GUSTAV METZGER

Supportive, 1966-2011, the exhibition

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Gustav Metzger, Supportive, 1966-2011*
View of the exhibition "Supportive, 1966-2011", mac^{k-ron} (february 15th - april 14th 2013)
mac^{k-ron} collection
© photo Balise Addino

Inauguration

Thursday, february 14 2013 at 6:30 pm in the presence of the curator

Opening Hours

Wednesday - Sunday, from 11 am to 6 pm $\,$

Press contacts

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High resolution pictures (300 dpi) are available on request

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THE EXHIBITION



WITH SUPPORTIVE BY GUSTAV METZGER, THE MACLYON RENEWS ITS EXHIBITION'S ACQUISITIONS POLICY DEFINED SINCE ITS OPENING IN 1984.

DESIGNED FOR AND PRODUCED BY THE MUSEUM, THESE MONOGRAPHIC EXHIBITIONS ARE BOTH A PROBLEMATIC AND A UNIQUE MOMENT IN THE ARTIST'S OEUVRE, AS WELL AS BEING GENERIC WORKS*.

DESIGNED IN LONDON FOR THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE MUSEUM, FINALIZED AND ACQUIRED IN 2011, THIS EXHIBITION WILL BE INSTALLED IN 2013.

SUPPORTIVE IS THE MOST MONUMENTAL AUTOCREATIVE WORK EVER MADE BY GUSTAV METZGER.

* A generic work, whether it is monumental or composed of numerous elements, aims to synthesize one particular aspect that is characteristic of the artist's work, in general. The generic work synthesizes all of the artist's previous works which it crystallizes and encapsulates in a new problematic.

Supportive consists of seven 4 x 4 m screens. Designed in a loop, according to a 16-minutes and 27 seconds controlled cycle, the work is in constant evolution, subject to random processes of liquid crystals. It consists of seven simultaneous images, the duration and coincidental genesis of which are impossible to record, just as it is unthinkable to imagine the future.



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© photo Blaise Adilion

The Supportive Exhibition is accompanied by a collection of documents - signed letters, articles, publications and facsimiles which provide an insight into the very particular context of the history of auto-destructive and auto-creative art, since it first appeared in 1959 (Carboard Exhibition). The exhibition also includes the 5 original manifestos (1959 to 1964) gathered and exhibited together for the first time.

From the beginning of his career, while he was still searching for new means to make an art that was adapted to the omnipresence of science and technology in modern society, Gustav Metzger adopted the forms of the manifesto and the conference or "demonstration". His five manifestos: Auto-Destructive Art (4 November 1959), Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art (10 March 1960), Auto-Destructive Art, Machine Art, Auto-creative Art (23 June 1961), Manifesto World (7 october 1962) On Random Activity in Material/Transforming Works of Art, Fifth Manifesto (30 July 1964), are striking examples of the close links between the destructive nature of technology and the creative potential of science and digital media.

Early on in his career, Gustav Metzger stressed the importance of a collaboration between artists, scientists and engineers.

"AUTO-DESTRUCTIVE ART IS ESSENTIALLY A FORM OF PUBLIC ART FOR INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES.

(...)

AUTO-DESTRUCTIVE ART MAY BE CREATED BY NATURAL FORCES, TRADITIONAL ARTISTIC TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGY.

(....)

THE ARTIST MAY COLLABORATE WITH SCIENTISTS, ENGINEERS.

AUTO-DESTRUCTIVE ART MAY BE PRODUCED BY MACHINARY AND ASSEMBLED IN FACTORIES."

Gustav Metzger,

Extracts from Auto-Destructive Art (First Manifesto), 1959



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Curator: Mathieu Copeland

The mac^{LYON} has asked Mathieu Copeland to curate this exhibition. He is also overseeing an anthology of texts by Gustav Metzger that will be published by Presses du Réel in February 2013, as well as *Suite pour exposition(s) et publication(s)*, a proposal for the 6th edition of the Jeu de Paume's Satellite programme (Paris, from 26 February 2013 to 26 January 2014).

Suite pour exposition(s) [Suite for exhibition(s)], plays on the musical connotations of the word "suite", and is designed as a reflection on the fragmentation of the exhibition for a suite of spaces and over the duration of a year.

The first exhibition designed by Mathieu Copeland in this context considers the exhibition of the word and the overall dissemination of a work through the spoken word. Between writing and mental imagery, reading and listening, this exhibition raises questions concerning the uniqueness of reading and the word, the place of the word in the exhibition, the issue of the exhibition and the catalogue – or rather of the exhibition of the catalogue...

