Stephen Durkee), Vassilakis Takis,
Gregorio Vardanega, Steve Willats,
John Willenbecher, Zero (Heinz Mack,
Otto Piene, Günther Uecker)



1966 Klagenfurt

Galerie Heide Hildebrand
'Konfrontation 66'
Bernard Aubertin, Miguel Berrocal,
Bruno Gironcoli, Adolf Luther, Dušan
Otaševi, Diter Rot, Jan Schoonhoven,
Erwin Thorn, Herman de Vries, among
others

1966 Bonn

Bahnhof Rolandseck
'Zero-Demonstration Zero
ist gut für Dich'
Heinz Mack, Otto Piene,
Günther Uecker

1967 Rotterdam

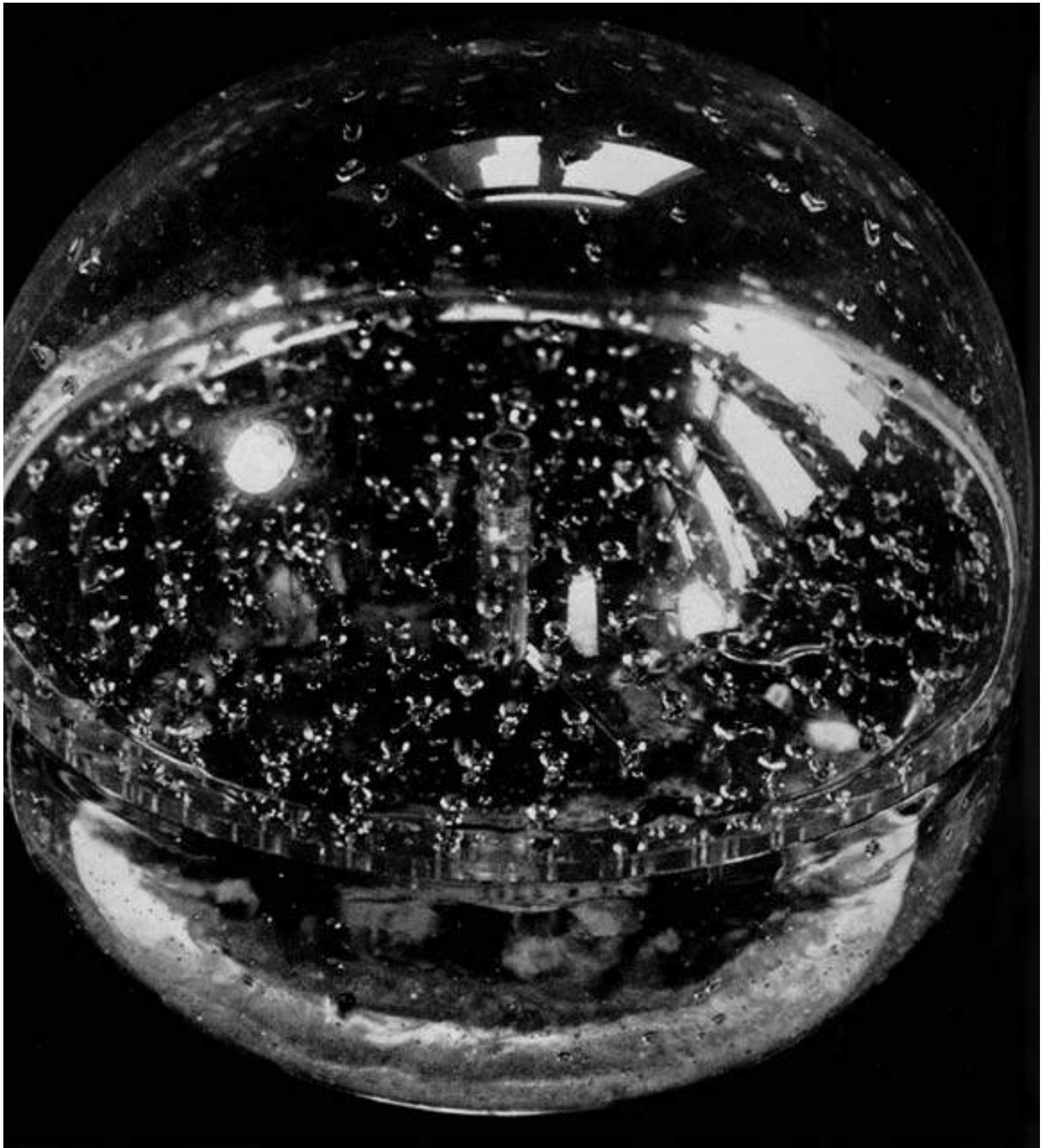
Experiment Studio
'GUTAI Group Osaka Japan'
Sadaharu Horio, Norio Imai, Kumiko
Imanaka, Georg Kikunami, Shigeki
Kitani, Takesada Matsutani, Shuji
Mukai, Michimasa Naohara, Senkichi
Nasaka, Yuko Nasaka, Minoru Onoda,
Kazuo Shiraga, Satoshi Tai, Teruyuki
Tsubouchi, Toshio Yoshida, Minoru
Yoshihada, Michio Yoshihara



