

Concepts of the All-Over

Oct 3, 2024–
Apr 13, 2025

MEDIA ORIENTATION

Oct 1, 2024, 11 am

VERNISSAGE

Oct 2, 2024, 6 to 9 pm

In *Concepts of the All-Over*, Museum Haus Konstruktiv is presenting a magnificent group show that celebrates the combining of colors, shapes, light and architecture. As the final exhibition to be held in the ewz Unterwerk Selnau building before the museum moves to the Löwenbräukunst site in spring 2025, it is also a homage to the historical industrial structure that has been our home for over two decades. Visitors will be able to experience large-scale works by Carlos Bunga, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Fritz Glarner, Ana Montiel, Reto Pulfer, Esther Stocker and Christine Streuli.

In art, the term ‘all-over’ describes the (painterly) principle of a more-or-less uniform composition that is dispersed across the whole surface of an image carrier and can potentially be continued beyond its boundaries. With regard to the almost 40-year history of Haus Konstruktiv though, ‘all over’ also refers to the end of a chapter: the museum’s imminent departure from its current location beside the River Sihl. With the exhibition title *Concepts of the All-Over*, we are deliberately playing with this double meaning. It’s about all-over artworks... and it’s all over!

The centerpiece of our collection:

Fritz Glarner’s *Rockefeller Dining Room* as the catalyst for the exhibition

The conceptual starting point for this group show is the *Rockefeller Dining Room* created in 1963/64 by Fritz Glarner (b. 1899 in Zurich, CH, d. 1972 in Locarno, CH). On permanent display since our museum moved into the ewz Unterwerk Selnau building in 2001, this abstract geometric interior design constitutes the centerpiece of the in-house collection. Already in the context of Russian constructivism, and mainly in association with De Stijl and the Bauhaus later, artists were not only implementing their geometric compositions in paintings and sculptures, but also applying them to product design, interior design and architecture. When commissioned to design a dining room for Nelson A. Rockefeller (then Governor of New York, later Vice President of the United States), Glarner drew on this integration of art into everyday life. He proceeded on the basis of his ‘relational painting’ system, consisting of modules with rectangles cut at 15 degrees on one side. In his composition, Glarner interlocked these differently sized trapezoidal shapes to create a rhythmically dynamized and sensitively balanced structure. While the primary colors red, blue and yellow, along with black and white, are mainly reserved for the more densely structured sections, the larger interlocking surfaces appear in finely nuanced shades of gray. The observer is also firmly integrated into the concept of the relational: Most of the colorful, more eye-catching formations are located in the upper wall and ceiling areas, so they remain clearly visible from the perspective of anyone sitting at the dining table. In the *Rockefeller Dining Room*, Fritz Glarner expanded the principle of ‘relational painting’ to create an impressive all-over that fascinatingly interweaves form, color and life.

In loose reference to Glarner's unique work, the other pieces presented in the exhibition, most of which are more recent, allow the museum architecture itself to become an image carrier. Shapes, structures and programs are applied to walls, ceilings and floors in a playful variety of ways, inviting the public to immerse themselves and linger.

Boundless spaces:

Esther Stocker plays with order and chaos

The spatial intervention *A Space for Thoughts* by Esther Stocker (b. 1974 in Schlanders, IT, lives in Vienna, AT) exemplifies integration of the museum's architecture into art. Using black adhesive tape and black-painted wooden slats, this artist has covered the walls, windows and floor of the large entrance hall with an orthogonal network of lines. Fascinated by systems of order and "the vagueness of exact forms", Stocker has been using geometric patterns and grids in her work for years. However, she is equally interested in the disorder inherent in a grid – because even though a regular grid represents order and clarity, the human eye is quickly overwhelmed when looking at it. This can also be experienced in the expansive installation at Haus Konstruktiv. The principle of the all-over structure allows the architectural elements to flow into one another, creating the impression of a boundless space, in which it becomes more difficult to get one's bearings. The same geometric grid motif provides the basis for Stocker's *Knitterskulpturen* (Creased Sculptures) – objects mounted on the wall, hanging from the ceiling, or placed on the floor, three of which serve as seating in the exhibition. For these works, Stocker printed geometric patterns on PVC film, the back of which she covered with aluminum. Like on crumpled paper, the regular grid structure now appears broken up and distorted. It is precisely such disruptions and the accompanying questions about the relationship between structure and confusion, or certainty and vagueness, that interest Esther Stocker. "In my paintings, sculptures and installations," states Stocker in this regard, "I try to describe the ambiguity and uncertainty of the system. I use the precision of a system to investigate the system itself."

