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Dynamo. A century of Light and Motion in Art, 1913-2013

Galerías Nacionales du Grand Palais. Paris, France

The exhibition entitled *Dynamo. A century of Light and Motion in Art, 1913-2013* opened its doors this spring at the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais in Paris, and marked the first time in the history of that institution that a show occupied all the galleries.

An ambitious initiative proposed by curator Matthieu Poirier, the project condenses one hundred years of artistic creation in 3,700 square meters of space and includes more than 200 works by 147 international artists whose experimentations and explorations center on the development of the *perceptive system*.

Dynamo is based on the notion of *movement* as principle for creation capable of evidencing seemingly immaterial categories like space, time and light. The works selected for this exhibition represent several degrees of modernization of the *persuasive mechanism* proposed by artists during the last century with the objective of developing the perceptive and participative abilities of the public.

Just as the phenomenological structures of perception described by Merleau-Ponty in his 1945 book entitled *Phenomenology of Perception* contain an active dimension, *Dynamo* proposes an exhibition in which visitors are subjected to several levels of optical invitations to interact. According to Poirier, the idea is to explore the question of perception in depth and that the works express the entirety of their phenomenological aura. The selection of proposals in *Dynamo* appeals to the emotive perception of viewers, as it encourages all sorts of "sensitive apparitions,"

experiences in which a transcendental conscience is not required.

The exhibition succeeds in blurring the chronological limits that would otherwise label and subject the participating artist when they show their works to certain types of mass exhibitions. Without pretending to establish any theoretical or historiographical basis of a century of casual experimentations in art, *Dynamo* offers an alternative approach to the *perceptive act* and the *notion of depth*, as it dismantles any logical or intellectual interpretation. Rather than grouping artists according to territory, the exhibition proposes a transversal dialogue on the perceptive phenomenon.

Nonetheless, nothing stops us from listing the Latin American artists that participate in this exhibition—as interlocutors of the synthetic, inventive and fascinating language of perception—and noting their large presence in the show. From Argentina: Antonio Asís, with *Composición en Blanco y Negro No. 1804* (Black and White Composition No. 1804, 1966); Gregorio Vardanega, with *Torre Ortogonal* (Orthogonal Tower, 1987) and *Espacios Cromáticos* (Chromatic Spaces, 1970); Martha Boto, with *Teclado Electrónico* (Electric Keyboard, 1967); Hugo Demarco, with *Superposición Recto-Verso* (Recto-Verso Superimposition, 1965); Horacio García-Rossi, with *Caja de Luz Inestable* (Unstable Light Box, 1964); Julio Le Parc, with *Muro de Láminas Reflectantes* (Reflecting Sheet Wall, 1966), *Superficie Color*, (Color Surface, from the series 14-2E, 1971), *Inestabilidad* (Instability, 1959), *Continual-Luz*

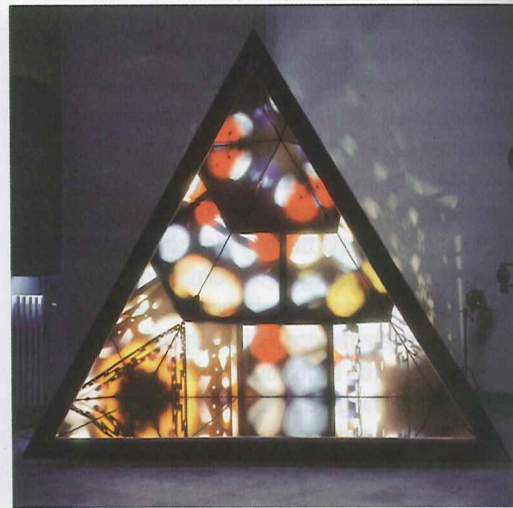
Cilindro (Continual-Light Cylinder, 1962), *Trama en Movimiento Virtual* (Weave in Virtual Movement, 1965), *Luz Alternada* (Altered Light, 1966), *Caja Luminosa* (Luminous Light, 1967) and *Móvil Transparente* (Translucent Mobile, 1962-1996); Luis Tomasello with, *Atmósfera Cromo Plástica No. 224*, (Plastic Chrome Environment No. 224, 1968) and *Atmósfera Cromoplástica No. 413*, (Chromoplastic Environment No. 413, 1974); from Brazil: Lygia Clark, with *Bicho*, (Bug, 1969); Almir Mavignier, with *Convexo/Concavo* (Convex/Concave, 1964); Mauricio Nogueira-Lima, with *Objeto Rítmico No. 2* (Rhythmic Object No. 2, 1952-1970); and Mary Vieira, with *Polyvolum* (1948) and *Superficies Circulares Móviles Dentro de su Espacio Esférico* (Mobile Circular Surfaces inside a Spherical Environment, 1958-1963); from Uruguay: Carmelo Arden-Quin, with *Forma Blanca* (White Form, 1950); from Venezuela: Carlos Cruz-Diez, with *Cromosaturación* (Chromosaturation, 1965), *Cromointerferencia Mecánica*, (Mechanic Chromo-Interference 1973) and *Transcromía* (Transchromie, 1972); Alejandro Otero, with *Coloritmo No. 43* (Colorhythm No. 43, 1960); Jesús Rafael Soto, with *Espiral con Rojo* (Spiral with Red, 1955), *Penetrable BBL Azul*, (Penetrable BBL Blue, 1999); *Cuadrado Interior con T Negra* (Interior Square with Black T, 1979); Elías Crespín, with *Circunconcentricos Transparente* (Transparent Circumconcentrics, 2013); and the international group G.R.A.V., with *Laberinto* (Labyrinth, 1963-2013).