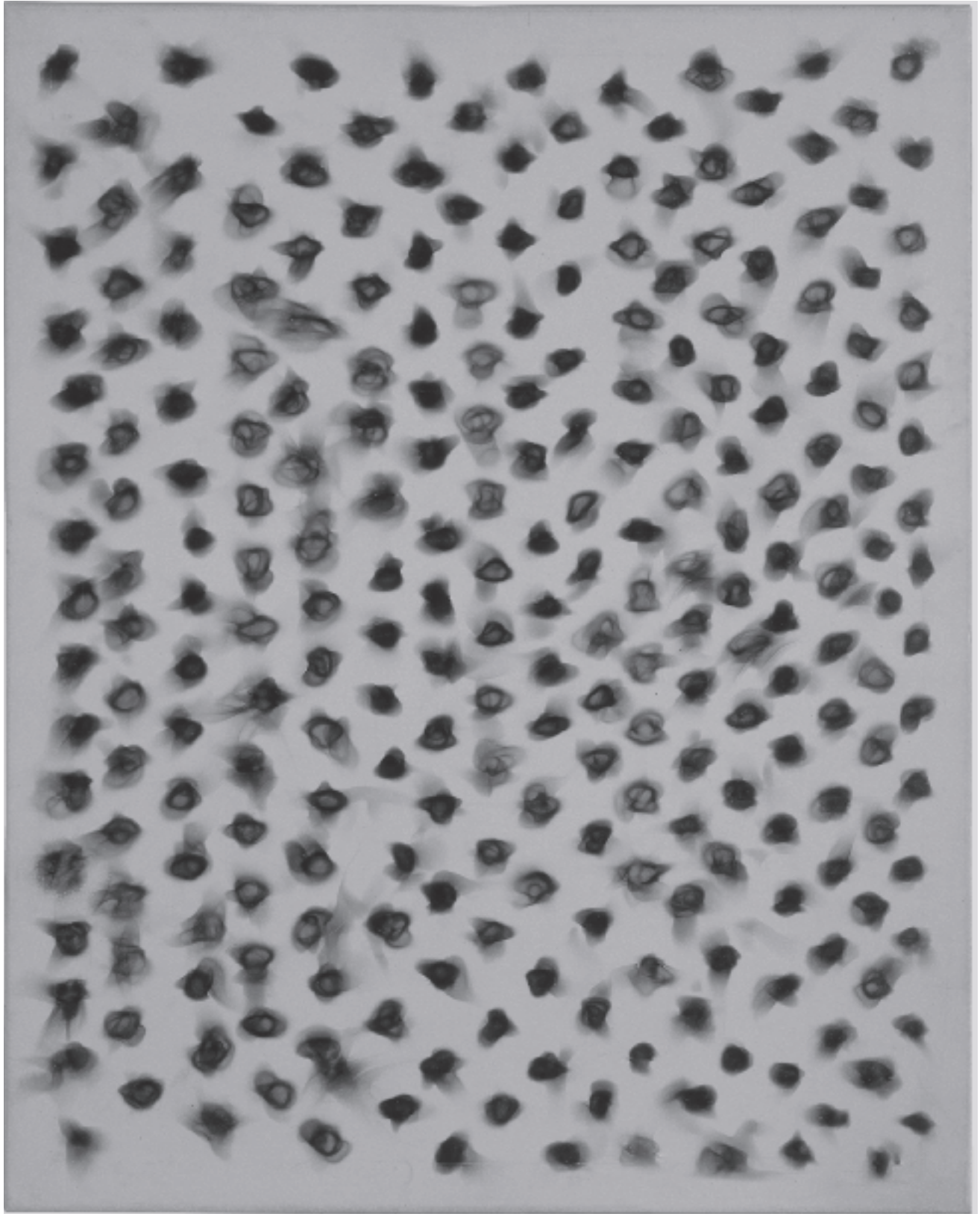
Group Exhibitions 1957-1967

Reflections

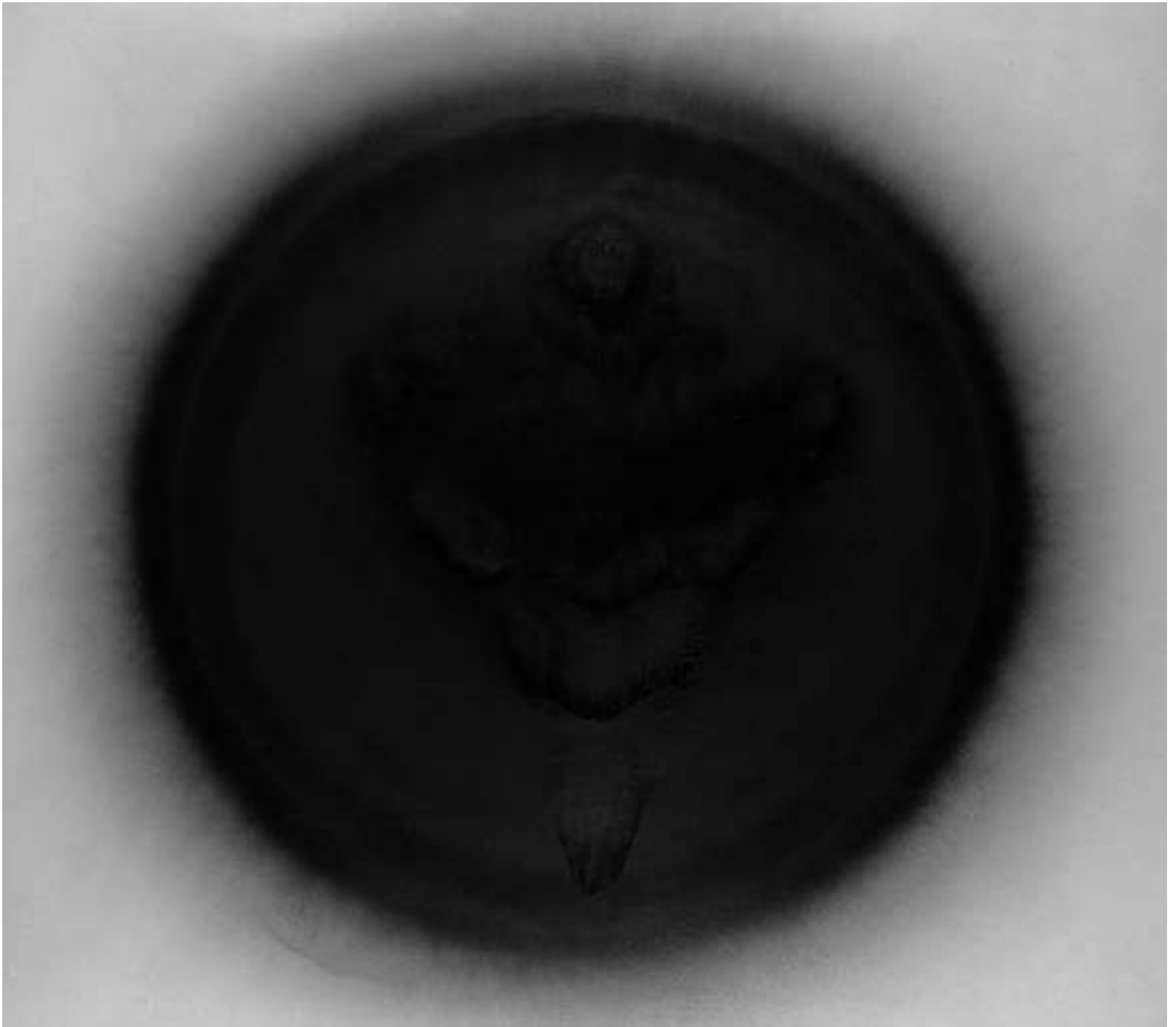




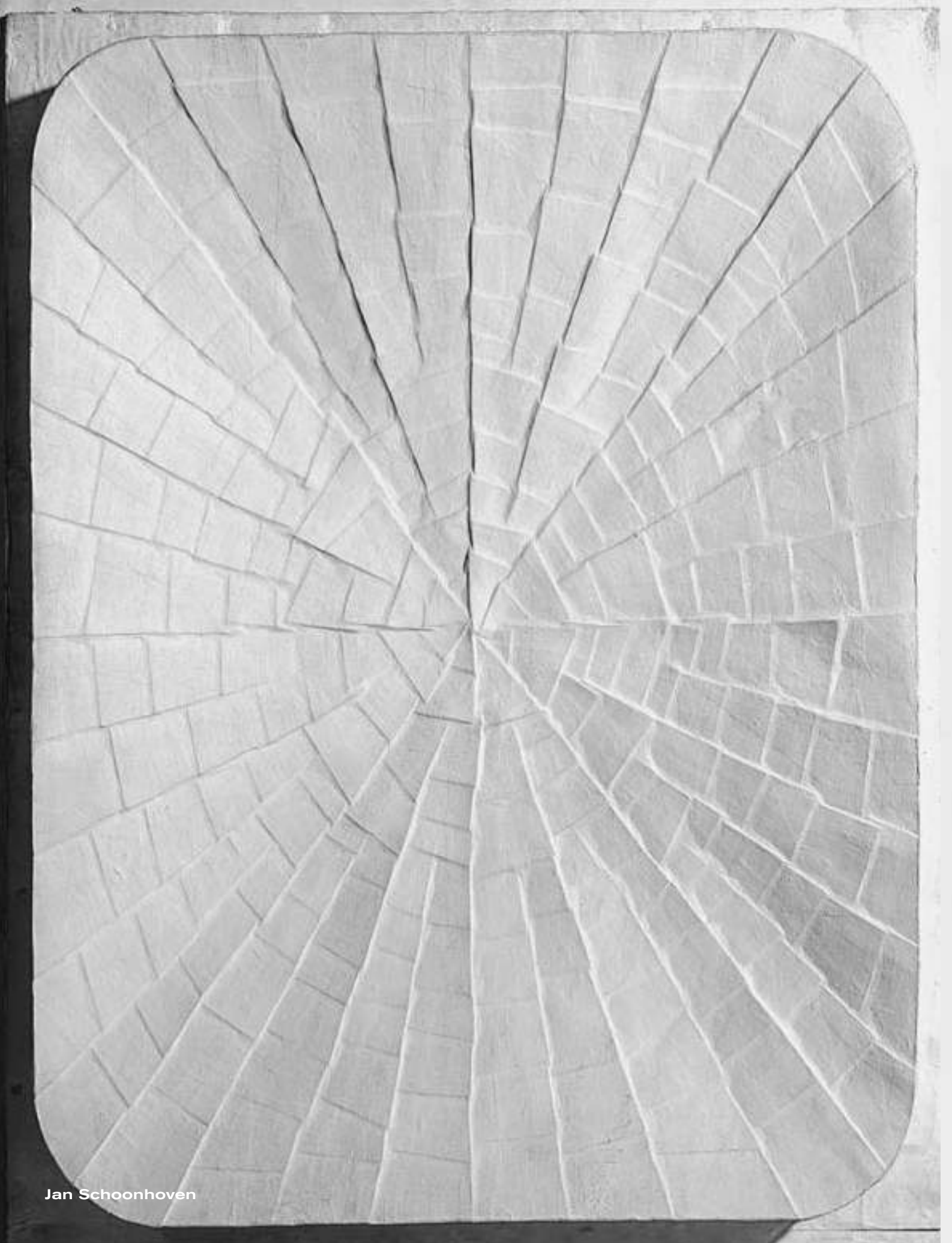
Hans Haacke



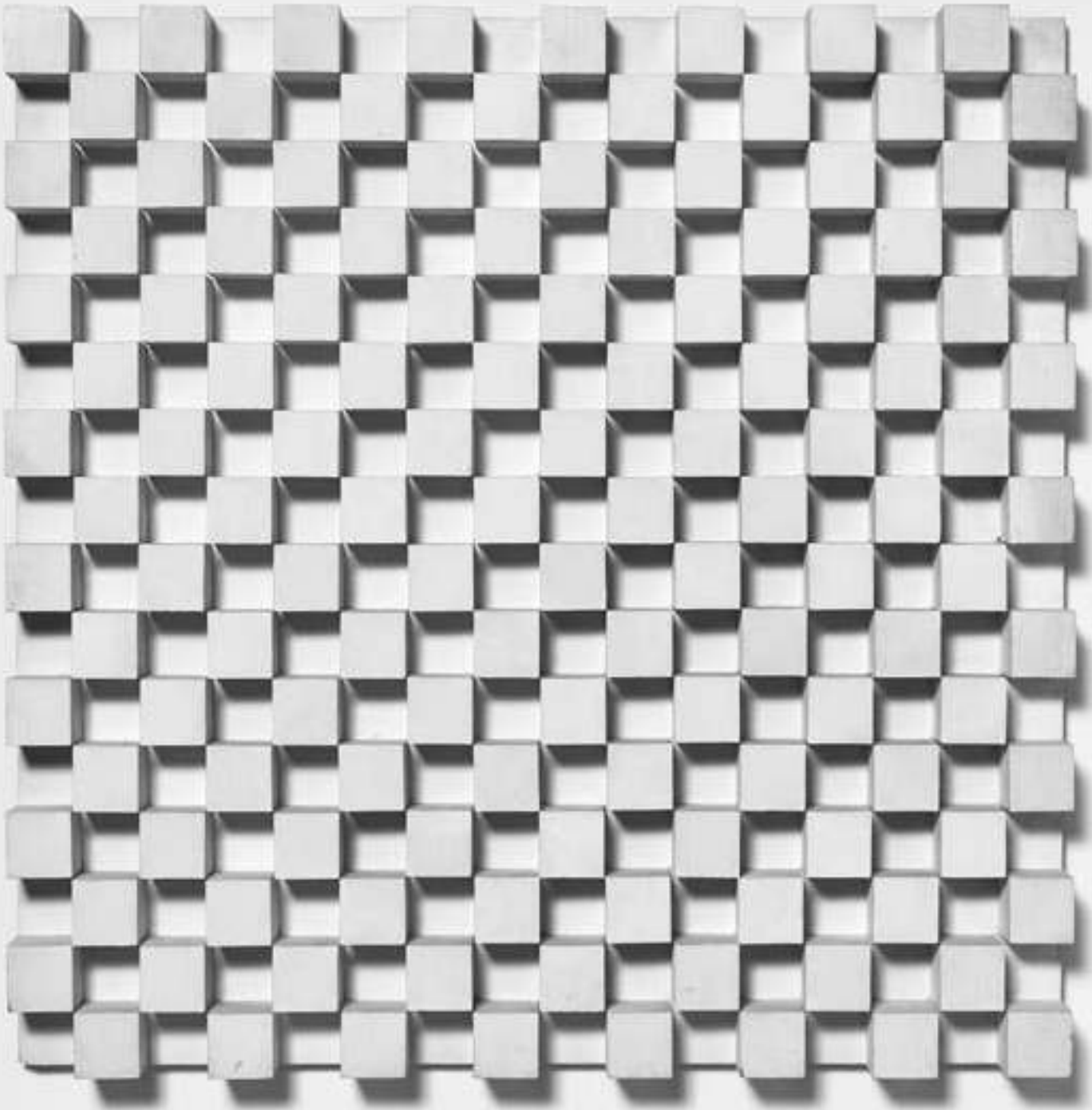
Henk Peeters



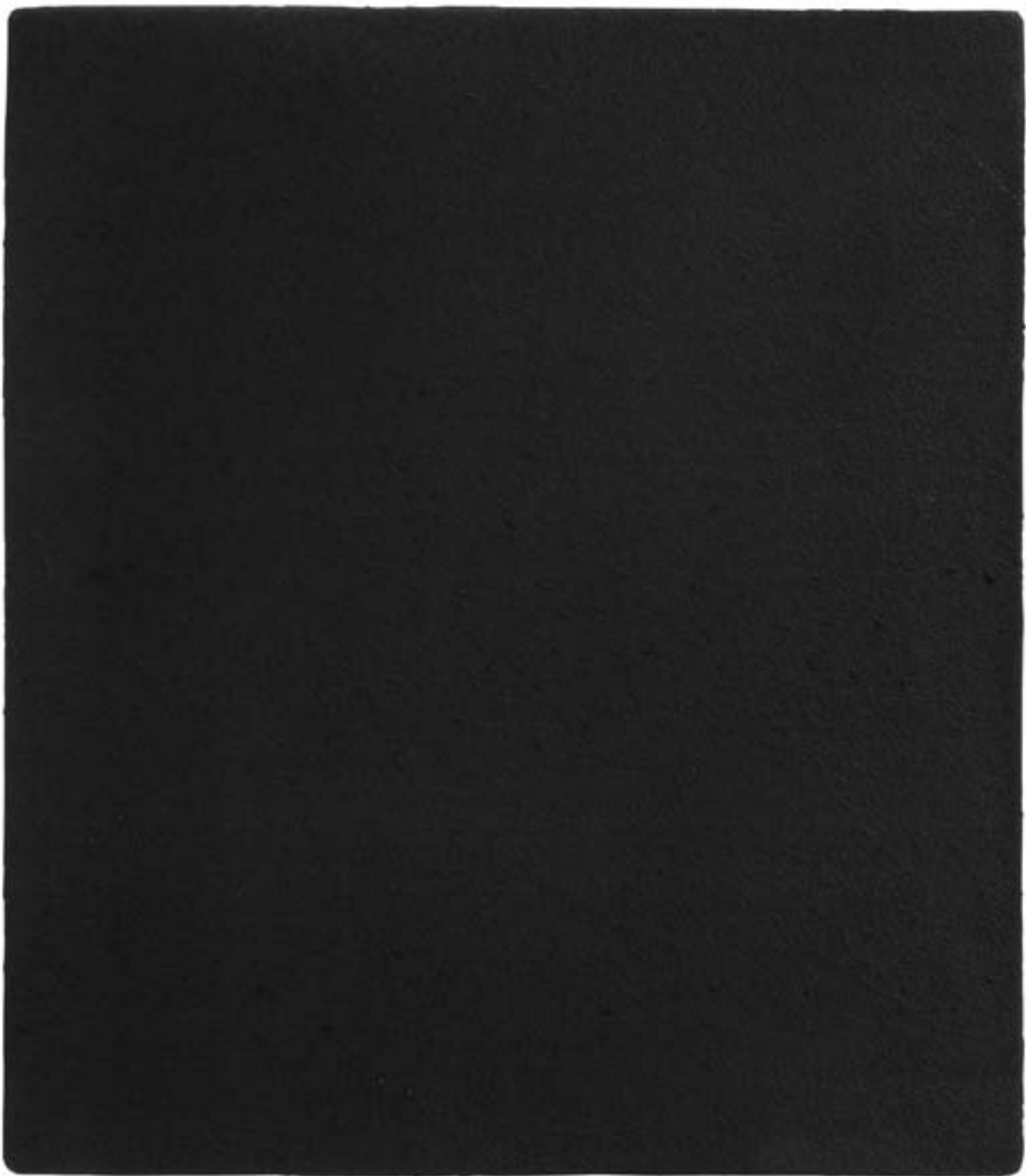
Otto Piene



Jan Schoonhoven



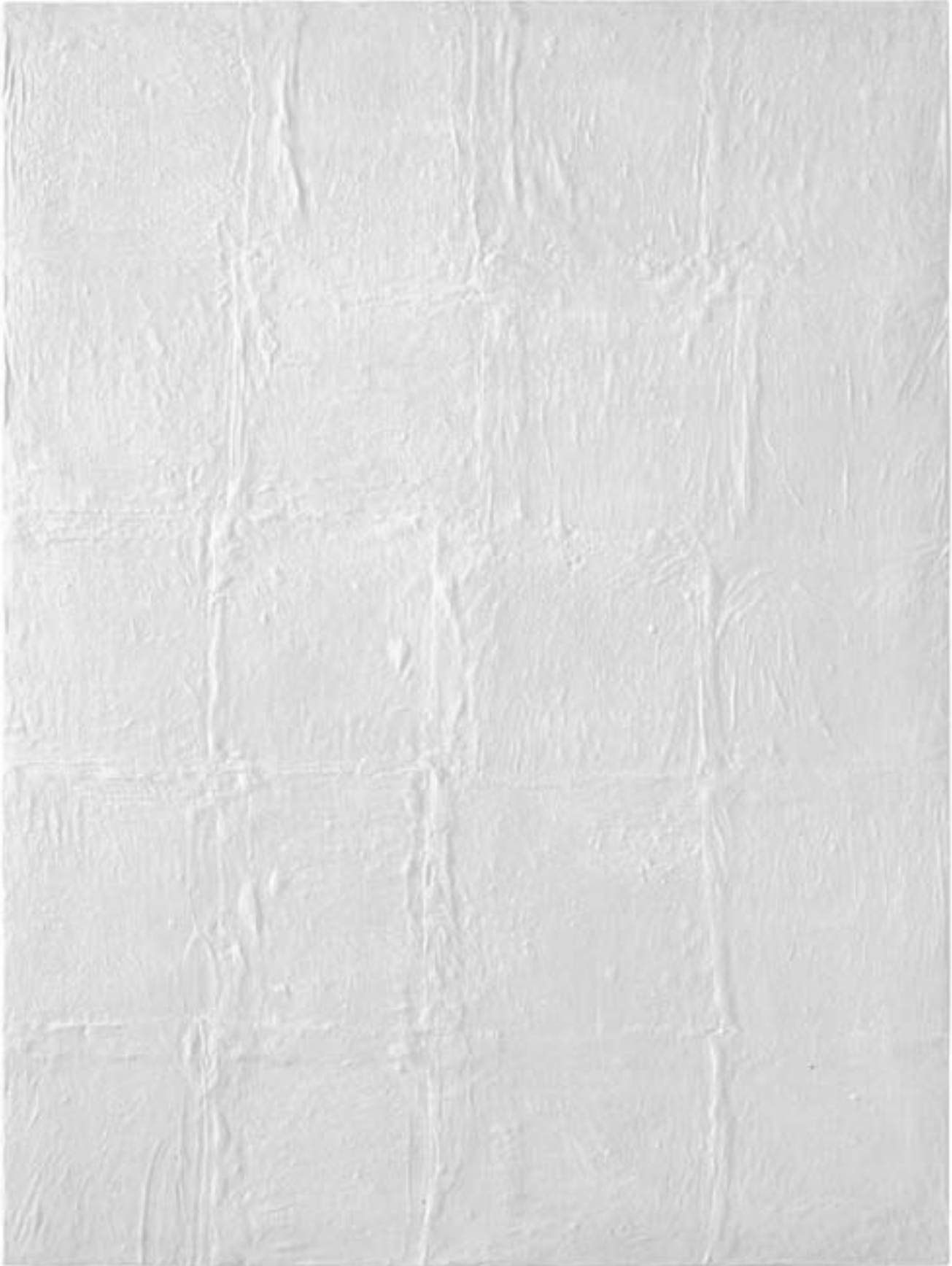
Herman de Vries



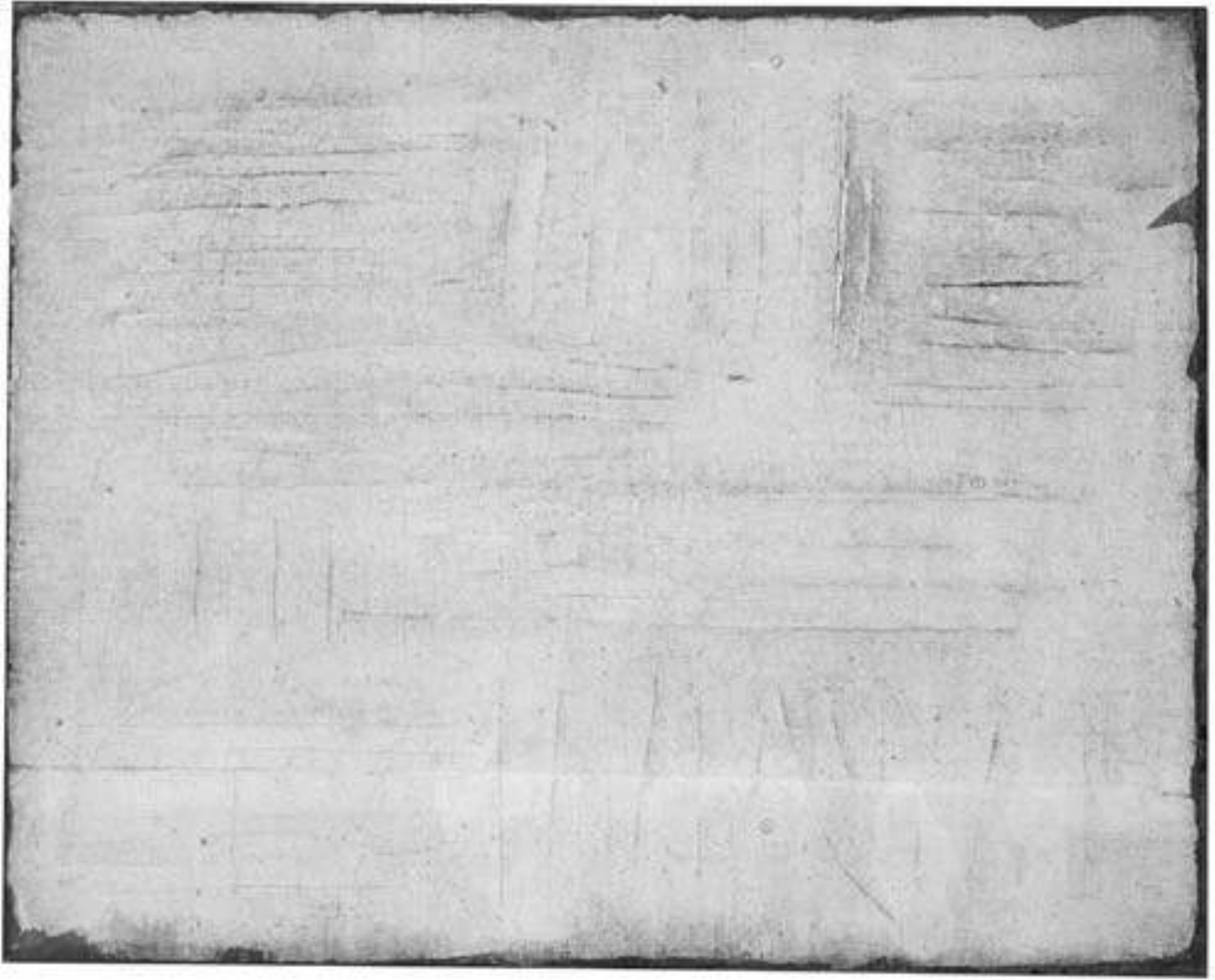
Yves Klein



Günther Uecker



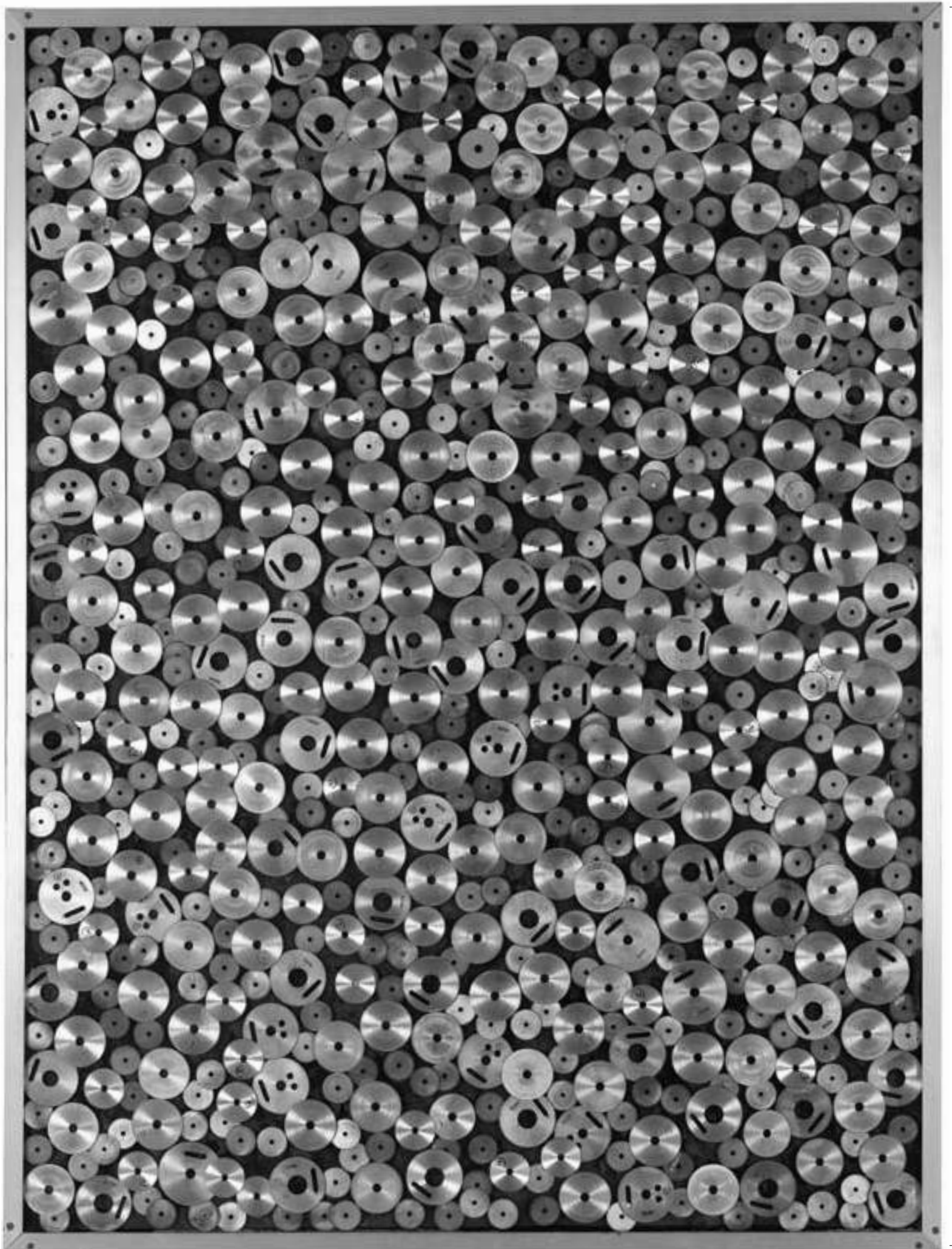
Piero Manzoni

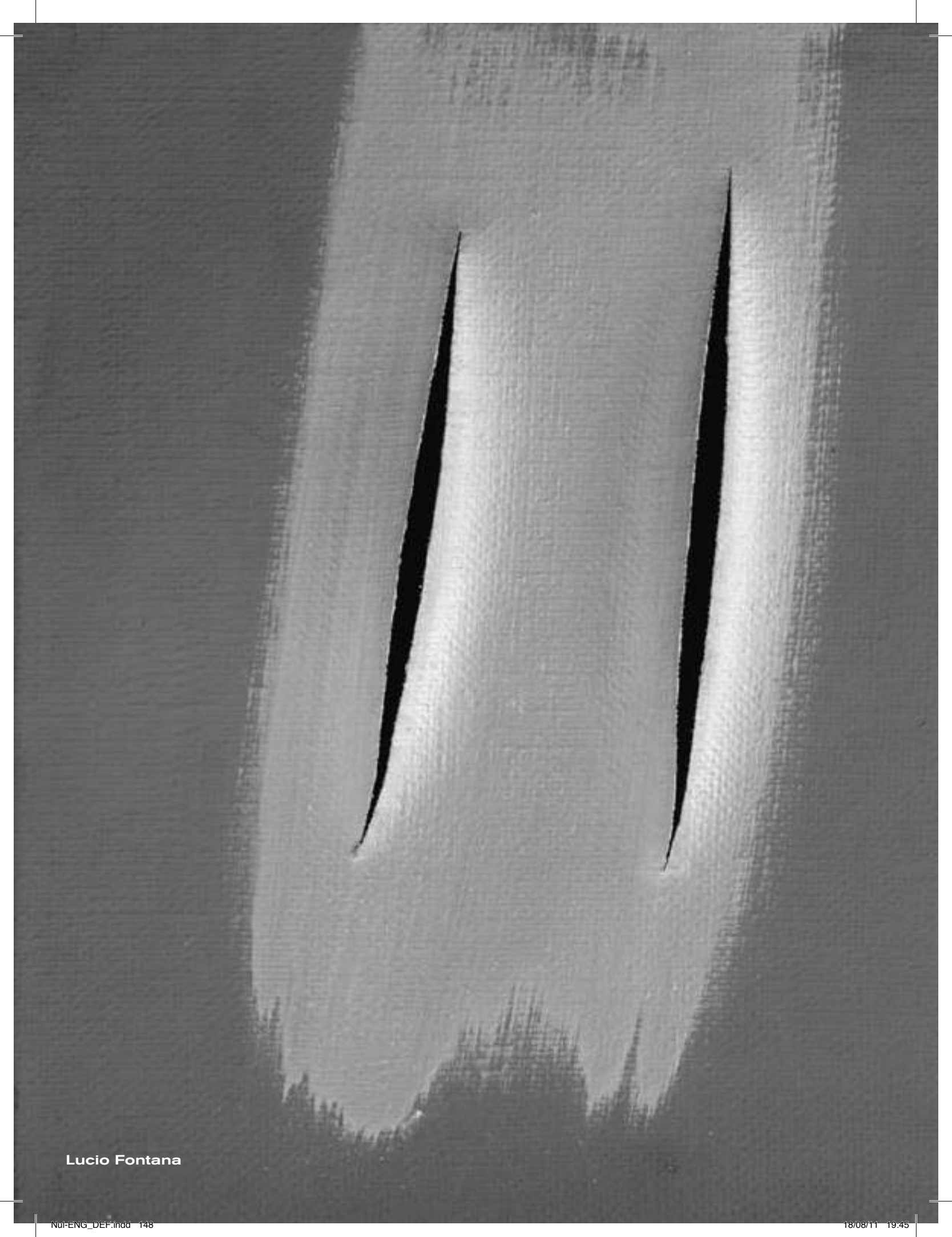


Jef Verheyen

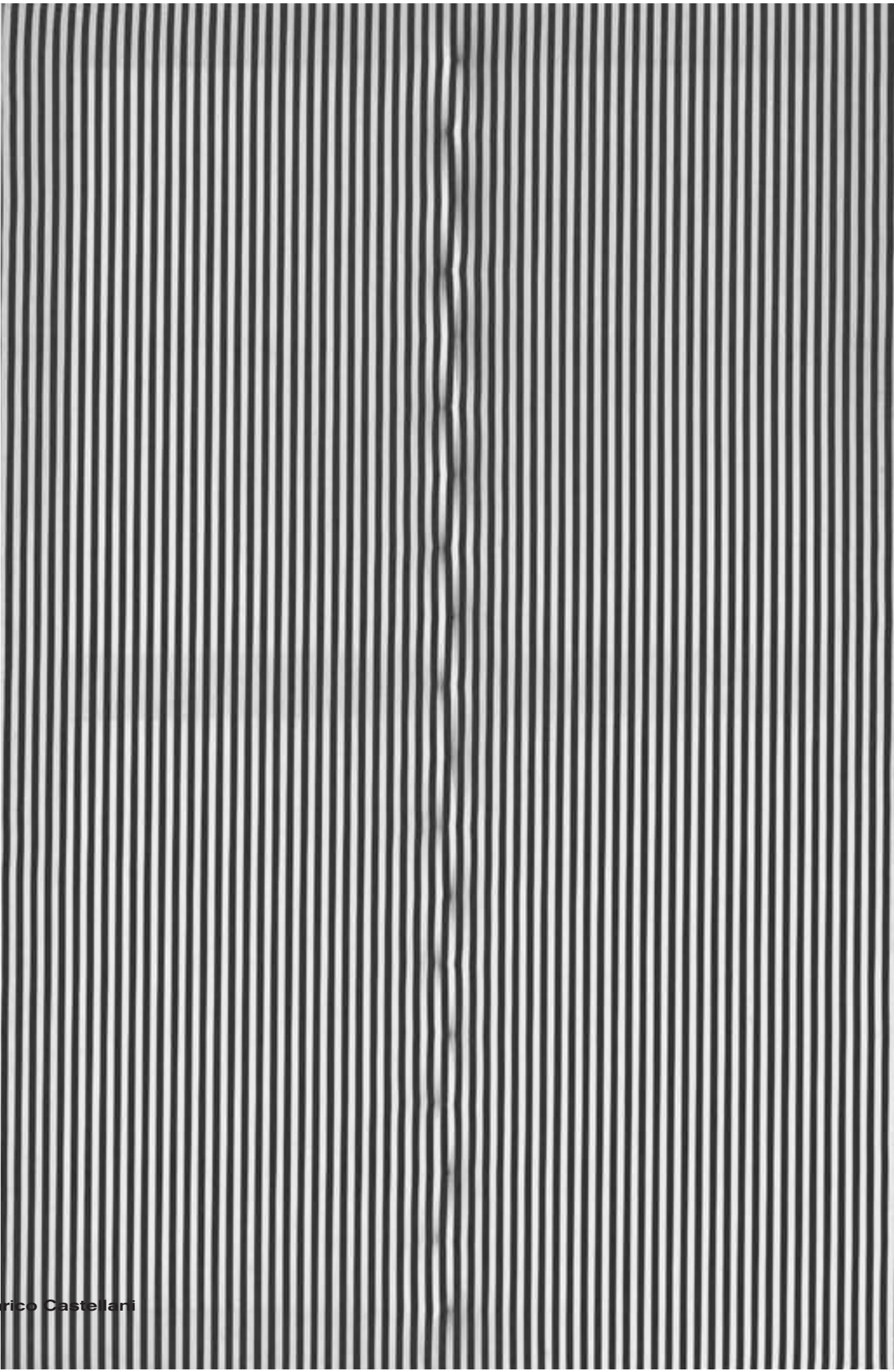


Jan Henderikse

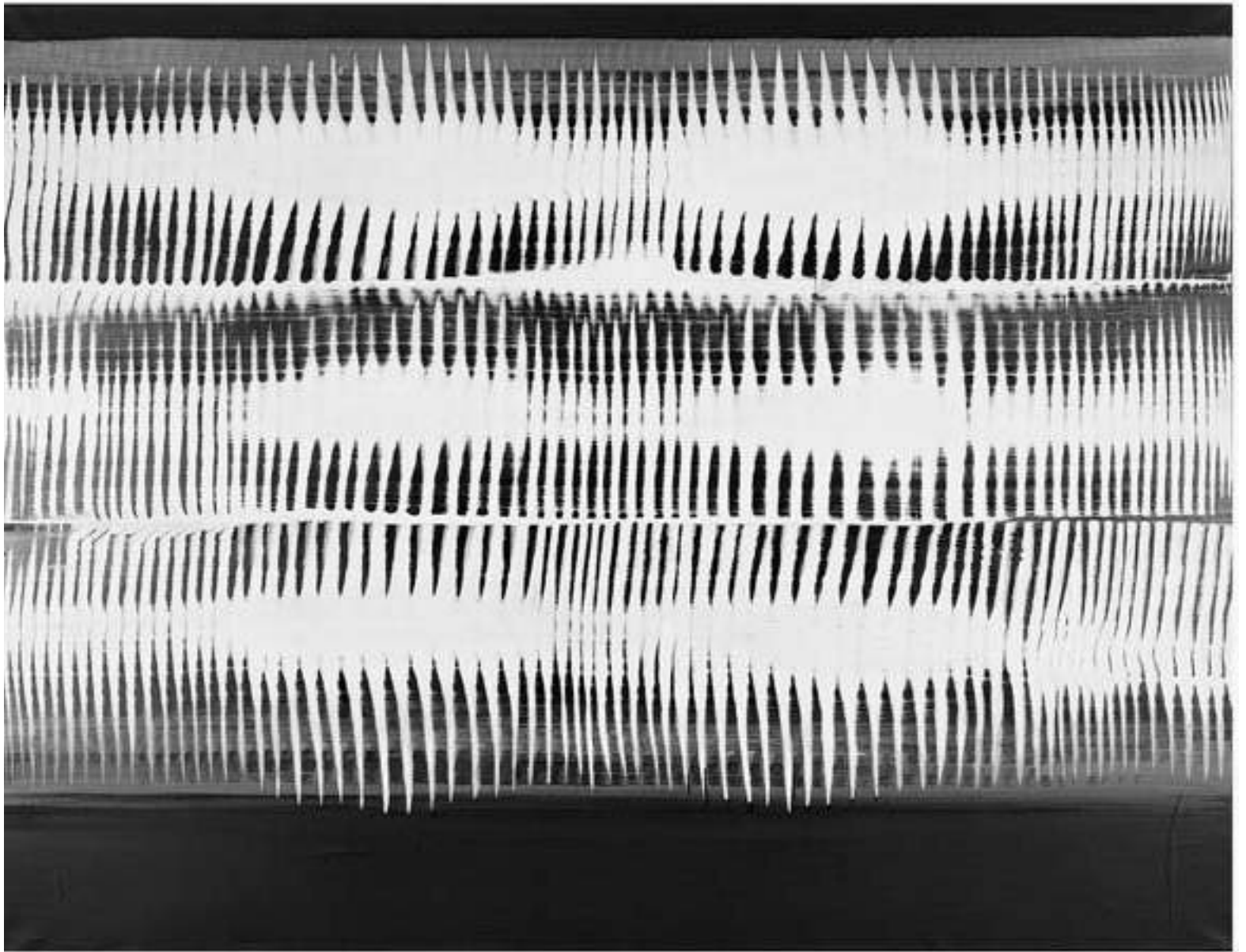




Lucio Fontana



Enrico Castellani

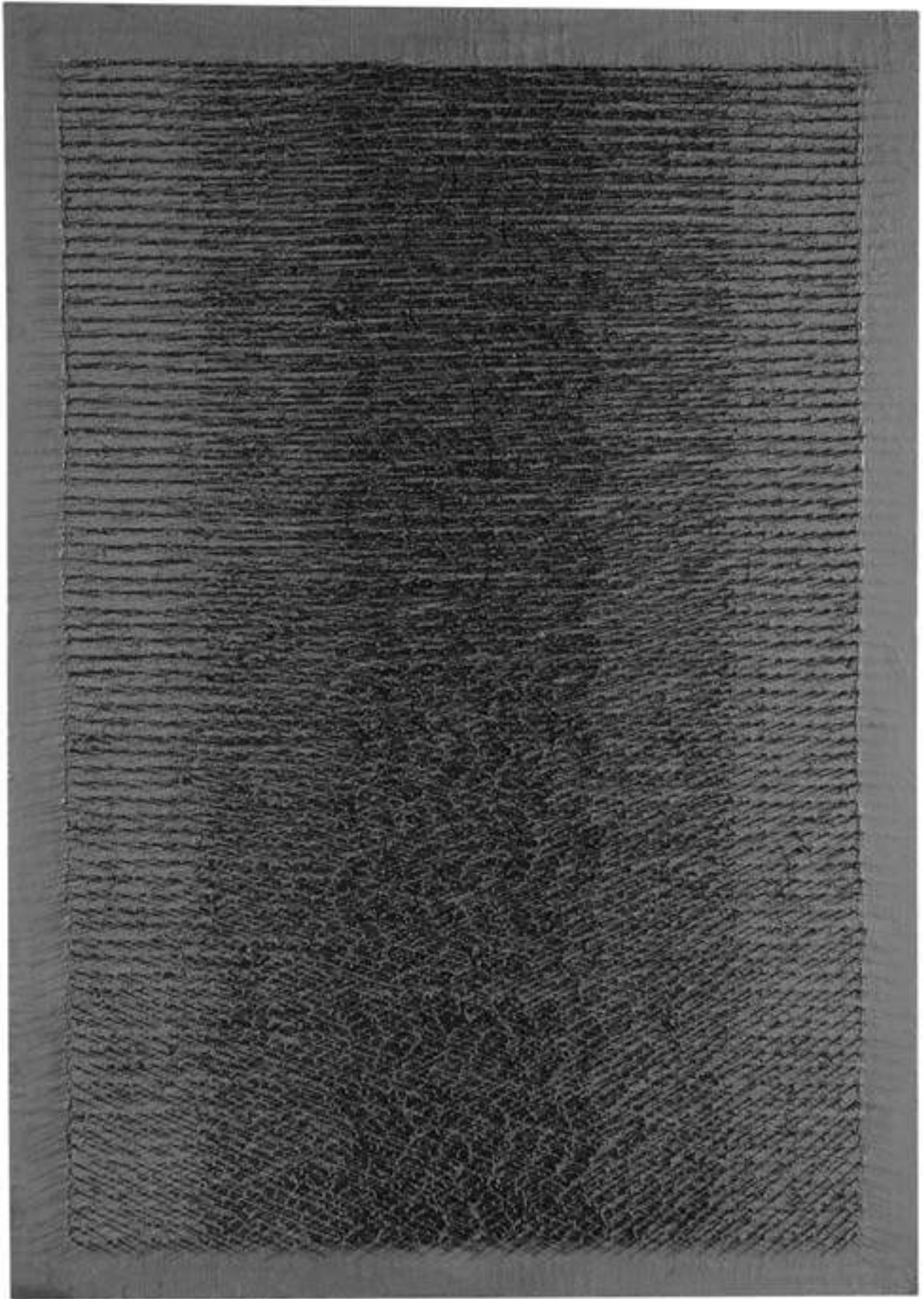


Heinz Mack

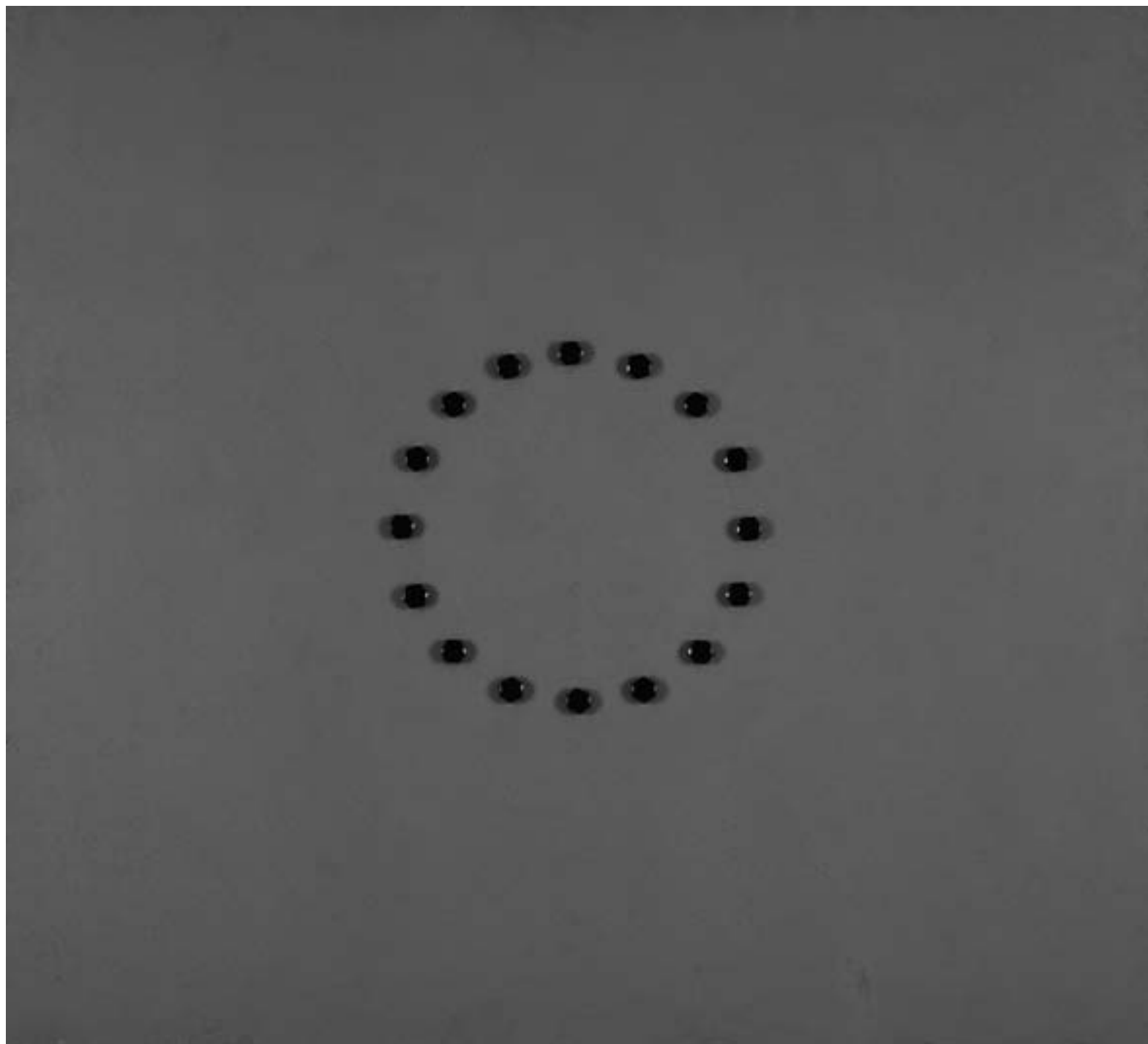
Yayoi Kusama



Christian Megert



Bernard Aubertin



Armando

Colin Huizing in
conversation with
Armando

Yes, Of Course, Provocation



So in 1958 you received a telephone invitation from Henk Peeters to take part in a group show in Delft, along with Bram Bogart, Kees van Bohemen, Jan Henderikse and Jan Schoonhoven?

I talked it over with Kees van Bohemen and then I thought, 'as long as they take care of the organizing, I'm in'. My paintings were shown, but I didn't go in person. I didn't know any of the other artists.

The same exhibition was later put on in Leiden. That time I did drop by, and I thought, 'these guys are actually pretty good'. And the Nul group eventually came out of that.

