

The Responsive Eye, an exhibition of more than 125 paintings and constructions by about 75 artists from some ten countries, documenting a widespread and powerful new direction in contemporary art, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from February 25 through April 25, 1965. Directed by William C. Seitz, the exhibition was announced in 1962 and has been in preparation for more than a year. An illustrated catalog will be published in February, followed later in 1965 by a book on the subject and its historical development.

After the New York showing, the exhibition will travel to St. Louis, Seattle, Pasadena and Baltimore.

The Responsive Eye exhibition will bring together paintings and constructions that initiate a new, highly perceptual phase in the grammar of art. Using only lines, bands and patterns, flat areas of color, white, gray or black, or cleanly cut wood, glass, metal and plastic, certain of these artists establish a totally new relationship between the observer and a work of art.

William Seitz, commenting on the exhibition, says: "Unlike most previous abstract painting, these works exist less as objects to be examined than as generators of perceptual responses, of colors and relationships existing solely in vision; of forms, presences and variations often entirely different from the static stimuli by the artist. Such subjective experiences, brought about by simultaneous contrast, afterimages, illusions and other optical devices are entirely real to the eye, although each observer will respond to them somewhat differently.

"The responses are by no means merely retinal, and they vary widely from optical tensions and fusions of color or tone to sonorous interactions between hues of the spectrum, retroactive effects of flatness, advance and recession, and arrangements of shapes, lines and patterns that exert a control over perception capable of arousing delight, anxiety and even vertigo."

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The exhibition will be limited to works that represent its theme most purely. Figuration, free form, gestural brushstrokes and thick impasto, which muffle and weaken the function of colors and shapes, are excluded.

Every relevant tendency within the theme of the exhibition is represented, including those which have been categorized as "Optical," "Retinal," or "Cool" art, "Hard Edge Painting," "Visual Research," "The New Abstraction," "La Nouvelle Tendance," "Post Painterly Abstraction," "Color Imagery" and "Programmatic Art." As was the case during the fifteenth century, when artists employed the new method of linear perspective, the means used in these works have reverberations beyond the field of art. They incorporate laws of vision under study by scientists since the time of Helmholtz, Hering and Chevreul, which have been occasionally employed by artists since the time of Monet, Cézanne and Seurat. The recent appeal of this art represents a peak in the history of color theory; it utilizes visual demonstrations of experimental psychology and optics (among them the dynamic effects of ambiguous perspective and moiré pattern); it transfers experiments begun in design schools and laboratories to the fine arts; it offers a new and rich source of study to scientists in several fields.

"Nevertheless, it should be emphasized," Seitz continues, "that these are the creations of artists, not the research of scientists or technicians. Certain of the painters and constructors to be shown proceed as coldly and programmatically as computers. Others are poetic, musical or mystical in spirit, and these two extremes sometimes exist together. Yet none of them follows systems or rules: rather, they discover inherent laws through creative experience."

Among the artists to be shown are: Agam, Albers, Anuskiewicz, Brach, Castellani, Gene Davis, Dorazio, Gerstner, Goodyear, Irwin, Kelly, Lohse, Louis, Mack, Martin, Mavignier, Molinari, Noland, Riley, Soto, Stanczak, Stella, Stroud, Tadasky, Tomasello, Vasarely, Wilding and Yvaral; the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (France), Gruppo "T" and Gruppo "N" (Italy), Equipo 57 (Spain) and "Zero" (Germany) also will be represented.

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