In addition to the exhibition, the catalogue presents a series of "spoken retrospectives". Gustav Metzger (whose work is characterized by the motifs of destruction and impermanence) and David Medalla (whose work is concerned with the ephemeral and the impromptu), amongst others, have been invited to recount and record what for them would be an ideal retrospective of their body of work, or indeed of their lives.

AUTO-DESTRUCTIVE, AUTO-CREATIVE ART

Born into a Jewish family of Polish origin and exiled to England in 1939, Gustav Metzger was miraculously spared the death camps, unlike his family. The artist would therefore go on to place the "borderline experience" implemented and experienced in Europe during WWII at the heart of his œuvre, as a symbol of man's ability to self-destruct.

Auto-destructive Art:

Between 1959 and 1961, Gustav Metzger published two manifestos bearing the same title *Auto-Destructive Art* (respectively 4 November 1959 and 10 March 1960), then a third manifesto entitled *Auto-Destructive Art*, *Machine Art*, *Auto-Creative Art* (dated 23 June 1961). His critical thinking and perspective on modernity led him to this extreme limit that he would call "the art of auto-destruction". Like Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Metzger questioned the future of art after the Holocaust, resulting in a reflection on destruction, which he attempted to transform into a positive act: a simultaneous process of auto-destruction and auto-creation.

Metzger initiated the principle of auto-destruction in 1961 in London with the *South Bank Demonstration* when he threw acid onto a series of nylon canvases which self-destructed in approximately 20 minutes. This iconoclastic gesture marked a radical break in western art.

In 1966, Gustav Metzger was one of the main organizers of the Destruction In Art Symposium which brought together in the English capital, Viennese Actionists**, certain Fluxus artists, as well as other artists from different schools and disciplines who all sought to jeopardize the establishment, similar to political protest movements in Chicago and Paris (1968). Similar also to alternative rock or counter-culture, in their attempts to invent other types of social behaviours. In retrospect, the Destruction in Art Symposium may be considered as a very important event for several reasons. Firstly, there is this sense of a multidisciplinary event, bringing together artists, scholars, philosophers and politicians. One of the fundamental characteristics of counter-culture was the search for new languages and means of expression that could be used by artists. Such means of expression did not reflect traditional art practices but instead, took into account a certain number of social, political and scientific elements. Furthermore, there was the notion of an artistic gesture that was not solely defined in terms of materials but in terms of the "event" itself: something happens at a certain time and takes place in time as well as in space.

On an international level, this was also the first time that the Viennese Actionists took part in events outside of Austria. Hermann Nitsch, Otto Muehl, Günter Brus, Peter Weibel and Kurt Kren, all members of the Vienna Institute for Direct Art, were present at the Destruction in Art Symposium. Nitsch's performance, 21st Action, was interrupted by the police; Metzger and John Sharkey appeared before the courts on charges of obscenity. The Zaj group from Spain was also present. So too was the German Wolf Vostell and the American Al Hansen. The tradition of the American "happening" had already taken root in Great Britain following Allan Kaprow's visit several years previously. Indeed, if Yoko Ono settled in London it was because she had been invited to the symposium. This mix of nationalities highlights the extent to which the emerging counter-culture movement was an international one.

After having been a leading figure of the London "underground" in the 1960s and 1970s, Gustav Metzger called for an art strike between 1977 and 1980 in reaction to a commercial trend that considered art to be essentially a consumer product.

He then began a series entitled *Historic Photographs* which consisted in "salvaging" the most striking newspaper headlines dealing with indiscriminate violence, connected to geo-political conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian war or the Oklahoma City bombings. The artist sought to confront the viewer with History and some of its most tragic events. At the beginning of the 2000s, he introduced newspapers as a key element in his works in order to bring the past into the present, particularly when this past is so threatened with obscurity in the face of media opacity and the tenuousness of memory.

In 2003, the artist created 100,000 Newspapers for the Lyon Biennial, an installation made up of thousands of newspapers arranged on ramshackle metal shelving, accompanied by three auto-creative screenings of liquid crystal light shows.



Gustav Metzger, 100 000 Newspapers, 2003 Metal shelves, newspapers Biennale de Lyon 2003 © Photo: Blaise Adiljon

Gustav Metzger's most recent works focus on ecology. Flailing Trees, presented in Manchester in 2009, for example, is a sculptural work consisting of trees standing upside down in a block of concrete.