What kind of work were you doing at the time?

I was already making black and red monochrome paintings then, and that's where Nul later came from for me. And this happened to each us at the same time. So you noticed affinities, even international ones. Of course there were differences, often in ways you thought you'd never do yourself. We were working on the same things, but they were individual developments. We discussed it among ourselves a lot; I went to see Henk Peeters in Arnhem every weekend, for instance.

At the same time you were working as a journalist, involved with the journal *Gard Sivik*, among others, and later *de nieuwe stijl*. How did this relate to your work as a visual artist?

Actually I was far too busy with other things, like my journalism work. I had to earn a living, you know. You think I ever made any money from those Nul things? Do you know how much I made from my art between 1960 and 1970? Six hundred guilders. This wasn't at all appreciated by the tax office. It's very odd. You have an exhibition in Germany. You don't sell anything there, and the tax office doesn't believe you. In the beginning journalism was very inspiring, because you were dealing with 'reality'. You were consciously relating to reality. It was identical to what you were doing in your paintings. And so journalism led to that New Poetry, for instance, conversations in the train, the *Karl May Cycle*. You looked at things happening with greater intensity. I went to an agricultural trade show at the RAI in Amsterdam, for example, and I used those farming things to create *The Agrarian Cycle*. You just ran into these things. And why did I go to an agricultural trade show that I would never go to now? In search of reality, or to put it a better way: in search of a reality.

Were these gestures of provocation?

Not originally, no. They may have become so, but that wasn't the intention. It was just the product of my journalism work. I worked very hard to recruit other writers to our group and our way of thinking. I saw that in other avant-garde movements in other countries. In the end I didn't succeed. It's probable that its true value wasn't appreciated, but I also think that these writers were not necessarily interested in the things we were doing in the visual arts. I did make contact

with people like Hans Verhagen and Hans Sleutelaar, who were also working at the Haagse Post then. I was also on the editorial staff of the literary journal *Gard Sivik*. But a close collaboration between painters and writers never materialized. The remarkable thing is that in that period was Barbarber, with people like K. Schippers, Bernlef and Brands. They were working from more or less the same mind-set, but at the time I had no idea. I did later on.

