

Legacy of Modernism

Mar 15 — May 26, 2024 | CAC Málaga, Spain

The CAC de Málaga presents an outstanding exhibition of the work of Günther Förg, a renowned German artist of the second half of the 20th century and a fundamental pillar of European contemporary art. Entitled *Legacy of Modernism* and curated by Michael Neff and Fernando Francés, the exhibition introduces visitors to the artist's minimalist oeuvre through twenty-nine meticulously selected paintings, spanning from 1987 to 2004. The show, including large-format works, pieces on paper and paintings on lead, has been designed to tie in with the modern architectural style of the CAC Málaga building, in a conscious attempt to reflect Förg's deep interest in architecture and the inspiration he drew from artists such as Barnett Newman, Mies van der Rohe and the Blinky Palermo of the 1970s.

The exhibition *Legacy of Modernism* underscores the German artist's relationship to modernity, stressing the importance of the modern movement in his work and revealing his interest in exploring the legacy of modern aesthetics in the midst of the postmodern era. More than simply showcasing his works, the show aims at highlighting Förg's aesthetic quest and the relationship he establishes with space through the use of form, colour, texture, scale and composition.

Förg's work is a blend of disciplines that reimagines the creations of historic artists like Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Cy Twombly and Edvard Munch. His interest in Munch was sparked in the late 1980s, and in 1990 led him to devise his *Gitterbilder* ("grid paintings"), in which he focused on non-figurative elements and the Norwegian artist's use of colour. In 1994, these grid paintings signified a turning point in his work, reflecting the need to evolve and concentrating his attention on the physical and tactile properties of the artistic medium.

Throughout his career, Förg challenged the conventions of modern art, absorbing elements of abstract expressionism and conceptual art and introducing a brighter palette in his later works of the 2000s, under the influence of artists such as Barnett Newman. Among the pieces on display are examples from his series of paintings on lead, which blur the line between painting and sculpture, questioning traditional methods and the purity that modern art has sought to achieve. The process of transformation of metal through oxidation reflects a continuous artistic evolution that goes beyond the limits of painting, allowing for a profound reflection on the pictorial medium itself.

Förg's abstract paintings in the exhibition, whether on canvas, aluminium or lead, are notable for an experimental approach that achieves a unique combination of the constructivist tradition and a soft, evocative atmosphere, in line with the Romantic school of German painting. This quality transcends mere geometric abstraction, enriching the viewer's artistic experience.

Günther Förg – who was born in Füssen in 1952 and died in Freiburg im Breisgau in 2013 – began his career in Munich in the 1970s under the influence of Blinky Palermo. Over five decades, his work encompassed various forms of artistic expression, with a particular focus on painting and an in-depth exploration of themes that fused modern architecture with female figures and portraits. Förg's obsession with the concept of space is apparent in every stage of his creative output, in which the architecture of galleries and exhibition rooms was incorporated into the works themselves. This characteristic of his production explains the meticulous care that has been devoted to every detail of the show's design.

The exhibition at the CAC Málaga, which runs until 26 May, not only displays works done on a variety of supports, but also invites visitors to reflect on the very essence of painting. Günther Förg's work, with its critical approach to the principles of modern art, continues to be a source of inspiration for generations of contemporary artists, transcending temporal and aesthetic boundaries in the world of art.

With a prolific career, the acclaimed artist's work has been the subject of numerous solo and group exhibitions that have made a unique mark on contemporary painting. His presence in major international collections bears testimony to his impact on the contemporary art world.