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The Marli Hoppe-Ritter Collection

Homage to the Square – the title of Josef Albers's celebrated series of paintings – could be taken to describe the Marli Hoppe-Ritter Collection. Marli Hoppe-Ritter, founder of Museum Ritter and co-owner of the Ritter Sport company, has collected art based on the square ever since the early 1990s. By now, around 1,500 works exemplifying 20th and 21st century geometric abstraction have been amassed to build collection with a unique profile.

What at first glance looks like a successful marketing coup for the famous square chocolate bar proves to have a stringent art history concept: the history and development of constructive-concrete art from its beginnings to the present, as exemplified by the geometrical figure.

At the dawn of the 20th century, the square was made famous as a subject for art by the Russian Suprematist Kazimir Malevich, who saw it as a symbol of a creative new beginning beyond materiality and fixed purpose. A small Malevich drawing from 1915 forms a cornerstone as it were of the Marli Hoppe-Ritter Collection, which has been followed by further works of early Modernism, including the Constructivists Alexander Rodchenko and El Lissitzky, the De Stijl artist Theo van Doesburg, and the Bauhaus protagonists Andor Weininger and Josef Albers.

Other approaches have been brought together that also focus on the square: the works of the Zurich Concretists Max Bill, Camille Graeser, Verena Loewensberg and Richard Paul Lohse, whose legacy has been taken up by the Italian Arte Programmata with Grazia Varisco and Alberto Biasi, Op Art by Victor Vasarely and the ZERO group with Heinz Mack and Günther Uecker, accompanied by further variations by among others Rita Ernst, Hans Jörg Glattfelder, Dóra Maurer, Vera Molnár, and Esther Stocker.

The holdings now also include numerous works that have scarcely anything to do with the clear beauty of constructive logic or analytical Colour Field Painting. Younger artists have shattered the mathematical perfection of the square to create vital and exciting works based on imperfect structures, distortions and deformations. Enrico Bach, Tamás Kaszás, Imi Knoebel, Karsten Konrad, Jim Lambie and Beat Zoderer counter straight-laced seriousness with the elements of chance, planned disorder, and painterly surface texture.

Last but not least, the collection also includes objects from the fields of Light Art and Kinetics. Brigitte Kowanz, Germaine Kruip, François Morellet, Miriam Prantl and Regine Schumann literally bring movement and light into the exhibition space with their art.

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