In 2012, he exhibited a hundred or so drawings at Documenta in Kassel, Germany.

/« AUTO-DESTRUCTIVE ART DEMONSTRATES MAN'S POWER TO ACCELERATE
DISINTEGRATIVE PROCESSES OF NATURE AND TO ORDER THEM. » /

GUSTAV METZGER

** In the 20th century, their approach resulted from a desire to radically question the artistic gesture and to defeat abstract expressionism. With this aim, the Actionists placed reality, even its most tragic aspects, at the heart of their concerns. Their main representatives were Günter Brus, Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch and Rudolf Schwarzkogler.

AUTO-DESTRUCTIVE, AUTO-CREATIVE ART (2)

Auto-creative Art:

If destruction remains a central element of Metzger's work, his *œuvre* cannot be conceived without a consideration of the conditions of its own creative renewal: his *œuvre*, conceived as a generator of new forms, carries in itself its own auto-creation. This is why, from 1961 onwards, in response to the double issue of destruction and regeneration, Metzger developed in a "dialectic" way an auto-creative art based on the technique of liquid crystals. Metzger would take a number of years to fully develop it.

In 1963, during a conference at the *Bartlett Society* of the University of London, Metzger exhibited a first *œuvre* which could be considered simultaneously autodestructive and auto-creative. Nylon stretched over a slide frame was allowed to smoulder as a result of the projection. **He presented his first auto-generative** *œuvre* made from liquid crystals on 8 January 1966 as part of his solo exhibition at Better Books, London.

The crystals, placed between two glass plates inserted into a slide projector were driven by a slow movement. The coloured crystals were in turn heated by the lamp and then cooled down to regenerate images with constantly changing colours and forms, beyond the control of the artist.



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In the 1960s and 1970s, Metzger became a central figure in the "London underground" scene. He produced "psychedelic" film shows for concerts by *Cream* and *The Who*. Pete Townshend, the lead guitarist of *The Who* has often traced his guitar-smashing antics back to the influence of an auto-destructive art conference he attended at the Ealing School of Art. Townshend's actions have of course, added to The Who's legendary image.



It was years later however, at the first retrospective of Metzger's art at the Oxford Museum of Modern Art in 1998 that Gustav Metzger returned to this practice of liquid crystals. The retrospective included five large scale video projections controlled by a computer system Metzger had designed in association with engineers. As before, the liquid crystals reacted to the heat but their evolution, as well as their shapes and colours remained uncontrollable. The exhibited work therefore, encouraged the public to immerse themselves in continuous time in the movement of random images and silent colours.



Gustav Metzger, Auto-Destructive Art, Machine Art, Auto-Creative Art, 23 june 1961

Third manifesto (Manifesto South Bank), London View of the exhibition "Supportive, 1966-2011", mac^{LYON} (february 15" april 14" 2013)

© photo Blaise Adilon

/« Auto-creative art is art of change, growth, Movement. » /

GUSTAV METZGER IN "AUTO-DESTRUCTIVE ART, MACHINE ART, AUTO-CREATIVE ART", THIRD MANIFESTO, 1961

Gustav Metzger, Supportive, 1966-2011 View of the exhibition "Supportive, 1966-2011", mac^{LYON} (february 15th - april 14th 2013) mac^{LYON} collection © photo Blaise Adilon

THE ARTIS

Gustav Metzger was born in 1926 in Nuremberg, Germany. He currently lives and works in London.

PERSONAL EXHIBITIONS:

1959

Cardboards, coffeeshop, Monmouth Street 14, London, GB Three Paintings, coffeeshop, Monmouth Street 14, London, GB

Paintings & Drawings 1945 -1960, Temple Gallery, London, GB

1966

Art of Liquid Crystals, vitrine de la Better Books, Charing Cross Road, London, GB

Liquid Crystals in Art, Lamda Theatre Club,

Swiss Cottage, London, GB

1968

Extremes Touch: Material/Transforming Art, Filtration Laboratory, Department of Chemical Engineering, University College of Swansea, Arts Festival, Swansea, Scotland

1972

Executive Profile, (within The Body as a Medium of Expression), Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, GB Unrealizable Disintegrative Architecture and Other Projects, Architectural Association, London, GB

Faschismus Germany: Darstellung Analyse Bekämpfen, Bern University, Switzerland

Passiv - Explosiv, Hahnentorburg, Köln, Germany

1991

Installation, Department of Architecture, Technical University, Delft, Nederland

Damaged Nature. Two New Works and Documents, workfortheeyetodo, Hanbury Street, London, GB