Surely the 1960 pamphlet *Bekendmaking* (Proclamation) by the Informal Group (Armando, Kees van Bohemen, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven) cannot be seen as anything other than a provocation, not least because of its apparent similarity to a German *Bekanntmachung* of the Second World War. Was it consciously done for effect?

Yes, of course, provocation, because that's what works; that's when we get noticed.

In April 1961 you were a co-signer (and writer?) of the *Manifesto against Nothing*, an adaptation of Carl Laszlo's *Manifest gegen Nichts* (1960), and *Einde* (The End). In these publications, you, Onorio, Carl Laszlo, Bason Brock, Piero Manzoni, Henk Peeters, Jan Henderikse, Jan Schoonhoven, Christan Megert, Arthur K pcke and Silvano Lora declared an end to all previous art forms and their related institutions. And also announced an exhibition in which (in the end) there would be nothing to see.

Yeah, when I look back on it now, it's nonsense, but at the time it was a provocation, poking fun at the art world.

And so nothing was exhibited?

No, I don't even know anymore.

There are conflicting accounts. It was in a gallery on the Willemsparkweg in Amsterdam.

I do remember there was an opening on a Saturday afternoon and everyone went to it, but I wasn't there. There are people who say they saw me, but I honestly was never there.

The reactions to Nul were mixed. *De nieuwe stijl*, the successor to the journal *Gard Sivik*, ran a selection of not exactly positive reviews under the title 'Parade of the Plebs'.

Yes, we were proud of that. There'd been that sort of negative criticism during the CoBrA period, too. The things they wrote about Appel and all those guys. Now it's hugely popular, but at the time . . . You have no idea how they were trashed by the press. Our feeling was, the more negative the better. That's why I never understand the indignation today. I've even heard of people who get a tough review, burst into tears and give up painting, but we just laughed our heads

off. It only makes sense: when you come up with something new you're going to face resistance.

You said somewhere: 'We were very positive; everything was beautiful. One big open eye, and that produced, certainly in the beginning, a pleasant way of looking at things.' And yet your work from that period has a violent element to it, because of the materials you used: barbed wire, black water, metal plates, bolts . . . That was the most personal part, the choice of objects. I used bolts and Henk Peeters used cotton balls, for example. They're materials taken from reality. That's what I found beautiful: abandoned airfields, as long as it was dull. Another thing I always looked at then: rivets in steel bridges – that's where those paintings came from. At the time I was living on the Prins Hendrikkade in Amsterdam. And the light glistening in the black water in the evenings, that's where the work *Zwart water* (Black Water) came from. They're all things taken from reality.

The three-dimensional installations: Black Water, Car Tyres, Oil Drums. Can these be called conceptual works, in the sense that they can be produced by others following instructions?

The car tyres I had museum staffers set up. Black tyres on black linen. But it was just a case of, here you go, here are, I don't know, 20 car tyres, just hang them up. I wasn't even there. I was present at the opening, but not during the preparations. *Zwart water* can be produced by other people, too. I made that at the Gemeentemuseum (in The Hague) in 1964. You can still find photos of people looking very thoughtfully into those depths, which the lighting makes seem unfathomable. The funny thing is – maybe it's a generational issue – maybe 20, 30 years later I saw a similar installation somewhere by a Japanese artist whose name escapes me.

What impact did the work of colleagues in other countries have on you and the development of your work?

We didn't look that consciously at the work of the artists in other countries, because there were very few periodicals in which we could have kept up with their efforts. You only found out later what was going in other places. Henk Peeters was always well-informed, better than we were. It's been said that we followed those Germans (Zero) so much, and we never did – with all due respect to the Germans; we never worked with light, for instance, at least not with light as a visual element in itself. And they were much more idealistic; we tended maybe more towards the French Nouveau Réalisme. A tiny bit.

But that was primarily the case for you and Jan Henderikse. In the work of Schoonhoven and Peeters, phenomena like light and fire do play a role.

We did go to an exhibition by a certain Yves Klein at Haus Langen in Krefeld. And his work sold very badly; it was really cheap. To us he was already an idol. We had ideas in common, after all. We didn't meet him in person there; that would come later, at Günther Uecker's in Düsseldorf. But in the end it was Henk Peeters who had more contacts with artists abroad. He was the secretary, and I was too lazy for that sort of thing. I did meet Piene at the time. We came to Klein's exhibition because we had an exhibition there as well. It was very rare for us to go somewhere just for an exhibition. All the ZERO and Nul people admired Klein's work. It was the avant-garde you were interested in. You knew about Arman, too. And Fontana, of course. That was really the very early 1960s. There was one important journal: *Das Kunstwerk*. It was our ideal to get a photo of our work published in there. And when finally a photo of one of my paintings – with those bolts – was printed in it, the caption read, 'J.J. Schoonhoven'. We really worked at getting publicity that way. You know what was an important gallery at the time – in which I've never been? Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf. That's where they all showed, but we didn't – at least not that I know.

We were all doing avant-garde stuff, and this took different forms. What I didn't admire and have never felt any admiration for is that geometric abstraction, by people like Mavignier, Vasarely and so forth. All due admiration and respect, but I've never felt any connection with those geometric abstracts, none at all. They bored me. Again, with all due respect – some of them are very great artists. But it was a dangerous point, to end up with geometric abstraction, and I've never been for that, even though it may have seemed that way sometimes. I was for repetition, though. The most consistent work is what Jan Schoonhoven did, absolutely. He was the most consistent of all the Nul people, right up to his death.

Looking back it is still rather remarkable that you felt this kinship with a number of artists and that you all emerged simultaneously, as a group.

Yeah, but the credit was mostly due to Henk Peeters. The rest of us were too lazy for all that.

What or when was 'the end of Nul' for you?

When I got fed up during the second Nul exhibition (1965) at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. There's a group photo of the director, Edy de Wilde, his wife and the participating artists. I'm not in the photo because I'd already gone home by then. After that I didn't make any more Nul things. There wasn't anything that led to it while we were setting up the exhibition, but in the end I felt I'd become a

shell. I felt a renewed need for manual work, to do something with my own hands again, and this Nul work I could just have other people make. The way Schoonhoven had it made at the end. And in the beginning I made everything myself – how I did it is still a mystery, because I'm totally hopeless with technical stuff – but then others made it for me. After that I did other things for a few years, writing and so forth, and then I started drawing again and reconnected with the things I'd done in the 1950s. Ultimately, the Nul period was only a very brief period in my career. Afterwards I went back to what I was doing originally.

Antoon Melissen
in conversation with
Jan Henderikse

Too Much is Not Enough!



The Dutch Informal Group was founded in 1958. How do you remember those years, in terms of forming a group, but also of your start as a visual artist?

Actually, the founding of the Informal Group came out of very practical considerations: mostly we were hoping that as a group it would be easier to get exhibited. Earlier that year I'd managed to get us our first group show at the student cafeteria of the Delft Polytechnic. Don't forget that the official art circuit in the Netherlands didn't want anything to do with us, with the exception of Cor de Nobel's Galerie .31 in Dordrecht. De Nobel came to Delft in 1958 to invite Jan Schoonhoven to put on a solo exhibition; I just happened to be visiting Jan at the time. It was so like Jan to say: 'Sure, I'll do it, but let this kid do one first.' And so I had my first solo show in 1958, thanks to Jan. There were really good informal works in it, really thick with paint, too. In those days I was still using house paint, remnants I'd get from a paint shop in Delft. There were drops of paint on the floor tiles under the paintings in the gallery – that's how brand-new those pieces were! Schoonhoven encouraged me to continue with art – he saw something in my work. And he gave me stacks of paper on more than one occasion, because of course I could hardly afford it. My first visit to Jan and Anita Schoonhoven made a huge impression on me. An artist with a studio – for me it was really a whole other world. And yet Schoonhoven was from a working-class background. Neither of us had any contacts whatsoever in the art world, nobody to pull strings and help us out. We set everything up ourselves. It was the same during the Nul group period, by the way: museums and galleries had no interest at all in our work. It was primarily Henk, of course, who was very active in making contacts – his typewriter was never still. Without him many initiatives would never have got off the ground.

You left the Netherlands fairly soon, in 1959. What was behind your emigration?

To get out of the Netherlands was what I'd always wanted! Gerard Reve, too, wrote about moving abroad, in *Op weg naar het einde* (On My Way to the End), I think. Reve said there were two options: working in the mines or in a hospital, both in England. Of course I didn't really want to do *that*. I couldn't really find my niche in the Netherlands, and I wasn't able to do any serious work either. That's why I wanted to emigrate, to produce *real* art for a change. And yet around 1958 we barely had any idea of what was going on in other countries. Henk Peeters had a subscription to the journal *Das Kunstwerk*, so we were able to keep up to date a little bit. I'd hear things sometimes through Bram Bogart, who was also from Delft and had moved to Paris in the early 1950s. And Anita Schoonhoven was a friend of the sculptor Lotti van der Gaag, who'd also been living in Paris since 1950. But it really didn't amount to much; in the Netherlands you were really isolated in those days.

You spent several years in Düsseldorf. Did you choose Düsseldorf because of the circle around the German Zero artists?

No, absolutely not. I left in 1959, going first to Cologne and later that year to Düsseldorf. In the past I'd worked as a tour guide on those holiday boats on the German Rhine, so I was a little familiar with the area. I hoped the move would shake things up, and actually it did. Once I left I never painted again – it was really a radical break. In Cologne I met Günther Uecker and through Günther I found a studio in Düsseldorf. Joseph Beuys and Gotthard Graubner were my new neighbours, and Beuys always hated the fact that I had the nicest space. But we had hardly any contact with each other; our worlds were so far apart. He was still drawing at the time and I was already working on my first assemblages. I'd take endless walks with my wife, Idi, along the Rhine in Düsseldorf, and I'd bring back anything I found interesting, even things that had washed up on the banks. My studio was packed to the rafters during that period, and I always had to clear a path in the evening when we wanted to go to bed. Speaking of assemblages, when I was 18 and living in Amsterdam, I was already sticking all the everyday things I used onto panels. That was in 1955. But, yeah, what do you do with that when you're 18? Threw it all away, of course. What a shame!

Can you talk a little bit about your contacts around 1960, the people you met in Düsseldorf?

Günther Uecker lived around the corner from us in Düsseldorf; we talked with him every day and we were good friends during those years. Uecker would exhibit his work with Heinz Mack and Otto Piene, but actually things clicked a lot better between the two of us. And the Düsseldorf gallery owner Alfred Schmela also dropped by frequently. I usually went to the openings at Schmela's gallery with Uecker. I also saw a lot of exhibitions outside Düsseldorf, as it happens. 'Monochrome Malerei' (Monochrome Painting) in Leverkusen – that's where I met Lucio Fontana – Yves Klein's 'Monochrome und Feuer' (Monochrome and Fire) exhibition in Krefeld, and Christo's installation of stacked oil drums in the harbour of Cologne – that was in 1961 as well. And Manzoni, of course. I'd already seen his work in Rotterdam in 1958, with Jan Schoonhoven. For us it was really a jolt to see *that* much work that was *that* provocative. Jan was hugely impressed by the order in Manzoni's work. And of course everything was white, pure white!

Your works from the Nul period differ rather significantly from one another. What was the unifying factor, in your view?

I can illustrate that with a nice story. We picked up Jan Schoonhoven in Delft one day, in a 2CV, and we all drove to Trier, to the opening of the exhibition 'Avantgarde 61'. There's still a photo of that, of us at the opening in formal suits. All four of us hated affectation – the

kind of pretensions and attitudes you'd get from artists, those bohemian types who'd deliberately splatter paint on their hands and *then* go to an opening. On that score we all agreed. I really clicked with Armando. If you read the manifestos of the time now, it all seems so terribly serious and theoretically worked out, and yet Armando and I would be laughing our heads off making up slogans like 'creativity goes about dressed in a proper suit'. I wasn't involved in the writing of the manifestos, by the way. Jan Schoonhoven actually felt the same way about it as I did: 'Those guys can do what they like; it's really nothing to do with me' was more or less the way he looked at it. We weren't all sitting around all day theorizing; we were much too sober-minded for that. At least I was. But we did share a way of thinking. However different our works were.

How do you look back on the Nul period?

Yeah, how 'Nul' was I, really? Actually, for me Nul was more a vehicle. I was part of it, and yet I wasn't. And don't forget that Nul wasn't a club with by-laws or anything like that: something just evolved out of the Informal Group that became Nul. People often imagine something very rigid, but actually many things happen quite organically. And that's the way plans for exhibitions were made: lots of talking and then suddenly you'd get the best ideas. Like for the first Nul exhibition in Amsterdam – we discussed that a lot. Including with Günther Uecker and Yves Klein, as it happens. I really wanted to toss 20 crates of beer from the top of that beautiful marble staircase at the Stedelijk Museum. I could see it all, this fantastic layer of foam all over the museum floor. And I was in touch with Braun about a cabin with flash equipment at the museum exit, so you'd have spots in front of your eyes for four days. Real 'art you take home with you', in other words! All those plans were rejected. 'Are you out of your mind?' Willem Sandberg said. I even had an affidavit from an eye doctor that it wouldn't do any harm. A chain smoker, that doctor, by the way, because the cigarette packs for the assemblage I exhibited there came from him. But it's true I didn't want to have anything more to do with Nul for a long time, and neither did Armando, incidentally. Always the same anecdotes, and always having to explain, over and over, exactly what it was about. A losing battle. It's incomprehensible, really, that it took so long for the Dutch to pay attention to that period.

In 1968, so after the Nul group had disbanded, you had a solo exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum entitled 'Jan Henderikse Uses Common Cents'. 'Uses common sense' – is this still the spirit of Nul talking?

I've always felt that as an artist you should use your common sense; that's not specifically 'Nul'. Marcel Duchamp said it: '*bête comme un peintre*', dumb as a painter. Artists shouldn't philosophize too much about their own work; it only leads to problems and nonsense.

