

OTTO PIENE

Rainbow and Light

3 March – 21 May 2016

ENG

PLUTSCHOW GALLERY is pleased to present its second solo exhibition of Otto Piene in Zurich. Otto Piene was the co-founder of the Zero group, who died in 2014 at the age of 86. The exhibition focuses on two major topics of his work, rainbow and light. Otto Piene was featured prominently in the Guggenheim New York's exhibition "ZERO: Countdown to Tomorrow" in 2014–2015 as well as in major Zero exhibitions in Berlin, Amsterdam and Istanbul. He furthermore was the subject of four solo retrospectives in Germany and one in Iran in the last two years.

Piene's first rainbow works originate from the 1960s where the subject first appeared in paintings and paper works. Its major breakthrough came with a commissioned work for the 1972 Olympic games in Munich. The work needed to be a centerpiece, dominant and big. Piene had been working on the technique of the inflated sculptures, which he called "Sky Art", ever since the 1960s. He decided to create an inflated sculpture in the form of a rainbow. It consisted of five balloons in the five olympic colours, each having a diameter of approximately 1 meter and a length of 600 meters. It was floating above the Olympic Terrain and being lit by 60 strong lights. Like this, the rainbow was virtually flying and shining above the Olympics. Due to the sad terrorist attacks on the Olympic Games Otto Piene's rainbow also became a strong sign for peace. Piene afterwards continued to work on the theme of the rainbow both in paintings and in 2012 eventually also in ceramics. We will show both, the series of rainbow ceramics as well as a very important early rainbow painting from 1975.

Next to rainbow the exhibition focuses on light, Piene's primary source of inspiration, which he performed among others through his "Rasterbilder" (screen pictures), a series of works he began in 1957 whereas he developed a technique in which he pressed oil paint through cardboard or metal screens onto paper, canvas and wood. Piene returned to the "Rasterbilder" repeatedly during his entire career of nearly 60 years.



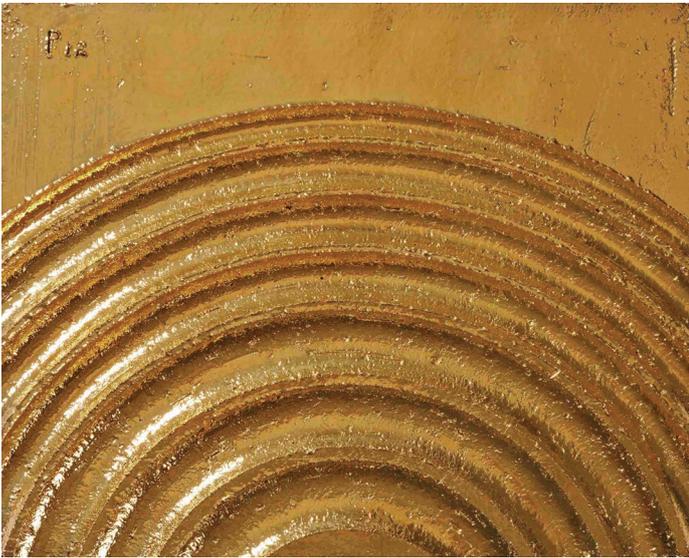
Yellow
1975
oil and smoke
on canvas
195 x 255 cm

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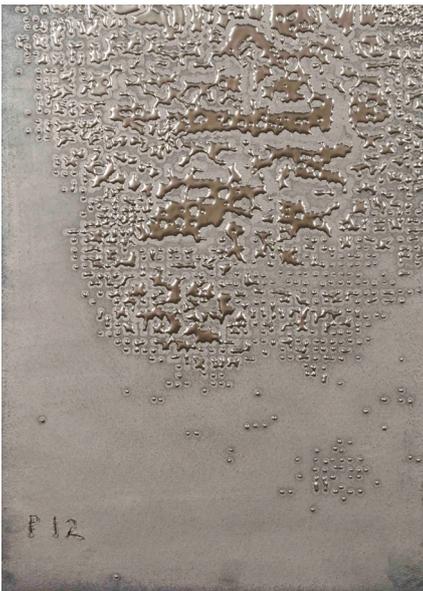
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**7-Tage Woche
(Seven Day Week),
2012
Glaze on Clay
75 x 93 x 7 cm**

He also used this technique in ceramics, ever since he started to work with the material for the first time in Vallauris in 1999 and furthermore, after he concentrated heavily on ceramic after 2006. We will show both, an important "Rasterbild" which he created with a screen from 1957 as well as various golden and platinum "Raster-"ceramics.



**Luftbild 1
(Air Picture 1)
2012
glaze on clay
68 x 48 x 3 cm**

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Further to the "Rasterbilder" Piene virtually used light in his light sculptures, with which he created his famous "Lichtballette" (light ballets), where he first projected light from electric hand lamps through his raster screens thus producing an otherworldly spectral dance engaging science, nature and technology. He filled entire dark rooms with these "Lichtballet" and created a magic atmosphere. Piene used various forms of light sculptures for his "Lichtballette", such as cubes, bowls or screens in all different forms, hanging or standing. We will be showing three of the last series of outdoor "Lichtraster" (light screens), which Piene made and which – going with the time – as Piene always did, are enlightened with LED lights.

Otto Piene was born in Bad Laasphe, Germany, in 1928. He studied painting and art education at the Academy of Art in Munich and the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf from 1949 to 1953. In 1957 he received a degree in philosophy from the University of Cologne. In 1957 he co-founded, together with Heinz Mack, the Zero Group in Düsseldorf, as a response of the darkness in art in Germany after the war and also as a response to their war experiences after which they no longer could continue the traditional way and reinvented art by using new elements such as fire and light to create energy with the limit only in the universe. In 1964 Piene moved to the United States, where he became first the Fellow of the MIT Center for Advanced Visual Studies (a cross-disciplinary venture that fostered collaboration among artists, scientists, and engineers) from 1968 to 1971, and eventually in 1974 director of the institute. Piene's works are included in more than 200 museums and public collections, among them the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Kunsthaus Zürich, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Albertina, Vienna, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Piene divided his time between studios in Groton, Massachusetts, and Düsseldorf until his death in 2014.

"Otto Piene, Rainbow and Light" is on view from 3 March – 21 May 2016 in co-operation with More Sky AG, Zug, which runs the official archive of Otto Piene's ceramic sculptures. An opening reception will be held on 3 March from 6 – 8 pm.

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