Expressive monochromy:

Carlos Bunga's paintings that float in the (inter)space

Carlos Bunga (b. 1976 Porto, PT, lives in Barcelona, ES) is known for his site-specific installational and sculptural works, most of which are created in situ. Made from the simplest of materials, such as cardboard, adhesive tape or textile products, they are destroyed after the end of each exhibition or reused in elements for subsequent projects. By also using the temporary constructions as a painting surface, Bunga makes his works oscillate between image and space, blurring the traditional boundaries between architecture, sculpture and painting. Bunga himself describes his art as nomadic. His oeuvre is shaped by the instability of the living environment, displacement, and stories of migration, but also by the modern type of nomadism that goes hand in hand with being an artist. This blend was also a theme in Bunga's solo exhibition *I am a Nomad*, which took place at Haus Konstruktiv in 2015 and was his first solo show in a Swiss museum. For *Concepts of the All-Over*, Bunga has realized a new piece in the stairwell titled *Free Standing Painting (Haus Konstruktiv)*. It comprises of paintings created between 2016 and 2024, which hang from the twelve-meter-high ceiling in such a way that they appear to float at different heights in this narrow space. To anyone walking up or down the stairs, the fact that the mobile image carriers are furniture-moving blankets and carpets, painted with simple wall paint, only becomes apparent on closer inspection. The same applies to the flaking and deep furrows that characterize the monochrome color fields in creamy pink and chalky white or gray tones, bringing weathered building facades or old maps to mind. Floor by floor, in this carefully conceived interplay of material, architecture and the visitors' movements, a delicate open dialog unfolds between interior and exterior, art and life, permanence and transformation. The fragility of life and the transience of artistic processes are also evident here – a subtle reference to the relocation of Haus Konstruktiv and to the museum's renewed use as an industrial building.

Color and motion:

Carlos Cruz-Diez's vibrant world of *Chromosaturation*

The artwork of Carlos Cruz-Diez (b. 1923 in Caracas, VE, d. 2019 in Paris, FR) is shaped by intensive theoretical and experimental engagement with the theme of color and how color is perceived. Throughout his life, this artist strove to make this complex phenomenon tangible on canvas or paper, as well as with objects and large walk-through indoor or outdoor installations. His multifaceted use of light, movement and space, along with active incorporation of the observer into the concept of the work, make Cruz-Diez one of the most significant representatives of kinetic art and op art. The fact that the latter remained relevant well beyond its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s is, in no small part, due to his irrepressible curiosity and openness toward new technologies.

Presented on the second floor of the museum, *Chromosaturation* is an immersive piece that constitutes one of the artist's most successful attempts to demonstrate the interaction of color and light to the public. This installation was originally conceived in 1965 and consists of three interconnected chambers bathed in blue, red or green light. When entered consecutively, the intensely saturated monochrome color situations trigger surprising optical effects. Here, a major role is played by the physiologically determined 'successive contrast', whereby, after prolonged observation of one color, its complementary color appears on the retina. The visitor is thus completely enveloped by changing color effects, which they in turn help to generate. In this way, *Chromosaturation* makes it possible to experience color not only visually, but also physically and emotionally. According to Cruz-Diez, this work playfully conveys "an awareness of the instability of reality".

Experiencing perception in a new way:

Ana Montiel's *The Cortical Columns* installation

The artwork of Ana Montiel (b. 1981 in Logroño, ES, lives in Mexico City, MX) also revolves around the subjectivity of human perception. The artist explores this inspired by theories from neuroscience and phenomenology, as well as by literary sources. At Haus Konstruktiv, Montiel is presenting *Synaptic Splendour* (2024). The main artwork is the site specific painting *The Cortical Columns (deepening into our shared fictions)*. The title refers to structures consisting of neurons that extend vertically from the surface into the deeper layers of the cerebral cortex. They integrate and process sensory information, and play a key role in generating perception and consciousness, turning "noise input" into "data". By incorporating six pillars in the large exhibition space on the fourth floor and with numerous paintings, the artist has produced a symbolic recreation of these millions of tiny structures. Narrow vertical panels encase the pre-existing pillars and line the walls in one half of the hall, suggesting a permeable space within the space. Montiel has sprayed the canvases with multiple layers of acrylic paint. This painstaking method makes the works generate an iridescent and blurry effect, in fascinating contrast with the countless sprayed dots that are clearly discernible up close. In other words, by means of varying colors and contrasts, Montiel (over)challenges the observer's neuronal systems, and generates an unsteady visual experience that depends on the viewing angle and incident light. Among other things, Montiel is thus drawing on the ideas of German philosopher Thomas Metzinger, according to whom, consciousness and the perception of reality can be understood as a kind of simulation in the brain.

In the cabinets, the two video installations *Istigkeit (Naked Existence)* and *Khoreia (dancing in unison)* can be experienced, which examine the interface between perception, imagination and reality – in allusion to Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* (1954) and philosopher Gaston Bachelard's *La Poétique de la rêverie* (1961).

