



Dual Current: Inseparable Elements in Painting and Architecture examines the relationship between painting and architecture in a contemporary context through color, shape, and theory. While in no way intended as a survey, this show presents artists who link three-dimensional space and the picture plane to create radical new forms. *Dual Current* explores some of these dialogues between painting and architecture, which have been closely intertwined since at least the Renaissance. The advent of modernism complicated this relationship, introducing hybrid forms such as the *Painterly Architectonics* of Lyubov Popova (Russian, 1889–1924). These iconic paintings by Popova, along with the work of other modernist pioneers in her circle such as Kazimir Malevich (Russian, born Ukraine, 1878–1935), eliminate representational forms and use stark geometric shapes to propose a new social

order that manifests itself in new social spaces. Walter Gropius (German, 1883–1969), and Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, French, born Switzerland, 1887–1965) explored this new worldview through the medium of architecture. Parallels to their structures can be found in the dicta Sigfried Giedion (Swiss, born Czechoslovakia, 1888–1968) set forth in his groundbreaking book, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (1948), which defined a philosophy of logic and clarity as the basis for modernism. Giedion greatly revised the visual language of the early twentieth century by classifying the movement's three main characteristics: primary colors, rectilinear geometry, and constructivist spaces. Both within and beyond the canvas, the artists in this exhibition interact with, but also transcend, Giedion's modernism.



left: Zaha Hadid, Vitra Fire Station, 1993 right: Lyubov Popova, Painterly Architectonic, 1917

Matthew Deleget (American, born 1972) investigates evidence of modernism's influence through his series of paintings called *Case Study*, begun in 2006. These works refer to the Case Study Houses program (1945-1960), one of America's most significant contributions to mid-twentieth-century architecture, whose influence continues as a reductive, yet experimental, system for innovative design. Deleget's works evoke the concepts of this avant-garde program by reflecting on the pattern, geometry, and architecture as found in domestic elements such as swimming pools, driveways, rooftops, and terraced gardens. More profoundly, the individual titles of this series, for instance *Case Study – Heathen* (2006), reflect a more analytical, perhaps ambiguous, mindset of the artist. He describes this body of work as "social abstractions," thereby hinting at Constructivist ideas first laid out

by Popova, Malevich, and Giedion, among others. Similarly, Peter Dudek (American, born 1952) is deeply interested in everyday life in the public sphere, as evidenced in his *Daylight Studio*, an ongoing practice in the form of installations that explore our notions of borders, streets, malls, furniture, and even the Internet. With the inclusion of some of his favorite books, the various incarnations of *Daylight Studio* became sites of exploration, recollection, and creation. Here, Dudek gathers found and carefully constructed elements—consisting of divergent materials, colors, and textures—and with them creates works that oscillate between the functional and nonfunctional, suggesting new connections, insights, and possibilities. Cris Gianakos (American, born 1934) is best known for his *Rampworks*, which range in scale from intimate to monumental. These works share Constructivist themes

and are not only exhibited in galleries and museums, but can also be experienced in sacred spaces and outdoor settings. With a nod to modernism's emphasis on "truth to materials," the artist does not conceal his means of construction. Exposed beams, which are cut, bolted, and mounted in vertical, horizontal, and diagonal orientations, constitute Gianakos's work. Matthew Deleget says of the *Rampworks*:

*In their apparent visual clarity and logic of assembly, the sculptures awaken a long-standing collective memory of cultural structures such as ancient temples, Russian constructivist sculpture, and everyday building sites. The effect is powerful and mysterious and transports the viewer in and out of a common, recollected history.*¹

Some elements of modernist art and architecture shared common characteristics, such as reductive forms, innovative materials, and pure, saturated colors. Color, its placement and relation in the pictorial plane, has been a preoccupation of modern painting since its origins. As Piet Mondrian (Dutch, 1872–1944) explained in 1941:

*The first thing to change in my painting was the color. I forsook natural color for pure color. I had come to feel that the colors of nature cannot be reproduced on canvas. Instinctively I felt that painting had to find a new way to express the beauty of nature.*²

The painter Vasily Kandinsky (French, born Russia, 1866–1944) studied the emotional impact of color as a professor at Gropius's famous Bauhaus. Kandinsky endowed colors with his own personal and specific meanings, which, while the viewer may not be familiar with the artist's connotations, the colors nonetheless communicate through their force.

