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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heinz Mack
Paintings, 1957-1964
17 September – 31 October 2009

Sperone Westwater announces *Heinz Mack: Paintings, 1957-1964*. Reacting to the personally-charged expressionism of the Post-War period, Mack comes from a generation of artists who aimed to banish any trace of psychological expression and instead bring elements of the non-art world into his work. The term “ZERO” was coined by Heinz Mack and Otto Piene to describe this concept, and later came to define an international movement taken up by artists across Europe. The paintings on view emerged during these founding years of the ZERO group, and exemplify the period immediately before the artist decided to work with entirely new materials such as aluminum and glass.

Informed by new materials and technologies, Mack’s aim was to abandon the traditional idea of pictorial space, and instead focus solely on an overall surface with the effects of light, reflection and motion. The early paintings on view consist of a series of parallel black, white or grey lines broken up with perpendicular streaks and scrapes. The vertical structure of the colors, marked by only a few horizontal interruptions, is set to rhythmically capture the viewer's eye. Furthermore, the sharply delineated borders within the grid-like compositions results in certain bands of paint appearing brighter than others. Through this, Mack generates the optical impression that the overall surface is vibrating. The theoretical premise behind this series was first introduced by Mack in his 1958 manifesto “The New Dynamic Structure” published in the first issue of the magazine *ZERO*. In speaking about the importance of vibration to color, Mack writes:

A color can have several meanings. However, its virtual objectification, i.e., its intrinsic energy, is achieved when it strikes its own vibration; that is its life, its breath. [...] We can achieve such intensity of color vibration through a continuum of deviations from an ideal monochrome, or through a continuum of graduated value of the same.

These early works still contain elements of the basic structures of gestural painting inasmuch as they allow materiality and the gesture of the brush. But at the same time, the grid-like compositions are forerunners to the artist’s later metal reliefs, light-steles and cubes, and anticipate Mack’s overcoming of traditional composition in painting.

Heinz Mack was born in Lollar in Hesse, Germany on 8 March 1931. He studied painting at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf from 1950 to 1953. In 1956 he also received a degree in philosophy at the University of Cologne. Following his studies, Mack applied himself intensively to informal painting, developing by the mid-1950s his first “Dynamic Structures” in painting, drawing and plaster and metal reliefs. In 1957 he founded the ZERO group with Otto Piene (and later Gunther Uecker), and organized the now-legendary evening exhibitions at his studio at 69 Gladbacher Straße in Düsseldorf. Between 1957 and 1961, Piene and Mack published three editions of the magazine *ZERO*. In 1966 *ZERO*'s last group exhibition took place in Bonn. Around 1964 Mack stopped making works on canvas, and instead focused on water, light and wind sculptures. During the 1970s and 1980s Mack applied himself overridingly to creating monumental outdoor sculptures. At present, the artist is the subject of an exhibition of early works at the Ludwig Museum in Koblenz, Germany entitled “Licht der ZERO-Zeit”. The artist currently lives and works in Mönchengladbach, a city near Dusseldorf in Germany. His work can be found in approximately 140 public collections worldwide.

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