Who pays the Bill:

Christine Streuli's color-explosion mural as a mood barometer

Who pays the Bill is the title of the site-specific mural that Christine Streuli (b. 1975 in CH, lives in Berlin, DE) has conceived for the smaller hall on the fourth floor, at the invitation of Haus Konstruktiv. The starting point for this 360° panoramic image is Max Bill's 1942 painting *horizontal-vertikal-diagonal-rhythmus* (horizontal-vertical-diagonal-rhythm), which is rhythmically structured by horizontal, vertical and diagonal black strips, and colored inner areas. Enlarged, vertically mirrored in part, and expanded by Streuli, Bill's construction is integrated into a harmonious-looking whole on the end wall, whereby the strictly ordered composition is steadily undone on both sides. The mural continues across

the two narrow walls, initially with black-and-white linear structures on the left and brightly colored fields on the right, and leads to an energetically charged, expressively somber all-over on the entrance wall. The abstract composition is made increasingly dense on both sides by means of figurative motifs, such as folding figures, a peace sign and a globe icon. The multi-layered panorama can be read as a landscape and, according to Streuli, as a “mood barometer”, in which various themes immanent to painting are negotiated, such as abstraction and figuration, construction and deconstruction, value and revaluation, history and contemporary art. The title is also to be understood in relation to art history and the reception thereof: With *Who pays the Bill*, the artist is referring on one hand to the Zurich Concretist Max Bill, a central figure not only for Haus Konstruktiv but for Swiss art history in general. On the other hand, the work’s title also calls the very process of writing art history into question. “Who pays, and who actually did pay the bill,” asks Streuli, “when, in art history, predominantly male colleagues were supported, collected and exhibited? Who pays when there is no longer any precise distinction between original and fake, or between truth and deception?” The artist deliberately refrains from giving any concrete answers. But with her painting, she does provide an example of how stimulating and playful the contemplation of painting, and of its ambivalent history, can be.

Zustand Urgeflecht:

Reto Pulfer’s immersive installation between art and nature

Self-taught artist Reto Pulfer (b. 1981 in Bern, CH, lives in Uckermark, DE) switches masterfully between disciplines – within art and beyond it. His oeuvre combines textile and installational techniques with painting, performance, music, literature and gardening. Here, nature is just as important a component as architectural/historical references to ancient Egyptian burial chambers, to Roman room painting from antiquity, to the Renaissance and to the baroque. For *Concepts of the All-Over*, Pulfer transforms the exhibition rooms on the fifth floor into an immersive route through textiles, found objects, sound and text. Self-sewn tents made from used, often hand-dyed fabrics are integrated into the angled architecture and open up a variety of temporary spaces that are heavily loaded with atmosphere and narrative.

Having just been installed at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, *Tunnel* (2024), a tube-like construction made of cheesecloth, guides visitors through Haus Konstruktiv’s passerelle. The characteristics of the passageway situation are further accentuated by this semi-transparent corridor. As an osmotic and perforated architectural fragment, the assortment of large-format textile works from the years 2015 to 2024 in the subsequent rooms also responds to the pre-existing building and, according to Pulfer, functions as an “echo chamber” for what was already there. The joined fabrics are all carriers of distinct literary text fragments, cryptic signs and symbols, and a multitude of motifs with fantastical plant creatures. Painted, drawn, knitted or embroidered, they grow together like rhizomes to form an ornament that expands into the space as an installation, with flowers, stones and strips of hand-woven fabric. One constant in this processual way of working is the concept of ‘*Zustand*’ (state), which is conveyed both in the materiality and in the variable formations of the individual works. With the multi-layered installation *Zustand Urgeflecht* (Primal Web State), the artist gives the audience at Haus Konstruktiv access to various states, both emotional and mental. This will also occur during a performance (to be followed by an artist talk) on January 22nd, 2025.

Program highlights:

October 2, 6 p.m.: VERNISSAGE

Speaking from 6.30 pm: Andreas Durisch, President of the Foundation for Constructive, Concrete and Conceptual Art, and Sabine Schaschl, Director of Museum Haus Konstruktiv.

Nov 6, 6.15 p.m.: ARTIST TALK* with Christine Streuli (in German)

Nov 27, 6.15 p.m.: ARTIST TALK* with Esther Stocker (in German)

Dec 8, 11.45 a.m.: Public guided tour in English

Jan 22, 6.15 a.m.: PERFORMANCE AND ARTIST TALK* with Reto Pulfer (in German)

*Registration required at: info@hauskonstruktiv.ch

Information on other events and our digital education program can be found on our website at: hauskonstruktiv.ch

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