

MoMA PRESENTS *GEOMETRY OF MOTION 1920S/1970S*, AN EXHIBITION THAT EXPLORES THE CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE THROUGH 14 WORKS

Exhibition Complements the Upcoming Survey *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson*, on View at MoMA and P.S.1 from April 20 through June 20, 2008

Geometry of Motion 1920s/1970s

Yoshiko and Akio Morita Media Gallery, second floor

March 19–June 23, 2008

NEW YORK, March 19, 2008—The Museum of Modern Art presents *Geometry of Motion 1920s/1970s*, taking cinematic experience as its point of departure, and using 14 works that trace the transformation of the art object from static image to fluid light projection within two artistic lineages: the unconventional optical techniques of the 1920s *Neue Optik*, or “New Vision,” generation of artists, among them El Lissitzky, László Moholy-Nagy, Hans Richter, and Marcel Duchamp; and the situational aesthetics advanced by Robert Irwin, Gordon Matta-Clark, Robert Smithson, and Anthony McCall in the 1970s. All of these artists have explored new perceptual propositions for the geometry of motion, conveying indelible filmic events. The phrase “geometry of motion” in the exhibition’s title derives from the literal meaning of the French word *cinématique*. The exhibition is organized by Klaus Biesenbach, Chief Curator, Department of Media, and Roxana Marcoci, Curator, Department of Photography, and is on view in the second-floor Yoshiko and Akio Morita Media Gallery from March 19 through June 23, 2008.

Geometry of Motion 1920s/1970s brings together light- and movement-capturing experiments that draw attention to the conditions and complexities of perception, both within the framework of institutional display and in outside surroundings. It also complements the survey exhibition *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson*, which opens on April 20, 2008, at MoMA and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, by offering context to Eliasson’s protocinematic experiments with mechanisms of motion, projection, shadow, and reflection.

From 1919 to 1923, Lissitzky developed his *Prouns*, paintings and works on paper of translucent and opaque abstract planes, some of which were intended to be rotated or hung in any direction, and which evolved into fully three-dimensional installations. A few years later, Moholy-Nagy conceived *Light Prop for an Electric Stage (Light-Space Modulator)*, a mobile light mechanism that materialized its creator’s goal of “painting with light” into space. Also in the 1920s, Richter translated geometrical shapes into pure cinematic sensation. His pioneering abstract films, exemplified in the exhibition by the four-minute film *Filmstudie* (1926), codified a visual syntax based on rhythmical patterns of light and motion. Richter’s interest in experimental cinema was related to Duchamp’s abstract optical tests with rotary discs and afterimages that in

1926 resulted in *Anémic Cinema* (also on view at MoMA), a film alternating shots of rotating spirals with discs inscribed with erotic puns.

During the 1970s, a new generation of artists built on the earlier artistic experiments with light to tap into sensory perception. This is the case with Matta-Clark's anarchitectural projects that carved unexpected, vertiginous apertures of light into abandoned buildings, and with Irwin's light installations that heightened spatial perception. Concurrently, Smithson explored the idea of experiencing art as itinerant and filmic in his monumental *Spiral Jetty*, orchestrated in 1970 at the Great Salt Lake in Utah. The exhibition includes Smithson's film of the completed sculpture taken from a helicopter, capturing the moment when the sun's reflection hit the water at the exact center of the spiral. Looking directly into the sun is not unlike turning away from the screen in a movie theater to look into the film projector's beam. McCall draws upon this accidental occurrence, fusing the properties of film and sculpture in his slide projection *Miniature in Black and White* (1972), a precursor of his solid light films.

RELATED PROGRAM:

Proto-Cinema: Contemporary Art and the Geometry of Motion

Tuesday, April 22, 6:30 p.m.

The Celeste Bartos Theater, 4 West 54th Street

From Andy Warhol's conceptual use of filmmaking in *Empire* to Olafur Eliasson's incorporation of cinematic effects in his environments and installations, the mechanics of the projected and perceived image have played a significant role in the art of recent decades. This program, organized in conjunction with the exhibition *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson*, explores how contemporary artists address the interstice between film and photography by deconstructing these mediums. Participants include Kerry Brougher, Acting Director and Chief Curator, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.; Chrissie Iles, Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Curator, Whitney Museum of American Art; and Anthony McCall, artist. Moderated by Klaus Biesenbach and Roxana Marcoci.

Tickets (\$10; members \$8; students, seniors, and staff of other museums \$5) can be purchased at the lobby information desk, the film desk, or online at www.moma.org/thinkmodern.

No. 33

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www.moma.org/press.

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art 11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019

Hours: Wednesday - Monday: 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m.

Museum Admission: \$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs)

Target Free Friday Nights 4:00–8:00 p.m.

Subway: E or V train to Fifth Avenue/53rd Street

Bus: On Fifth Avenue, take the M1, M2, M3, M4, or M5 to 53rd Street. On Sixth Avenue, take the M5, M6, or M7 to 53rd Street. Or take the M57 and M50 crosstown buses on 57th and 50th Streets.

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