In architecture, color can also be a key element; for example, one of the influential architects of the twentieth century, Le Corbusier, created his "Architectural Polychromy" in 1931, (and expanded in 1959), that is comprised of sixty-three color tones. He states:

*These Keyboards of Colour aim at stimulating personal selection, by placing the task of choosing on a sound systematic basis. In my opinion they offer a method of approach which is accurate and effective, one which makes it possible to plan, in harmonies which are definitely architectural and yet suited to the natural taste and needs of the individual.*³

The Mexican architect, Luis Barragán (1902–1988), is known as well for houses with open spaces, broad planar forms, and most notably, bright colors. He calls his work "emotional architecture," a term which is indicative of the capacity for powerful impact of color and space on the psyche.

The artists in this exhibition treat color as an autonomous tool in their practice. They can be considered in part the students of Josef Albers, (American, born Germany, 1888–1976) who rigorously advanced investigations of color behavior and perception. A painter, poet, sculptor, teacher, and theoretician, he was central to the connection between European modernism and its parallel movement in America. His legacy as a teacher of artists, as well as his extensive work "profoundly influenced the development of modern art in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s."⁴ As his colleagues before him, such as Popova and Malevich, Albers and his wife, Anni, are also considered pioneers in twentieth-century art—Anni through her innovative weavings, and Josef through his nonobjective color painting. In their teaching, both introduced a nondogmatic, nonhierarchical, rational approach and strategies of "defamiliarization" to sharpen visual observation—all part of the Bauhaus pedagogy—and in turn, for Josef, the influence of the progressive educational philosophy of the American philosopher John Dewey was profound and lasting. Dewey stressed experimentation and direct experience over theory in the learning experience.⁵ Albers is well known for his use of seriality as a working method, particularly in the *Homage to the Square* series. In this exhibition, a silkscreen print, *Variation*, serves as an example from his multimedia *Adobe* series. In the original *Adobe* paintings Albers built-up area of knifed-on pigments to mimic a façade-like surface—reminiscent of the way common building materials are handled—thus coupling unfamiliar associations with the color experience afforded the viewer.

Like Albers, Michelle Grabner (American, born 1962), a painter, conceptual artist, teacher, and curator, is interested in the interactions of color, but her work takes a direct prompt from her surroundings. In one series titled *Gingham*, Grabner examines domesticity by translating patterns of tablecloths, bed linens, and blankets into paint. In bringing these commonplace patterns to an art context, she initiates a dialogue about gender roles and our assumed habits of seeing. The range of her many investigations are far-reaching in themes, materials, and methods.

1. Mathew Deleget, Cris Gianakos: RAMPWORKS, press release (New York: MINUS SPACE, 2016).

2. H.L.C. Jaffé, *De Stijl, 1917-1931* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 40.

3. "Architectural Polychromy," Les Couleurs Suisse AG, accessed 29 April, 2017, <http://www.lescouleurs.ch/1/le-corbusier/architectural-polychromy/>.

4. "Josef Albers," The Art Story: Modern Art Insight, accessed 16 May, 2017, www.theart-story.org/artist-albers-josef.htm.

5. Ibid.

Exploring objects and spaces outside of the home, Grabner created a full-size outdoor shed-turned-gallery titled *The Suburban*, in 2014. Located in Milwaukee, *The Suburban* is an independent artist-project space, as well as a work in its own right. In an ongoing program, Grabner invites artists to show their work in this unexpected context, and since they have complete control of what they wish to produce and exhibit, artists not only reclaim their autonomy, but also create, far from the marketplace, a community. Here, the white walls, so familiar in a traditional gallery context, undergo a dramatic change when experienced as a small suburban shed. Not driven by commerce, Grabner and her partner, Brad Killam, are funding projects “within the economy of our household.”⁶

Russell Maltz (American, born 1952) creates works that similarly decontextualize everyday objects, using color to heighten this effect. Trained as a painter, but now working in installation, Maltz combines the two disciplines in his *SP Series*, (‘SP’ standing for ‘suspended’). A new take on Duchamp’s *Readymades*, these works consist of painted plywood sheets that are suspended from a steel pin. Scouring active construction sites for discarded building materials, the artist collects cinder blocks or variously sized plywood sheets, which he then stores for a period of years. He cleans and preserves these artifacts until an opportune moment arrives for their alteration and display. Maltz uses brightly colored paints to further infuse a work with meaning. One of his signature colors—the yellow-green Day-Glo used in this exhibition—is especially unsettling, as it brings to mind caution tape, men at work, and emergency personnel. The interplay of painting and architecture in Maltz’s work is perhaps most evident in his use of everyday materials, but this relationship is also emphasized by his mode of presentation and use of a common language of color.