1997

Gustav Metzger, Kunstraum München, Munich, Germany

Gustav Metzger, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, GB

Gustav Metzger, Spacex Gallery, Exeter, GB Gustav Metzger - Ein Schnitt entlang der Zeit, Kunsthalle Nuremberg, Germany

100,000 Newspapers. A Public-Active Installation, t1+2 artspace, Bedford House, Wheler Street, London, GB

2005

Eichmann and the Angel, Cubitt Gallery, Angel Mews Nr. 8, London, GB

Gustav Metzger. Geschichte Geschichte, retrospective, Generali Foundation, Vienna, Austria

Gustav Metzger, Lunds konsthall, Lund Gustav Metzger - In Memoriam: New Works - Kunsthalle, Basel, Switzerland

2007

Gustav Metzger. Modelle, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster,

Gustav Metzger Works 1995-2007, Zacheta, National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland

Gustav Metzger: Decades 1959-2009, Serpentine Gallery, London, GB

Gustav Metzger - Decenni: 1959 - 2009, Galleria Civica di Arte Contemporanea di Trento, Trente, Italy

Gustav Metzger, Strampelde bäumf / mirror trees, Haus der

Kunst München, Munich, Germany

Gustav Metzger: Décennies 1959-2009, Musée Départemental d'Art Contemporain de Rochechouart, Rochechouart, France

2011

Gustav Metzger: Historic Photographs, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, USA

COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS:

1948

Ben Uri Gallery, London, GB

London Group , Academy Hall, London, GB

East End Academy, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, GB

Drawings and Paintings by the Borough Bottega, Berkeley Galleries, London, GB

Bewogen Beweging, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Nederland; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden

Festival of Misfits, Gallery One, London, GB

1969

Event One, Computer Arts Society, Royal College of Art, London, GB

Computers and Visual Research, Zagreb, Yugoslavia

Kinetics, Arts Council, Hayward Gallery, London, GB

1971

Art Spectrum: London, Alexandra Palace, London, GB

British Thing, Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, Hovikødde, Norge Documenta 5, Kassel, Germany

3 Life Situations, Gallery House, London, GB

Art into Society - Society into Art. Seven German Artists, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, GB

Towards another Picture, Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, GB

Vor dem Abbruch, Kunstmuseum Bern, Berne, Switzerland

1993

The Sixties: Art Scene in London, Barbican Art Gallery, London, GB

Life/Live. La scène artistique au Royaume-Uni en 1996, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France and Belem Cultural Center Lisbon, Portugal

Made New. Barry Flanagan, Tim Mapston, Gustav Metzger, Alfred Jarry, City Racing, London, GB

Out of Actions. Between Performance and the Object, 1949 -1979, Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, USA; Museum für Angewandte Kunst (MAK), Vienna, Austria; Museu d'Art Contemporani (MACBA), Barcelona, Spain et Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan

Speed - Visions of an Accelerated Age, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, GB

Deep Storage: The Arsenal of Memory, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, USA puis Arsenale der Erinnerung - Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, Germany

THE ARTIST (2)

1999

Dream City, a Munich Group Project, Kunstraum München, Munich, Germany

Sublime. The Darkness and the Light. Works from the Arts Council Collection, John Hansard Gallery, Southhampton, GB

2000

Dream MaChinas, Camden Arts Centre, London, GB Live in Your Head. Concept and Experiment in Britain 1965-75, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, GB

Look Out. Art/Society/Politics, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Wolverhampton, GB

Protest and Survive, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, GB

2001

City Racing 1988-1998: A Partial Account, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, GB

2002

Blast to Freeze - Britische Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany St. Petrischnee, Migros Museum, Zurich, Switzerland Strike, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Wolverhampton, GB Iconoclash - Jenseits der Bilderkriege in Wissenschaft, Religion und Kunst, ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, Germany

2003

Adorno. Die Möglichkeit des Unmöglichen, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfort, Germany

C'est arrivé demain, 7^e Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France Dreams and Conflicts – The Dictatorship of the Viewer, 50^e. Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy

Independence, South London Gallery, London, GB Zona People 1974-1985, Florence, Italy; Mamco - musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland

2004

Art and the Sixties - This Was Tomorrow, Tate Britain, London & Birmingham Museum, GB Artists' favourites - act I, ICA, London, GB Signatures of the Invisible, P.S.1, Contemporary Art Center, New York, USA

