

Not a Day without a Line. Works from the Marli Hoppe-Ritter Collection
7 November 2021 to 24 April 2022

A first draft, a small sketch, a jotted-down thought: the line is regarded as the origin of every artistic idea, captured in pen or pencil drawing on a sheet of paper. But a look at the line itself shows that this simple, one-dimensional graphic element opens up an unexpectedly complex panorama of aesthetic forms, well beyond the classic drawing. This is the reason behind this presentation showcasing works from the Marli Hoppe-Ritter Collection.

Reflections on the nature of the line as an autonomous visual medium began with the onset of abstraction. Paul Klee, who subscribed to the motto "Not a day without a line" (Pliny the Elder), understood the line as the direct trace of a point set in motion, and compared the genesis of a drawing to a walk through the world of nature. Similarly, the line also became a central design element for the representatives of the Constructivist avant-garde. Unlike Klee, artists such as Alexander Rodchenko adopted a scientific, technical stance and established the mathematically exact line not only on the picture plane, but also in object constructions that transfixed space.

These contrasting approaches still continue to inspire a diversity of takes on the line, not least because this simple structure opens up a range of aesthetic play that extends from the expression in an artist's subjective signature to the highest mathematical precision. Further, the line performs a large number of functions: It delimits and outlines, it records and charts the temporal dimension, it divides up a structure or defines a field, and last but not least, it can create spatio-dynamic effects.

Different aspects of the line can be found while walking round the exhibition at Museum Ritter, which presents works by over 50 artists. On display, for instance, are construction lines and linear grids, dimension lines and articulated surfaces, typefaces and lines of motion, as well as drawings in space. That the line frequency departs from the normal expectations placed on drawing and leaves the conventional pictorial rectangle can be seen in a series of sculptures, objects and installations. In an embroidered thread, a silhouette, a fluorescent tube or a sinuous metal rod, the line manifests as a tactile element that penetrates the concrete space of the viewer. Finally, with artists such as Serena Amrein, Leo Erb, Katharina Hinsberg and Vera Molnar, the show also presents a number of contemporary approaches that have taken the line as their medium for reflection and experimentation.

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