I've always felt an affinity with Duchamp, with the combination of doing serious work but not taking yourself too seriously. Duchamp was a master at self-contradiction, at stirring up tensions time and time again. You can see this in his work: every step is a surprise. Wim Beeren, the director of the Stedelijk Museum in the 1980s, said this about my work too, that I'm so unpredictable. Make what you enjoy, whether it fits in a particular pattern or not. A lot of artists just go on doing things in the same familiar way. Sort of don't rock the boat, don't change too much, because it might all go wrong. To me that's death. I've never wanted to conform; I wouldn't even be able to. What Wim Beeren meant is that people expect an assemblage from me, but instead they get the Dutch national anthem, as *my* work of art, or an installation of cola bottles. That infuriates people. Because they don't get it – it runs counter to their expectations.

You've mentioned Marcel Duchamp. What are your thoughts on the conceptual element in your own work?

I've always believed that art is really more an idea than a thing. I think. I once had an exhibition in mind in which I wouldn't make any of the pieces myself, and I wouldn't even go to see it. Maybe that's going too far; you'd be *too* consistent. My installations of fruit boxes and beer crates from 1962 are of course the original pieces. But the point is the idea, not that one initial version. Forget the patina, forget the old signature, forget the original work; the value of the later versions of the installations lies somewhere amidst all that, and they are really just as unique as the original version. I was already working with fruit and vegetable boxes and beer crates in 1959, and I also made my first large installations in my studio that year. I didn't show them until 1962, first at the Stedelijk Museum and later at the Antwerp exhibition 'Anti-Peinture' (Anti-Painting). Yeah, when you look back the idea turns out to be stronger than that one execution in and of itself. It's why we can still look at it, still make it.

You talked earlier about a shared way of thinking. And yet you didn't take part in the second Nul exhibition in Amsterdam in 1965.

That's right. In fact I dropped out in 1964, because I didn't take part in the 'ZERO-0-NUL' exhibition at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague in 1964. Jan Schoonhoven and I did exchange letters about that show, but I was already over it by then. It had all got a little too serious, too white, too clean and 'Zeroist'. In the early years it was different; the Dutch artists had a clear identity of their own, averse to idealism. Very different from the Germans, both feet more on the ground, really. It got a little too *rein und hoch* for me. I still sent in a proposal for 'Zero on Sea' in 1966, because the idea of art in public space has always appealed to me enormously. When I think back on it, you can see a definite difference from the German Zero group, from those light pieces by Otto Piene, for instance. I'd done a design

for a room built out of beer crates, with a light bulb inside each beer bottle. And then those light bulbs would flash on and off like mad, preferably at random, of course, not all at the same time. I've always loved quantities, masses, preferably of everyday objects. It's provocative but it's also beautiful, the way the packed stands of a baseball field are beautiful. It's decoration in the classical sense of the term, even though it's to do with things that others might find banal. Unlike many other artists, by the way, I don't think 'decoration' is a dirty word!

Arman also worked with everyday objects and materials. How did your work from the Nul period relate to Arman's?

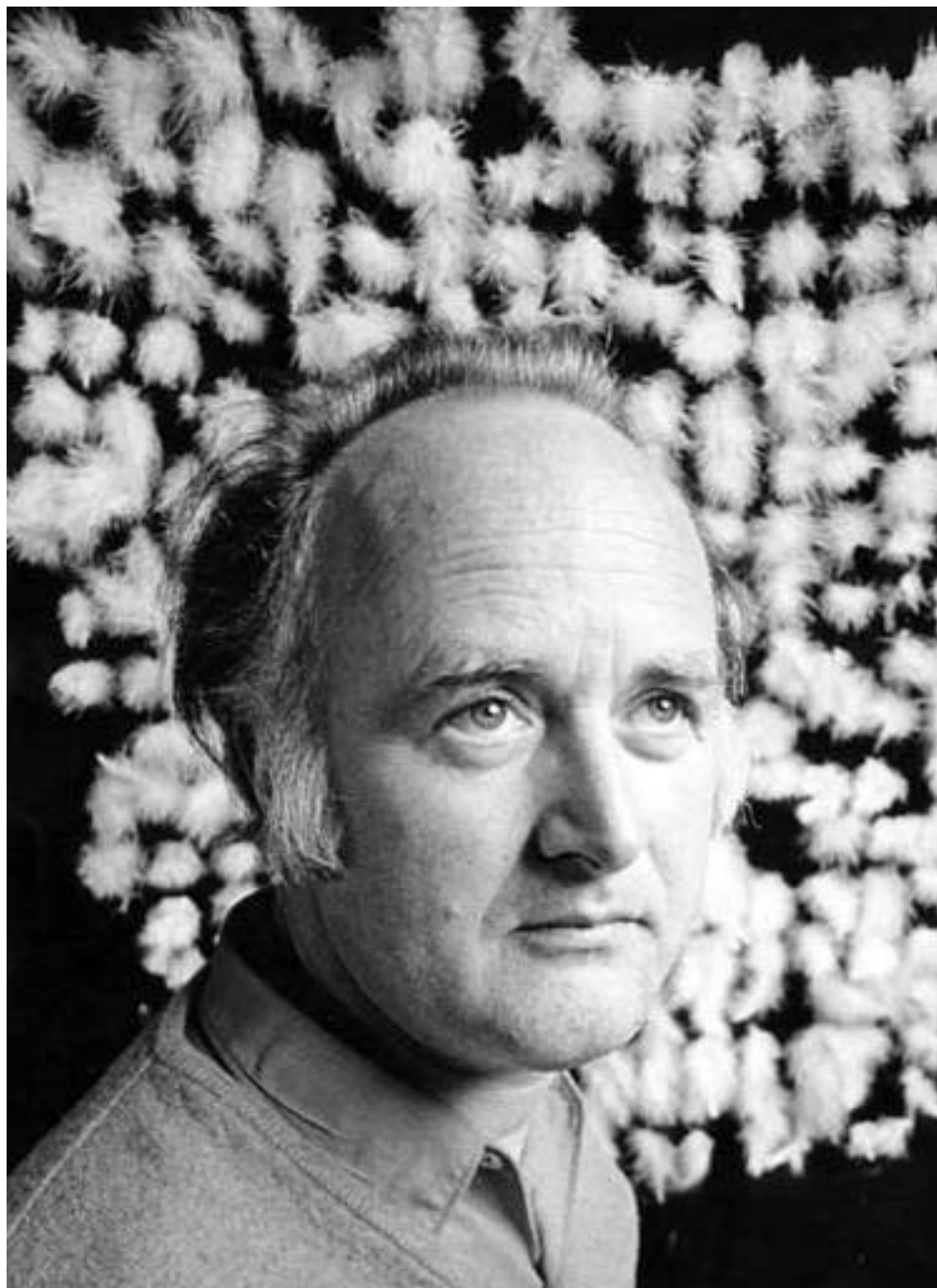
I saw Arman's *Poubelles* for the first time in Paris; those pieces made a huge impression on me. Stuffing the contents of a rubbish bin inside a Plexiglas box – you couldn't get any more radical than that, I thought. I was also working with anything I came across, but I had the feeling that there was more of a 'choice' in my work than in Arman's. Making art without technique, totally devoid of any technique at all – I admired that enormously, although Arman's work was often much more composed than mine. And just recently I heard that he was in fact quite selective before those Plexiglas boxes of rubbish were sealed. I never say anything about my own work; for that you'll have to go to art historians. Still I think my work is more intuitive, less constructed. Arman, myself, but also Christo, Armando and of course Daniel Spoerri, so many people in those days were looking for 'it' in ordinary things, and yet each found it in his own way. Günther Uecker once asked me very politely whether he might make a piece with corks, just as I was doing a lot back then. But of course that piece looked completely different from mine, really composed, laid out in rows – I'd never do it that way. The Korean artist Nam June Paik once said that television had been such a new and dramatic form of entertainment that it allowed artists to go back to making dull and repetitive work. Maybe that's not such a crazy notion. My favourite things to work with are the most ordinary things, things others find totally uninteresting or fail to notice entirely. Discarded photos, corks, coins, number plates, you name it. When I look back on it, that really is a constant line in my work, right up to the present day, in fact. And then all those ordinary things suddenly turn out to be very interesting indeed.

The artist gets the last word?

Yes please! I've said it many times before: I'm interested in everything that moves human beings. Everything. Preferably in large quantities. The more the merrier, too much is not enough! To me that really sums it up best.

Tijs Visser in
conversation with
Henk Peeters

There Must Be a New Art. Or a New Public!



You began as an 'Informal' artist. How would you describe the transition from 'painter' to ZERO? And where did you first come in contact with the ZERO artists?

Disillusionment about pre-war expressionism was just beginning to spread. At the end of the 1950s, the Netherlands had just started appreciating CoBrA and Tachism. The work of the Dutch Informal Group drew the obvious conclusions from Tachism, with artists like Mark Tobey and Mark Rothko, or material painters like Jean Dubuffet and Tàpies. The group included Armando, Kees van Bohemen, Jan Schoonhoven and myself, and at the beginning Bram van den Boogaard (who worked under the name Bogart) occasionally took part. We were interested in monochromism, and Jan Henderikse, another member of the group, produced plain white or grey surfaces in a thick impasto, Armando went totally black, Schoonhoven produced grey, virtually silted-up droppings and in my case it was grey planes with a white or black border.

We shared our genealogy with Piero Manzoni and Yves Klein, whom I had previously met in Paris. In 1960, via Yves Klein, I made contact with his future brother-in-law Günther Uecker and through the latter we then met Heinz Mack and Otto Piene. That autumn we transformed the 'Informal' group into 'Nul', signalling an affinity with the German 'Zero' group.

I first saw Günther Uecker's work at Galerie Kasper in Lausanne, where I also exhibited. At the time he was a member of the NEE (Nouvelle École Européenne) group, which was being actively promoted by Kasper. Subsequently, I got to know Uecker's work from the exhibition in Wolfram's Eschenbach and of course also from the exhibition 'Monochrome Malerei' that Udo Kultermann mounted in Leverkusen.

I just missed the exhibition, but saw a large portion of the works in store. I was keen to bring them to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, though without old warhorses like Mark Rothko. I wanted to show new work. Until the last moment, and at the cost of lots of arguments, though with the support of Sandberg, the museum's director, I tried to persuade artists to participate.

The plans for a first large international Nul exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in 1962 originated in the spring of 1961 in Uecker's studio in Düsseldorf. Uecker took me to see Mack to discuss things further and Mack in turn advised me to invite Yves Klein. But Klein wasn't at all interested, since he felt that monochromism was his invention, and actually had an argument about it with Kultermann. Mack also had a different concept and wanted to make the show more of a ZERO exhibition. Because I felt very much at home with them, we drew up a list of artists together. Piene made a plan showing the distribution of rooms.

Shortly afterwards Piero Manzoni visited me at home while he was in Rotterdam for an ZERO exhibition that Hans Sonnenberg

organized at the Rotterdamse Kunstkring, and we drew up the final list of participants to which he added Lucio Fontana and Enrico Castellani. Somewhat against his wishes I added Lo Savio, who had made a great impression on me in Leverkusen. Manzoni had a clear picture of trends and he also brought Gruppo T to my attention, especially Gianni Colombo, whom he considered important.

Where did you meet Yves Klein and what influence did he have on your work?

In 1960 I saw his work at Iris Clert's gallery in Paris, where I also met him for the first time. I'm not sure whether he had a great influence on me. I'm not as religious as Klein, who's very mystical, and that didn't interest me at all. I'm much more interested in the superficial, I don't go beyond the surface, there's nothing 'behind' my work. My ideas were much closer to Manzoni's; he had much more humour than Klein.

My work is quite similar to Manzoni's. For the Nul exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in 1962 I asked him to cover a large panel, one of those with feet which paintings usually hung on, with glued cotton wool. He first stretched canvas over it and covered that with cotton wool. At first he wanted to use fibreglass but that irritated the skin, so I sent him some nylon, which I used. It's a shame the Stedelijk Museum has disposed of the work; it would be worth a lot of money today. You could easily do a copy: the dimensions were just over 2 m high and 3 m wide. He had signed it on the side – it was a genuine Manzoni. But I think that the influence of Alberto Burri or of Fontana is easier to see in my work. I saw Fontana's work in 1958 at the Venice Biennale and it gave me the first impetus to change my work and to move away from Informal Art.

In 1965 you organized the second Nul exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Why did you invite the Japanese group Gutai to take part? They had never taken part in a ZERO exhibition before.

It was probably around 1961. I was in Düsseldorf staying with Günther Uecker, who regularly organized parties, and Yves Klein was there too. Klein talked about a Japanese group that worked with ideas equivalent to those of ZERO. He had been to Japan in 1952 to learn judo. Klein was going to give me more information but died shortly after, so that on my own initiative I contacted Michel Tapié, who in turn gave me Jiro Yoshihara's address, he was the spokesman and founder of the Gutai group. Tapié's book contained illustrations of Sadamasa Motonaga's work, long bags filled with water hanging from tree to tree in a park. That fascinated me, as I also worked with water. We – Ad Peetersen, the curator of the Stedelijk Museum and I – received a letter from Yoshihara saying that he would like to take part with recent paintings. We had now all stopped painting, and so we asked him to reconstruct the installations that they had made

in the park. Unfortunately there wasn't enough money to bring all the Japanese over to Amsterdam, so Yoshihara came with his son Michio. They had also shipped over a crate of paintings, but when we opened it, it turned out to be full of tachist works, still wet. We regarded that period as a closed chapter and so did not show them. Next, with a number of assistants we bought materials based on Yoshihara's shopping list: sand, paper, lamps, coloured cloth, wood, a clock and with his son he reconstructed the works. I put a big balloon covered in coloured dots in the Yves Klein room, because I thought it fitted in beautifully. Kanayama's work was just like an atomic mushroom cloud which combined well with the body imprints, an 'Anthropometry', by Yves Klein. In the corridor there were long lengths of material covered in footsteps along the walls and on the ceiling. The press found Gutai's participation very exciting, but Yves Klein's wife was less happy about my juxtaposition of Klein and the Japanese, since Yves had always been very worried that people would think he had stolen many of his ideas from Gutai. However, it later emerged that Lucio Fontana, Jean Tinguely, Jef Verheyen and Günther Uecker were also interested in Gutai. Fontana and Castellani had in fact had an exhibition in the Gutai museum as early as the early 1960s. Afterwards we included many of the Japanese in the 'Zero on Sea' exhibition for Scheveningen.

Why did you include Yayoi Kusama in the Nul exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum that you organized? She wasn't a member of the Japanese Gutai group.