2005

Summer of Love. Art of the Psychedelic Era, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, GB

Zur Tektonik der Geschichte - Forum Stadtpark, Graz, Austria

2006

Gustav Metzger/Eva Weinmayr, Kunstraum München, Munich, Germany

MERZ - Magazin4 - Bregenzer Kunstverein, Bregenz, Austria

Performa 07 - The Second Biennial of New Visual Art Performance, New York, USA

Skulptur Projekte Münster 07, Münster, Germany SAMMLUNG - Generali Foundation, Vienne, Austria Bit international - [Nove] Tendencije - Neue Galerie Graz - Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria

8th Sharjah Biennial - Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Ruins / Emotional Landscapes - Safn, Reykjavik
For a Special Place: Documents and Works from the Generali
Foundation Collection, Austrian Cultural Forum New York,
New York, USA

The Evil Part 1 & 2: Pop & Politics, Galerie Gebr. Lehmann - Dresde, Germany

2008

Manifesto Marathon, Serpentine Gallery, London, GB Yokohama Triennale 2008, Yokohama, Tokyo, Japan Moralische Fantasien - Künstlerische Strategien in Zusammenhang mit der Klimaerwärmung, Kunstmuseum des Kantons Thurgau, Warth, Austria Experiment Marathon Reykjavik - Listasafn Reykjavikur - Reykjavík Art Museum, Reykjavík, Iceland Old News 4, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, USA Biennale Cuvée - OK Offenes Kulturhaus OÖ, Linz, Austria bit international. [Nove] tendencije | Computer und visuelle Forschung | Zagreb 1961-1973 - ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, Germany Paul McCarthy's Low Life Slow Life: Part 1, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, USA Self-Cancellation - Beaconsfield, GB

2009

Going to Market, Henie Onstad Art Centre, Høvikodden Modernologies, MACBA, Barcelona, Spain Hello Goodbye Thank You, Again - castillo/corrales, Paris, France

On the Tectonics of History, International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP), New York, USA

Moralische Fantasien, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany

Tate Triennial 2009, London, GB

2010

29º Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brasil 8th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, China

XIV Biennale Internazionale di Scultura di Carrara, Carrare, Italy ... avant il n'y avait rien, après on va pouvoir faire mieux, Circuit, Lausanne, Switzerland

Collection, Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich, Switzerland

Une exposition (du) sensible, Centre d'art contemporain la Synagogue de Delme, Delme, France

La revanche de l'archive photographique, Centre de la photographie, Geneva, Switzerland

Klimakapseln. Überlebensbedingungen in der Katastrophe, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Hambourg, Germany I'm Not Here. An Exhibition Without Francis Alÿs, de Appel arts centre, Amsterdam, Nederland

Modernologies - Contemporary Artists Researching Modernity and Modernism, Muzeum Sztuki / Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland

2011

Eyes Looping for a Head to Inhabit, Muzeum Sztuki Lodz, Poland Produced by Migros - Sammlung migros museum für gegenwartskunst, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany Curators' Series #4. Studies for an Exhibition, The David Roberts Art Foundation, London, GB

2012 Documenta (13), Kassel, Germany

Ein Wunsch bleibt immer übrig, Ludwig Museum im Deutschherrenhaus, Coblence, Germany Making History, Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK), Francfort, Germany Plus de Croissance, Un Capitalisme Idéal ..., La Ferme du buisson, Noisiel, France Artandpress - Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany Printed in Norfolk: Coracle Publications 1989-2012, The Gallery at Norwich University , Norwich, GB

VISITOR INFORMATION E G E R

The exhibition

General curator:
Thierry Raspail
Associated curator:
Mathieu Copeland
Head of project:
Hervé Percebois
Production manager:
Thierry Prat
Exhibition assistant:
Marilou Laneuville
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Gaëlle Philippe, Xavier Jullien

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Opening Hours

Wednesay - Sunday, from 11 am to 6 pm

<u>Access</u>

By car:

- Along "Quai Charles de Gaulle," Lyon Parc Auto - Carparks PO et P2, special rate for museum visitors: 40 minutes free of charge

By bus, stop Musée d'art contemporain:

- Line C1, Gare Part-Dieu/Cuire
- Line C4 Jean Macé/Cité internationale change with metro Foch line A or metro Saxe-Gambetta lines B et D
- Line C5, Bellecour -Terreaux/Rillieux-Vancia

Bv bike:

- Several Velo'V stations are loc ated around the Museum.

Admission

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