Changha Hwang (Korean, born 1969) mines color and space to different effect. His paintings often begin with one saturated, pure color, as in works by Mondrian and Maltz, but he departs from modernist forms. Hwang uses dense grids that are passive in and of themselves, but he complicates his work by juxtaposing their repetitive hatching and cross-hatching with blocks of different colors. This technique creates a complex system of layers, planes, and solids that build a dynamic dialogue and thus cause the observer to evaluate, reinterpret, and reframe their perceptual presence. Denying the eye any rest, these alternating spaces, at once open and dense, conjure our interconnected world and our inner and outer environments.

Postmodernism uses modernism both as a direct source and an impetus for experiment. With the rapid rise of digital and virtual experiences and wireless technology, modernist concepts of space, time, form, and color converge in a postmodern art that simulates surfaces, treats color with ambivalence, and creates non-spaces using an eclectic mix-and-match methodology. In so doing, art folds into pastiche. In postmodern architecture, classical theory mixes with modern elements to create an aesthetic that no longer directly references its historical context. As digital means allow disciplines to be combined with unprecedented ease, artists and architects are called upon anew to embrace technology as an extension of their creative selves.

Manfred Mohr (German, born 1938) was originally an action painter and jazz musician, but transformed his work from Abstract Expressionism to computer-generated algorithmic geometry. Mohr’s flat-screen installations are computer-generated real-time algorithmic animations that display different images each day of the exhibition. The artist programmed his first computer drawing in 1969, citing as influences the German philosopher Max Bense (1910–1990) and the French composer Pierre Barbaud (1911–1990). One of his early works seems to afford us a glimpse into the future; Mohr’s *Laserglyphs* from 1993, for example, are painted steel letters that in their strangeness, seem to be left behind by an advanced alien civilization. But in his imposing shaped monochrome paintings we begin to see the determined effort of tracing a line, here in a 6-D space that is beyond mental representation but nonetheless calculable. His computer program works named *Articiata* and *parallelResonance*, displayed on LCD screens, reveal a diagonal path that is randomly chosen between the 11th and 13th dimensions of a rotating hypercube. The color spaces and horizontal lines move with the structure; the diagonal path made visible by an animated white line extending in slow motion, which can be observed in real-time, moving in his invented space of the hypercube that makes for mesmerizing viewing. The course of the line never repeats itself because there are so many possibilities. The impulse comes from music, Mohr said, when he began writing computer programs, but found himself at a loss for a structure. He adopted the cube as his basic alphabet, followed by the hypercube, which provided the framework. The complexity of the structure is not important to Mohr—it is the line that is traced through the rotating space of the cube, with random variations of speed, adding a musical rhythm to this work. But the mathematical structure exists only to get to a visual “that I have not seen before.”⁷

6. “The Suburban,” accessed 19 May, 2017, www.thesuburban.com.

7. Manfred Mohr, interview by Gabriele Evertz, February 20, 2017.

In his effort to create rational work, Mohr joins the kind of inquiry that in modernism possibly finds a notional origin in the French Neo-Impressionists—especially the young painter Georges Seurat (French, 1902–1988) or, more recently, the Swiss painter Richard Paul Lohse, who was one of the first artists to formulate a systemic, modular principle for his color structures different from those of Mondrian, Malevich, or Theo van Doesburg (Dutch, 1883–1931).⁸

Kristine Marx (American, born 1969) takes a multidisciplinary approach to technology. A student of painting, poetry, and philosophy, Marx is interested in “the way memory seizes upon isolated fragments of experience, reconstructing and formulating them into a cohesive mental artifact, yet never truly fixing an accurate picture.”⁹ She works with video, animation, and installation, often collaborating with composers and musicians to create multimedia works that are exhibited in theaters and concert halls. By recording, taking apart, and reconfiguring videos, Marx creates a peculiar terrain that lets the viewers move throughout mysterious, dreamlike, and haunting spaces. Technology also serves as a source of inspiration for more analog works, such as Deleget’s *Shuffle Paintings*—originally defined by the shuffle feature on his iPod—which randomizes scale, size, and color, leaving the final picture up to chance.