I first saw Kusama's work in the 'Monochrome Malerei' exhibition that Udo Kultermann had put on. Kultermann regularly visited New York and knew her work well. I wrote to her, and an enthusiastic and frequent correspondence developed, so I included her *Net*-paintings for the first time in the Nul62 exhibition. But since I had no money to invite her, I did not meet her until shortly before the Nul65 exhibition when she was exhibiting at OREZ. Because of her difficulty in communicating with the museum staff, I came to her aid in setting up her first installation: the boat surrounded by posters. I assigned one of my art school pupils to her, and because she was keen to do something else, I suggested she do another work commissioned by me. She produced a large white plastic canvas, through which she had woven carding twine. Not exactly my style, but I have kept it as an example of group work. Later she exhibited widely in the Netherlands and in a number of performances she painted the naked bodies of Jan Schoonhoven and others with large dots. That was hugely exciting for us at the time: a little Japanese woman painting dots on people and mannequins, sticking spaghetti on clothes and sewing objects with penises.

How were the Nul exhibitions received by the press and the public? They have now become historic exhibitions, and many works from them are real showpieces in important museum collections.

The Nul62 show was one of the shortest in the history of the Stedelijk Museum – 13 days – but nevertheless drew over a thousand visitors a day. That wasn't due to press enthusiasm. Comments included: 'Infantile handicrafts produced out of boredom,' said Doelman, who thought Fontana was a pushy old codger. 'Nihilistic and intolerant,' was Adri Laan's verdict. 'It gives you a bellyache,' observed Jan Donia. 'A NULlity, it really doesn't get any worse,' declared Gabriël Smit. And one critic said to Sandberg, the director of the Stedelijk: 'Anyone who shows Cézanne and Van Gogh, and round the corner these charlatans, conmen and airheads, understands nothing about art and nothing about museums.' I'm giving you a sketch of the atmosphere that today strikes us as almost pathological. To think that those works, which today make a benevolent, serene impression, could make the critics so angry!

After the shows in the Stedelijk Museum was there continued demand for ZERO exhibitions? Did it help you build up international contacts, and how were sales of your own work?

After the Nul65 exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum we really had the feeling we had arrived. Actually, though, that was not at all what we wanted to do: exhibit in a museum, but it was the only option for us. Sandberg couldn't see any merit in our project but thought it made a change, and so we were able to do what we wanted: we had to pay for it all ourselves anyway. After the show, I realized that it was actually the end of the whole movement; everyone was tired of compromising and having rows, and we didn't earn a penny. The only galleries that were important to us and sold our work were Iris Clert in Paris and Alfred Schmela in Düsseldorf. Only Fontana had a gallery in New York. I sold my work from the exhibition to the Stedelijk Museum for 400 guilders as it were to settle my mounting debts for transport costs. Kusama too could not afford to ship her boat back to America. She didn't know what to do with the thing, and so she simply presented it to the Stedelijk. All the work by the Gutai artists was thrown away; Sandberg had no funds to acquire it and his successor De Wilde was unwilling to. Only Kanayama's 'Balloon' has remained in the Stedelijk, since it was to have been exchanged for a work by Hans Haacke. Enrico Castellani was in hiding in Switzerland, because of his involvement with the Red Brigades, and did not want his works back for the time being. So that when the Stedelijk Museum refused to store them I had them transported to my studio, again at my own expense. On top of that many works came back damaged, and so I had to repair them, which also cost me money. So things were not very hopeful and I simply had to do something else. I destroyed part of my work; making art involved so much misery, and

I really wanted to call it a day. There had to be a payoff, I felt, if I didn't earn anything, then at least I wanted to be famous; and I didn't succeed in doing either. Other things were happening that were much more exciting than making art or organizing exhibitions: the student movement, women's liberation, the reform of the universities. Fortunately I had been teaching for a while, so I had money coming in and I was able to help my colleagues to plan and mount exhibitions. In that way I was able to build up a large collection of ZERO work. With lots of pieces that were left behind or exchanged.

How did art develop after Nul? You gave up producing art and concentrated on your teaching.

Why did so little of it penetrate more widely? Why is it that one side, the historical side, everything goes so fast, but on the other, the absorption, acceptance, so slowly? I must say that that question has greatly occupied me in recent years. How was it possible that the Nul exhibitions were accepted so quickly and painlessly, but that it should all have stopped dead? Why is it that at present you can no longer visit an exhibition without seeing something of yours or your friends', even if there are different names underneath and the prices are consequently higher. Why is it that some of us have let ourselves be co-opted into the production system and have to churn out replicas of our original discovery ad nauseam, which paralyses any attempt to change it. Why is it that we all now feature in the illustrious history of art, but all that is generated is an amount of trade. The fact is that I have drawn my own conclusions from this, and no longer play the game. 'There must be a new art,' wrote Armando. I would like to counter that with 'there must be a new public'. For me Manzoni demonstrated this problem as clearly as can be. His work nowhere shows the continuity of the artist who allows himself to be put into a box. Every moment, every work was a final conclusion, unrepeatable: the end result did not lead to a new style of art, a way in which production could begin. No, each phase was a closure that left only one way out: towards life itself.

Diana Stigter and
Pietje Tegenbosch
in conversation with
Jan Schoonhoven

Inspiration in White



In 1989, Diana Stigter and Pietje Tegenbosch had a conversation with Jan Schoonhoven, which is reproduced here. This text is an adapted version of the text published in Sjoerd van Faassen, Hans Sleutelaar (eds.), *De Nieuwe Stijl 1959-1966* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij/The Hague: Netherlands Letterkundig Museum en Documentatiecentrum, 1989). Jan Schoonhoven died in 1994.

I never wanted to be an artist. I can still remember the teacher, when I was in the sixth year at primary school, saying: ‘So you’re going to be a painter, right, Jantje?’ But I said, ‘No way, sir!’ I’ve never wanted to go through life as an artist. The idea that I should pursue a career as a painter has always been odd to me.

My job with the Dutch PTT meant I could work on my art at my own pace. The others weren’t financially dependent on their art either. We all had regular jobs. Armando worked for the *Haagse Post* newspaper, Peeters at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague and Henderikse did all sorts of things. We were proper gentlemen, actually. To me that job meant order. You had to be on time. I would leave the house before 7 a.m. so as not to have to rush to work. Everything took place according to a set rhythm; I’ve always felt a need for structure. The fact that we presented ourselves as a group came out of the Informal period, when we were already writing manifestos and all that sort of thing.

Armando liked to write. And he was good at it. Some of his slogans – like the one about art that isn’t art anymore – were almost a gospel for us. We wanted to provoke. The German Zero artists were also noted for that. In that respect the way had been prepared for us. We called our art Nul to distinguish it from Zero. Nul was just Dutch. And anyway 0 is a wonderful form: round, always good, and doesn’t mean anything more. Still, I usually talk about ZERO art myself – I almost never say Nul.

Initially there were five of us. When Kees van Bohemen left there were four, and when Jan Henderikse became a New Realist there were only three of us left. Three Germans and three Dutchmen for our ZERO exhibition at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague. Armando’s contribution was his *Zwart water* (Black Water). It looked great, really enigmatic. A dark room, with a few lights here and there and a platform above the water. It was like you were walking alongside something unfathomably deep. Only once the public had thrown too many coins in could you see the water wasn’t all that deep.

Peeters was always the linchpin of our group. He’d previously founded the Informals, of course. In hindsight you realize that it’s one continuous line of evolution. Nul’s place in history is secure now, and the Informal period too, but that took longer. Only after ZERO had become quite well-known did we realize that the Informal period had been the first stage, the true beginning. I hadn’t thought so previously, not at all. It looked so different, after all.

I met Henk Peeters shortly after the war. We would run into each other every once in a while. We’d go to the Pulchri parties together.¹ They were usually quite fun. We always looked each other up, even after Henk moved to Arnhem. Jan Henderikse was a regular fixture in this house. We always got along pretty well, and as far as the make-up of the group: well, my goodness, Henk wanted to bring in

Bouthoorn, for example, but he wasn't an abstract painter. And Jan felt we should ask Armando to join. He was right about that, of course.

We were absolutely not an idealistic movement. The Germans were, but not us. Not even Peeters. We wanted to accept society as it was. So we got sponsors very early on. For our first Nul exhibition, Armando managed to get a car tyre manufacturer. And I used Histor paint to make my cut corrugated cardboard work. Henk used tins from a specific brand. We were all conscious of the fact that we were living in *this* society and that we had to accept that. Not that we didn't all have some form of social engagement, but the Germans were much more strident about it! Mack, Piene and Uecker were true idealists. I even said to Henk and Armando later: 'Jesus, did you believe all that so literally?' You can't change anything with art. It's about the moment; it's about beautiful things. A good Rembrandt is still worth looking at, right?

It was really easy to make contact with the foreigners. I first met Manzoni at Hans Sonnenberg's in Rotterdam. He was an aristocrat, and very wealthy to boot, which is not always the case for a count. Klein and Manzoni were a lot more philosophical than the Dutch. You would notice that most in Klein's texts. He always had wonderful ideas. Think of that time he wanted to have an empty room guarded by cuirassiers. You could just hire them. Klein occasionally threw in something Eastern into his theories, a little Zen or the like – he was moved by such things, but I don't think it was real mysticism.

Actually, I feel more affinity with American minimalism than with the Nouveau Réalisme of somebody like Klein. To me minimalism is simply the American version of ZERO. Only we didn't get as plastic as they did. At least I never went beyond the relief. During the ZERO period my reliefs had to be white. That was just the dogma. Some of my Informal reliefs were grey. I just painted them white. That turned them into Nul pieces. At first they looked like baroque ceilings. I only started doing completely abstract work in 1955. My ideal was the pure white church. I probably started making those reliefs because I never went to kindergarten. I must have had some catching up to do . . . At one point I made papier-mâché castles for my son Japie. And I used that stuff for my reliefs as well. Boiling toilet paper and then smearing glue on it. The downside is that it took forever to dry; before I could use it properly, it would be covered in mould. Later I started using paint filler. That was a lot faster. I'd use a cardboard base and just stick the pieces of newspaper on top of it.

In 1962 I set out my operating principles in a text. I wrote it in English. There are a few mistakes in it, but it is the way I intended it to be. It's about geometry, about simple geometry. You can criticize it. Maybe it's a typical artist's truth, whose opposite you could argue just as easily, but to me it was important. I wanted to achieve the

greatest possible purity. That was why I didn't use any colour. I wanted to avoid any form of hierarchy, any centre. For this reason my work has been called 'democratic', but as far as I'm concerned you could just as easily call it 'fascist'. 'Alles ist rein und sauber, nicht?' It's an odd phenomenon in abstract art that everybody can see something different in it. To many people my work invites contemplation. That's fine, I don't mind, however they interpret it.

For me this geometric structure is primarily a way of working, a method. Repetition creates a rhythm and makes it easier to think about the composition. I set up a drawing and the result comes naturally. But my drawings are not sterile or mechanistic. The strict methodology actually makes small deviations interesting. When you see them side by side, none is the same. And in fact I don't want to exclude personality *too* drastically. Nul may have aimed to be as objective as possible, but ultimately all that work is as subjective as hell. Just look at the differences between Peeters, Henderikse, Armando and myself. The material, the pen, the paper: with me everything gets a chance. I see it as directed happenstance. I may have an idea of how I want a line to run, but sometimes my pen does the exact opposite. Sometimes it knows better than I do. You usually know while you're working on it when a drawing isn't going to work out. I throw a lot of stuff out. I've used too much black again for a particular drawing, for instance, and it's dead.

I've never really had much to complain about when it came to success. But when I won the David Roëll Prize, I was really flattered. Not to mention the money was a nice plus. I used it to have my reliefs produced. I'd never have been able to do it all myself. At a certain point you have someone else make something for you and then you keep growing in that system. I deliver the drawing and they do the rest. In the beginning I would help a little, but now I leave it all up to assistants. My last assistant was a radio mechanic. I've also worked a lot with architecture and mathematics students. Above all they shouldn't be too artistic: before you know it you get back a totally different thing.

Those architecture boys often have a tremendous affinity with the Zeroists. That comes from our attention to organization and structure, of course. In essence, they're doing exactly the same thing, except that they're bound by efficiency factors. And a lot of architects are into my work. They think it'd be great to fit it in. But I've never wanted to lend myself to that. I think a painting should remain a painting and not be absorbed in the totality of a building. My things are individual: that's where it's happening, and nowhere else. Yet I did do some commissioned work. I once made an Informal relief for the PTT, a really beautiful thing. It was intended as a wall piece, but I made so it could also function as a free-standing object. Good thing, too, because during some renovations they tore down the

wall it used to cover. Not it's just hung as a work of art, not quite lit correctly, but oh well.

Not only did I regularly get commissions, but my work was also bought by museums. I knew Leering,² for instance, from when he was studying in Delft. He bought one of my reliefs quite early. And Sandberg always stimulated me. As for galleries, I've always said: they're crooks, but you need them. Of course it's a business; after all we live in a capitalist society. And who are the experts, who can best present the work? The gallery owners. When they come here you can tell they're thinking, 'this guy's never seen a thousand guilders in one place before'. I've always found that hard to deal with, but fortunately I've worked with the same gallery owner for years.

My wife never wanted anything to do with the habit I developed later of going to Catholic masses, but I thought the rituals were beautiful. I especially loved Gregorian chant. When it's done well, it's very precise. What I also liked about that Catholic Church was the fact that it was a real people's church. The riffraff shared the pews with the rich. I usually sat in the back with the heathens. I didn't belong, but I enjoyed it.

What I've always tried to do is simply to exorcise my own restlessness, the most primitive form of psychology. The goal is actually supposed to be happiness, but in most cases it isn't. With nothing but happiness you'd be bored to death. When I was a kid I used to think that when you go to heaven it's always Sunday, and how horribly dull that would be. I was really worried about that. And hell? That's not entirely clear yet.

1 Pulchri Studio is a society of visual artists in The Hague, founded in 1847.

2 Jean Leering (1934-2005) was the director of the Stedelijk Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven from 1964 to 1973.

Colin Huizing and
Tijs Visser in
conversation with
Herman de Vries

Vacuity Squared



You joined the Nul group for a short time, you took part in the exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1962 and until 1964 you were an editor for the journal *revue nul = 0*.