The concern expressed by Torres-García in the *Círculo y Cuadrado* periodical (1936), with regard

Jesús Rafael Soto. *Penetrable BBL Bleu*, 1999. Metal, PVC. 157 ³/₅ x 177 x 236 ²/₅ in. (400 x 450 x 600 cm.). Avila Edition, 2007. Paris. Avila Collection / Atelier Soto. © Adagp, Paris, 2013.*



Nicolas Schöffer. *Prism*, 1965. © Adagp, Paris, 2013.



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to the need for injecting a distinctive look into an already universally appealing abstract Latin American art, tends to vanish in this exhibition, as we observe Vasarely, Schöffer, Le Parc, Cruz Diez, Sobrino and Morellet in the role of “indiscernible moderators” of the *persuasive mechanism* and the intrinsic potential for participation contained in the work of art.

Each piece included in *Dynamo* “happens” in an uncertain and obscure space that answers to a force field that continuously plays with instability and forces us to inhabit a disconcerting environment that is enjoyable at times but also terribly shocking.

Structured around two main sections: *Vision* and *Space*, *Dynamo* is subdivided into 16 thematic axles or metaphors intimately related to the perceptive phenomenon: *immateriality, monochrome, interference, concentric/eccentric, immersion, blinking, turbidity, instability, distortion, emptiness, invisibility and permutability*, among others.

The depth found in the *phenomenon of perception* is revealed right behind that “responsive eye.” As soon as the classic forms of abstraction and concrete art have been assimilated, any logical explanation is discarded and the artists appeal to optical reflections, intuition and the answers from the body. It is then when art overflows, dematerializes and floods the exhibition space.

It is important to emphasize the term *Expansionism* (1953), temporally introduced in Paris by Venezuelan artist Omar Carreño to underscore the dematerialization and expansion of art—geometrically and spatially—as abstract conventions of thought.

Antwerp (G58-Hessenhuis) presents the exhibition *Anti-Painting* (1962), a title that defines those works that, without being three-dimensional, invade the space as result of optical and physical phenomena that take us into another dimension that experiences changes in movement and light vibrations.

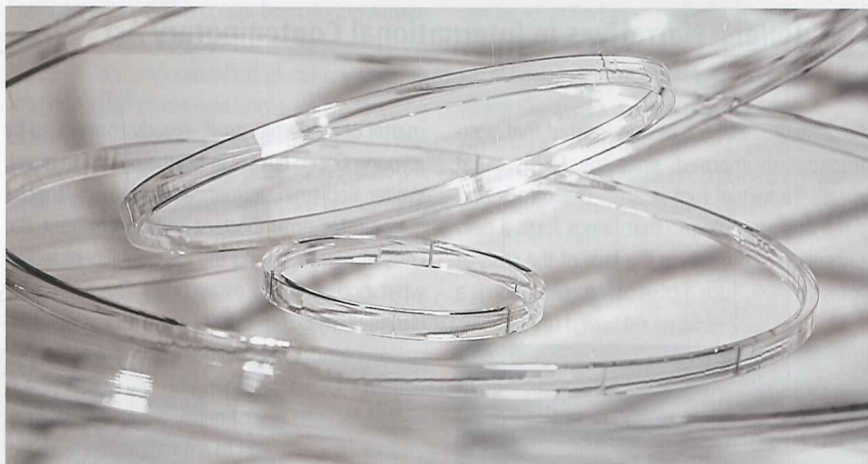
Beginning with contemporary creators, *Dynamo* includes a large and varied number of artists who, with the technical advances and artistic languages of their generation, performed explorations centered on the *subtlety of movement*. Standing out among these works are the *Circunconcentricos Transparentes* (Transparent Circumconcentrics) by Elías Crespín, works that were delicately programmed and articulated with a computer; the uncertain depth of the immersive environments by Ann Veronica Janssens atomized with color; the impact of light flashes that Carsten Höller shoots like bullets (*Light Corner*, 2001); the ultra-polished



Carlos Cruz-Diez. *Mechanic Transchromy*, 1965. Plexiglass, aluminum, molding. Atelier Cruz-Diez. © Carlos Cruz-Diez. © Adagp, Paris, 2013.



Dan Flavin. *Untitled (To You Heiner With Admiration and Affection)*, 1973. Fluorescent tubes. New York, Dia Foundation. © Dia Art Foundation. © Adagp, Paris, 2013.



Elías Crespín. *Transparent Circunconcentricos*, 2013. Plexiglass, nylon, motors, computer, electronic interphase. Diameter: 100 cm. © Elías Crespín. Photo: Pascal Maillard.

surfaces—visceral color—conceived by Anish Kapoor (2008) to give us back a disconcerting version of ourselves.

These contemporary artists precede the enormous body of veterans from the multiple manifestations of Op-Art and Kinetic Art. They represent a generation that since the beginning of the 1950s advocated the participative role

of the public. In this regard, many artists like Argentinean Raúl Lozza who, beginning with his work *Perceptismo* (*Perceptivism*, 1947), demands a participative attitude from viewers that, rather than encouraging mere contemplation, are geared toward action and the exaltation of the public's own interactive abilities. In this regard, Nicolás Schöffer affirmed that it was imminent