These artists are not strict opponents of mainstream culture, but instead coexist with its concerns. Collectively the artists in this exhibition demonstrate a multiplicity of politics and styles, none of which can be said to represent a dominant worldview. For example, Lynne Harlow (American, born 1968) constructs elegant, lean organizations of light, color, and space that probe the threshold of awareness. Harlow achieves her intention of a specific perceptual experience with the minimum amount of material and information necessary. In addition, sometimes audio or olfactory stimuli are factors in her installations. Her work challenges established ideas of painting’s function and the separation of the structural and phenomenological. One of her signature elements, the curtain, is often employed to allow the viewer to interact with her work. In a world where more is more, Harlow asks: “How little is enough? How much can be taken away before a piece crumbles?” But the precise quality of color always plays an important role in even the most reduced works. Her recent preoccupation with a specific tint of red—resulting from research on a house built by Gropius, located on Baker Bridge Road in Lincoln, Massachusetts—has expanded Harlow’s palette to include what she names “Gropius pink.”

On the other hand, associating color with a symbolic function, Rossana Martínez (Puerto Rican, born 1969) employs her color language, which brings to bear the rich cultural complexity of her native Puerto Rico, in each of her far-ranging projects. Her focus is the body in relation to specific interior and exterior spaces. Many works investigate diverse aspects of abstraction, color, and space that exist in binary relationships with the ephemeral and the enduring. In her performances, the viewer witnesses ways in which subtleties of balance and movement create a dialogue between body, space, and, occasionally, common materials, together leading to quietly profound and poetic experiences.¹⁰

Art is not created in a vacuum or in a world that is separated from scientific, social, and political meaning; all are intertwined, and technology, however promising, is not the only impetus. Art has always facilitated the merging of disciplines and ideas. Duchamp’s *Readymades*, for instance, proposed a reconsideration of everyday objects in an art context, thus lending them new meaning. And what caused Albers to fashion work from discarded pieces of glass?

Among the most inventive reappraisals of the relationship between painting and architecture is the one developed over the course of her career by the Iraqi-born British architect Zaha Hadid (1950–2016). Producing revolutionary architecture with innovative materials and powerful forms, she was first recognized for her dynamic vision in painting. In one of her first and notable projects, the Vetra Fire Station, 1993, she created a highly sculptural building resembling the shapes in her paintings. Like the Russian Constructivist painters, she avoided excessive detail, which would only detract from the building’s prismatic structure, and like her paintings, the building conveys a powerful sensation of movement.

Resisting the temptation to “copy and paste,” arriving instead at a synthesis free of nostalgia—this is perhaps the great challenge for contemporary practitioners of both art and architecture. Whether we see it as the final phase of modernism, or the fulfillment of postmodernist imperatives— artistic achievement in our time lies in the merging of elements from different fields into inseparable and vital new forms. Art has the unique ability to make visible and fruitful the enduring tension of opposites.

—Gabriele Evertz

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8. Donald Judd, “Richard Paul Lohse,” in *Richard Paul Lohse 1902-1988*, ed. R. H. Fuchs, (Den Haag: Gemeentemuseum, 1988), 9.

9. Kristine Marx: Video/Installation,” Station Independent Projects, accessed February 24, 2016, http://stationindependent.com/artist_kristine.php.

10. In 2003 Matthew Deleget co-founded MINUS SPACE together with his wife, Rossana Martínez—first as an online website, then as a shared space that functioned as a studio/gallery, where he “...gets each day to building a stronger artistic community.” He believes himself to be “part of a greater arts ecosystem, and the health of that system depends on what each of us contributes to it,” quoted in Loudon, 2017, pp. 259-269. In organizing this exhibit, I acknowledged the relatively new development of artists effectively teaming up with their partners. In so doing, they broaden their social and artistic base and form stronger ties to their communities, not unlike the dream of early pioneers such as Josef and Anni Albers, or Robert and Sonia Delaunay.

Gabriele Evertz is a German-born, American artist who lives and works in Brooklyn. She holds an MFA in painting and a BA in art history, from Hunter College in New York.

Since 1990, Evertz has exhibited her work in solo and group exhibitions internationally and throughout the United States. In 2017, her work was featured at 499 Park Avenue / The Lobby Gallery in Manhattan and at MINUS SPACE in Brooklyn. A three-person exhibition, with Robert Swain and Sanford Wurmfeld will take place in 2018 at the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey in Summit, New Jersey. She will also be included in a major project in Germany for the first half of 2018. Evertz's paintings are included in many public and private collections worldwide. She has an extensive bibliography as her work has been reviewed in many prominent publications.