Revue nul = 0 was Henk Peeters and me: the idea came from Peeters, the name from me. My idea was that we didn't need critics anymore, or art historians to describe and comment on everything – we could do it ourselves. The first two issues I produced with Henk Peeters include short texts I wrote. One of them is a statement about Nul that says Nul is not a starting point but a level of existence. I would nuance that today, but anyway: it is a starting point to which you can return over and over and from which you shouldn't stray too far. The second article was about 'random objectivation', the use of chance as I've exercised it in my work since 1962. I thought it was important to take a position about my work and set it in writing.

You did write articles, but *revue nul = 0* was also a platform for contributions by other artists. It was clearly a platform for a particular group, the way the journal *ZERO* was in Germany.

Absolutely. There wasn't anything like that in the Netherlands yet, so something had to be done, and a little publication like this was very useful indeed. It documented our ideas and our activities at the same time. Many of the contributions were supplied through Peeters – he just had more contacts. But his role was also to challenge the public, and this created publicity. I think the first Nul exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam generated 54 mentions in the press.

Did you set out to irritate or provoke?

We wanted to take a stand, and we felt it was vital that it be expressed seriously and clearly. The provocative element was primarily expressed by Peeters. I did feel it was useful to provoke, in order to generate more attention for Nul. But for me this wasn't the main preoccupation; above all I wanted to explain my position, lay a foundation for a certain point of view. I realized, of course, that a white canvas on which there was nothing to see was a form a provocation, an irritant. Indeed I recall some wonderful negative reactions to my work. I had submitted a white painting to a provincial prize competition for painting in the Province of Gelderland. There were 37 entries, I think, which were exhibited at the provincial government building. Mine was a white painting, and a critic from the local newspaper in Wageningen came along. He wrote:

Participants from the local area in this competition include the young artist Jannes Bakker, with his winter view of the river near Renkum, while H. de Vries from Wageningen has submitted a painting entitled 'White Painting'. The latter consists of a canvas onto which white paint has simply been smeared. This is really

vacuity squared. That is all we are willing to say about it; the fact is that he is incompetent.

I enjoyed that. Especially the formulation 'this is really vacuity squared'. Because it related beautifully to the ideas of Zen and the void, which are vital to my work.

How did you get involved with the Nul group?

At the time, around 1961, I was working at the Institute for Biological Field Research in Arnhem and on the bus to work I would pass Henk Peeters' house almost every day. One day I got off the bus to pay him a visit and exchange information with him. Peeters was a great source of information for me. He had different music, too, quite a lot of jazz, which I didn't have because I just didn't have any money to buy it. Every once in a while I would borrow some of his records and bring them back a few weeks later. I had very little money in those days. I had a family and a modest income. Sometimes I had to wait for my pay check to come in before I could buy a pot of paint. I had about 60 guilders a month to spend, and I had to make do with that. I would buy remnants from the wood merchant and take scraps home from the lab. And household items, things from my own home, as well. They were cheap and I could work on them. This is why the works from that period are in more or less random formats. I would make them in the evenings and during the weekends. They were Informal paintings, and later white-painted panels and objects. My earliest collages were different. Those were things I had found. My first collage is from 1955 or 1956; I found it on a wall in Paris. It's made up of little pieces of flaking paper. I took a few fragments with me and it became a *collage trouvé*. Actually, I've stayed true to this way of working. In my current work I still use things I find.

You visited Paris several times during the 1950s. At the same time your work, in terms of form, was evolving towards white monochrome objects and panels. Did you see the work of Yves Klein when you were in Paris?

Not at the time. That came later, during the Nul period. But the monochromes he was making, he interpreted those with moods and with representations of ideas. For me it was actually a sort of impressionism. It was a monochrome surface, but a very specific meaning was assigned to that monochrome surface, and to me that was something that didn't belong there at all.

Were you familiar with the monochrome white works of Piero Manzoni? Did you see his work when he had exhibitions in Rotterdam or The Hague?

No, but I did meet Manzoni in person when we were setting up the exhibition Nul62. Henk Peeters had barely any time to set up then.

He had to teach, so I was there the whole time. And I served a vital function there, because the staff at the Stedelijk Museum didn't speak German, French, English or Italian. I spoke a bit of French and I spoke German, so I could help out my fellow artists when they wanted to ask the staff something. Manzoni and I had similar ideas about what we could make. For example: a cube 2 x 2 x 2 m, white inside and out, into which you could peer through a tiny hole. When you look inside you see light, but you can't see the light source. So you're staring into an empty white space and there is nothing to see. We also talked about our function as artists, and we agreed that it consisted of 'deconditioning'. The deconditioning of the spectator was our common link.

Were there artists whose work you saw in the Netherlands that you liked?

The 1950s were an unbearably dull time in which everything had more or less ground to a halt, in which very few new things were happening and in which people fell back on the old things. Aside from exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam there was little or nothing going on in the Netherlands.

Did you see the work of Mondrian and Malevich at the Stedelijk Museum at the time? On the surface there are similar concepts, certainly in the use of space, from the two-dimensional plane to the three-dimensional plane, in which connections could be drawn with your work. You also started making three-dimensional work at one point.

Malevich's work was no great eye-opener for me. I didn't like the coldness in it. I don't think Malevich's work influenced me very much at the start of my artistic career. I did find it interesting later on, but more interesting than something I could draw upon for my work. Mondrian was mainly significant because of his social and societal ideas. But when he was working on his art, you would notice a number of incomplete things. You'd see double lines, and he'd make a note about it, something like 'this is overly dramatic'. And then he would shift that in order to avoid the dramatic element. He tried to harmonize the horizontal and the vertical. I did admire that a lot, the way those contradictions between the horizontal and vertical were actually eliminated.

Speaking of contradictions: How did black come into your work? At some point shadow effects begin to appear in the reliefs, nuances in the white.

The shadows were an outside influence: the glow of the light, for example because of the sun, which made the work look different each time. That was a dynamic aspect of the work, the fact that the work could change according to the external light. This added

multiple aspects to the way it could be perceived. That was very significant in the relief.

In a collage of white squares on black paper from 1965, for instance, the amount of black is, so to speak, no more than 50 per cent of the total; the work never becomes predominantly black.

White had a sense of openness about it, but also of totality, whereas black . . . Black locks light in. White reveals itself very clearly – I can't quite put it into words. At any rate black was not the colour I liked to work with. I could use black as a cover for a book or for a catalogue. A cover was not about the work; it was a black covering. There's an element of surprise when you open something black and there is something different inside. I also used black cardboard, which I would work over with a tracing wheel, during the transition from my Informal work, via Zen, to ZERO. White collages were difficult to reproduce, so I made them white on black.

There is a work of yours over which a checked tablecloth is stretched, rather brownish black paper . . .

That was an experiment with optics. It had a few black and a few yellowish-white checks. You could buy this in the shop as fabric. I stretched it over a canvas stretcher and that was it. I found it a beautiful gesture that had simply presented itself to me.

In this you were quite close to the work of Jan Henderikse, on the one hand, with his *objets trouvés*, and Henk Peeters, on the other, who buys cotton balls and sticks them onto canvas.

I think it's more somewhere between Nouveau Réalisme and Op Art, which was emerging at the time. I didn't like it all that much. There was also another work, a stretched canvas, in front of which I hung a glass plate with ridges that could move. It was an experiment with optics. And several self-reflecting panels of glass pearls have survived as well, in which the effect of light plays a role of its own.

Back to the things you did with the Nul group. After the second issue of *revue nul = 0* your collaboration with Peeters came to an end and you no longer took part in the exhibitions of the Nul group in the Netherlands.

Peeters and I had a disagreement about the title *revue nul = 0*. Lawyers were brought in, with the result that neither of us were allowed to use the title anymore. Peeters started the journal *de nieuwe stijl*, which I didn't consider a good publication, personally. I felt the documentation in it was to some extent rather trite. It featured poetry that I really didn't find very interesting in the context of Nul, Vaandrager for example. I did not like the concept of 'the new style' at all. It alludes to a style, but there was no specified style. It was a little booklet put out by a big publisher. I started putting out

publications under the title *revue integration*. The execution was simple: it was no longer printed in offset, just mimeographed; the writer would provide his own illustration material. Circulation increased; sometimes it was printed, sometimes handmade. But my interests kept broadening and extended beyond ZERO.

Nevertheless you have remained true to the principles of Nul in your visual work.

I have always operated from the idea of a zero point. In the Nul period I made white paintings. Later I did reliefs, homogeneous structures in which random structures defined the image. Through my work at the lab I came to the realization that research findings, including random structures as they are employed in scientific research, can also lead to objective visual results with no psychological element of any kind. Even now when I take objects from nature, I leave them unaltered. I never make any intervention: I leave nothing out and I put nothing in. If I were to do that, I would be taking away something of the object's originality. ZERO is still an important point for me, to which I return again and again.

List of Works in the Exhibition

- Arman, *Nucléide*, 1964
metal, cog wheels, polyester
121 x 92 cm
Stedelijk Museum
Amsterdam
- p. 36
Armando, *Oliedrums*, 1962-2011
oil drums
variable dimensions
Armando Museum, Amersfoort
- p. 156
Armando, *Autobanden*, 1962
car tyres
variable dimensions
Armando Museum, Amersfoort
- p. 38
Armando, *Zwart prikkeldraad op zwart*, 1962
barbed wire, oil paint, chipboard
122 x 82 cm
Armando Museum, Amersfoort
- p. 38
Armando, *8 zwarte bouten op wit*, 1961
chipboard, oil paint, bolts
122 x 102 cm
private collection, Amsterdam
- p. 38
Armando, *6 x wit*, 1964
tin, oil paint, chipboard
143 x 123 cm
Rijksmuseum
Twente
- p. 38, 154
Armando, *Cirkel 20*, 1961-1963
chipboard, oil paint, bolts
122.5 x 135 cm
Stedelijk Museum
Amsterdam
- p. 38
Armando, *2 x 7 bouten op rood*, 1961
chipboard, oil paint, bolts
122 x 122.5 cm
Stedelijk Museum
Amsterdam
- p. 38
Armando, *6 x rood*, 1963
tin, oil paint, chipboard
122 x 122 cm
Stedelijk Museum
Amsterdam
- Armando, *Wit prikkeldraad op wit*, 1962
barbed wire, oil paint, chipboard
159.5 x 124 cm
courtesy Galerie Rob de Vries, Haarlem
- Armando, *169 zwarte bouten op zwart*, 1960
painted fibreboard, bolts
144 x 122 cm
courtesy Galerie Rob de Vries, Haarlem
- p. 153
Bernard Aubertin, *Clous 61*, n. 23, 1961
nails on wood
25 x 19 cm
courtesy The Mayor Gallery, London
- p. 149
Enrico Castellani, *Superficie*, 1962
canvas, wood, nails
195 x 128 cm
Caldic Collection, Rotterdam
- p. 137
Hans Haacke, *Tropfkugel*, 1964
Plexiglas, water
Ø 29.4 cm
Stiftung Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf
- p. 24
Jan Henderikse, *Untitled*, 1961
matchboxes on panel
52.2 x 26.2 cm
Caldic Collection, Rotterdam
- Jan Henderikse, *Kurkenrelief*, 1959
assemblage of corks in a wooden box, painted white
55.5 x 36.5 x 5.7 cm
Centraal Museum
Utrecht
- p. 24
Jan Henderikse, *Players*, 1961
cigarette boxes on panel
65 x 85 cm
collection Erica and Gerard Stigter, Amsterdam
- Jan Henderikse, *Three Stars*, 1963
mixed media on panel
16 x 122 x 12 cm
collection Erica and Gerard Stigter, Amsterdam
- p. 24
Jan Henderikse, *Untitled*, 1961
spray cans on panel
50 x 50 x 20 cm
private collection, the Netherlands
- p. 24
Jan Henderikse, *Untitled*, 1959
plastic champagne corks on fabric, on panel
63 x 33.5 x 5.5 cm
Daimler Art Collection, Stuttgart
- p. 24
Jan Henderikse, *Kratjeswand*, 1962
beer bottles, crates
variable dimensions
produced according to artist's concept
- p. 79
Akira Kanayama, *Ashiato* (Footsteps), 1965/2010
print on vinyl foil
variable dimensions
courtesy Shinichro Yoshihara
- p. 46
Akira Kanayama, *Boru*, 1956-1965/2006
felt-tip pen on vinyl and air
350 x 350 x 50 cm
ZERO Foundation, Düsseldorf
- p. 142
Yves Klein, *IKB 170*, 1960
pigment and synthetic agent on canvas on panel
92 x 73 cm
private collection, London
- Yves Klein, *La terre bleue*, 1957-1988
pigment and synthetic agent on plaster
36 x 17.8 x 17.8 cm
collection N.J. De-laive, Amsterdam
- Yves Klein, *Epogne bleue*, SE292, 293, 294, 295, 1961
sponges with IKB pigment
c. 7 x 5 x 4.5 cm (4 x)
collection N.J. De-laive, Amsterdam
- Yves Klein, *Essai de toit d'air*, c. 1961
film, 2 min., 16 sec,
courtesy Yves Klein Archives, Paris
- Walter Leblanc, *Torsions*, 1965
oxidized steel
200 x 20 x 0.3 cm
ZERO Foundation, Düsseldorf
- p. 26
Heinz Mack, *Dynamische Strukturen*, 1962
oil paint on canvas
130 x 147 cm
ZERO Foundation, Düsseldorf, gift from Heinz Mack
- p. 26
Heinz Mack, *Lichtgitter im Raum*, c. 1961
18 aluminium bars, motor
Height c. 300 cm
ZERO Foundation, Düsseldorf, gift from Heinz Mack
- Heinz Mack, *Silberrotor*, 1965
glass, aluminium, motor
122 123 x 29 cm
Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven
- p. 144
Piero Manzoni, *Achrome*, 1958
kaolin, canvas
131 x 98 cm
Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven
- Piero Manzoni, *Corpo d'aria*, 1959-1960
wooden box with air balloons, mouth-piece, pedestal
42.5 x 12.3 x 4.8 cm
Archivio Opera Manzoni, Milan
- p. 30
Christian Megert, *Spiegelwand*, 1962/2011
mirrors, steel wire
variable dimensions
reconstructed by the artist
- p. 44, 81
Sadamaso Motonaga, *Sakuhin Mizu*, 1956-1965/2011
water, vinyl tube, pigment
variable dimensions
produced according to artist's instructions

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