In addition to her painting practice, Evertz is a Professor of Art in the Department of Art and Art History at Hunter College in New York. Over the past ten years, she has curated and co-curated critically acclaimed retrospectives and surveys of abstract painting at Hunter College, and presently at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is the author of catalogue essays on color in abstract painting and on the artists Antoni Milkowski and Robert Swain, among others.

ENDNOTES

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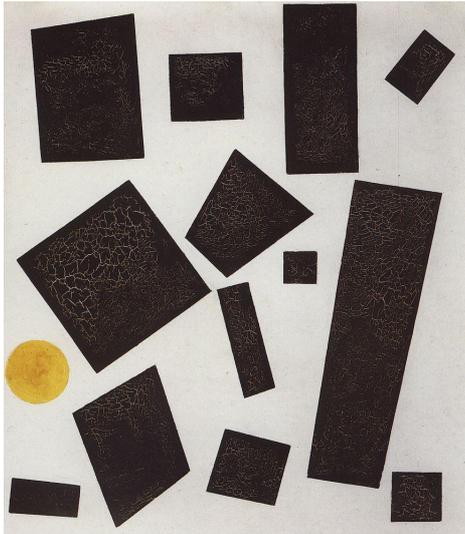
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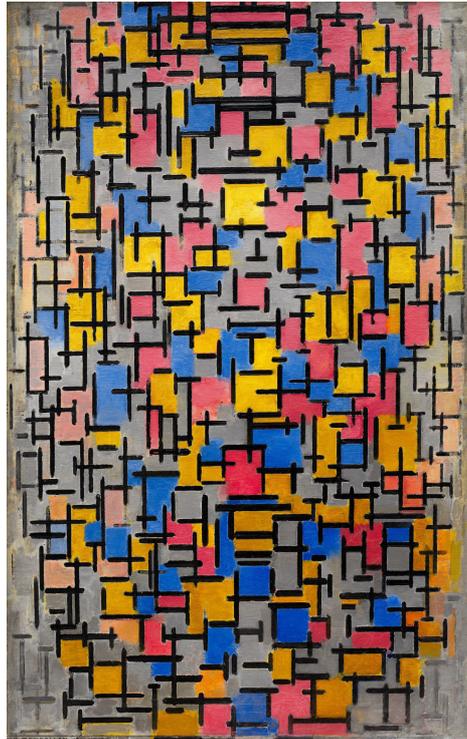
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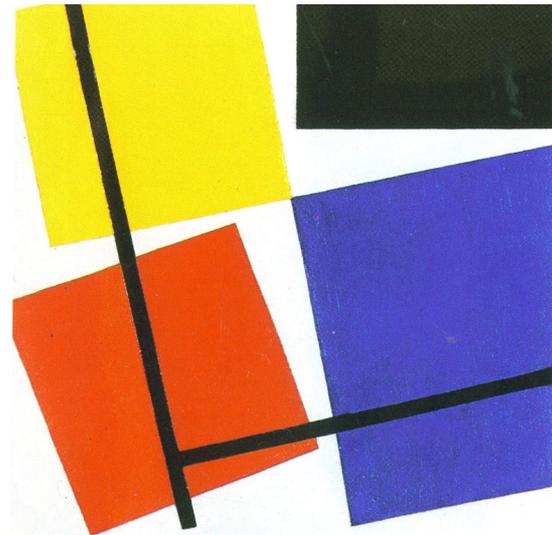
The following images are examples of work by the artists and architects who are referenced in the essay. The images are organized in order of reference.



Lyubov Popova, *Painterly Architectonic*, 1917
Kazimir Malevich, *Suprematism*, 1915
Post WWII restoration: Walter Gropius, *Bauhaus School*, Dessau, 1925-26



Le Corbusier, *Villa Savoye*, 1928-31
Piet Mondrian, *Composition*, 1916
Vasily Kandinsky, *Squares with Concentric Circles*, 1913



Le Corbusier, *Architectural Polychromy*, 1931
 Luis Barragan, *Cuadra San Cristobál*, 1968
 Georges Seurat, *Seascape at Port-en-Bessin, Normandy*, 1888

Richard Paul Lohse, *Neun Vertikale Systematische Farbreihen mit Horizontaler und Vertikaler Verdichtung*, 1955-69
 Theo van Doesburg, *Simultaneous Counter-Composition*, 1929-30
 Zaha Hadid, *Vitra Fire Station*, 1993