

Walter Giers. Just do it!

19 October 2025 to 19 April 2026

Walter Giers (1937–2016) is acclaimed as one of the pioneers of electronic art. With his interactive play objects and ingenious sound and light works, he followed in the tradition of constructivism, kinetic art, and light art.

Yet Walter Giers was a self-taught artist. In 1959, the trained metal engraver and versatile jazz musician moved to Schwäbisch Gmünd, where he initially worked as an industrial designer. Driven by his enthusiasm for aesthetic, acoustic, and technological questions, in the late 1960s he took electronic components to create his first purpose-free works, which he described as “nonsense designs” or “play objects.” The use of random generators from 1973 onwards became a turning point for him: from then on his objects developed a life of their own and could enter into a complex mutual relationship with the audience.

With over 40 exhibits spanning four decades, this overview exhibition gives a fascinating insight into the many facets of an oeuvre that embraces numerous media and moves nimbly between art, design, music, and technology. This interdisciplinary approach is reflected in the way the loudspeakers, resistors, and strip conductors are clearly visible in many of his objects, so that they not only fulfil an electronic function, but also always act as design elements. Beyond such aesthetic and technical matters, Walter Giers was also interested in a wide range of topics, as can be seen from the complexes of works in the exhibition: interactive play, natural phenomena and environmental destruction, luminokinetics and perceptual phenomena, the different modes of interpersonal communication, and dada sound poetry.

Walter Giers’s pictorial objects, sculptures, and installations appeal directly to our senses of sight, hearing, and touch. On encountering his works we feel surprised, amused, relaxed, or sometimes even baffled or emotionally overwhelmed. So *Just do it!* is Walter Giers’s invitation to the audience to abandon its passive role and interact with the objects. The slogan also expresses the self-image of an artist who developed his “playful communication tools” less through inspiration than by tinkering, trial and error, and experimentation.

Brilliant Works. Light Art from the Marli Hoppe-Ritter Collection

To mark its 20th anniversary, the Museum Ritter is presenting a choice selection of light works from the Marli Hoppe-Ritter Collection on the ground floor. Around 20 pieces from the early 1960s to the present day captivate through their enthralling sensuality and intriguing visual effects. They represent the ongoing interest artists show in the creative potential of light –because light is not only a medium but also a metaphor for seeing and understanding. It makes things visible and draws our gaze into the artwork, while simultaneously extending out into the surrounding space with its brilliance.

Art with and from light has developed into a focus in the collection over recent years. The Museum's depot contains numerous historical examples of post-war light art, which reached its first peak in Europe around 1960 with movements such as ZERO in Düsseldorf, GRAV in France, and Arte Programmata in Italy. Winged by a spirit of new departure, progressive artists at that time increasingly harnessed the specific properties of light through their creativity. By combining fluorescent tubes or lightbulbs with electric motors and industrially manufactured materials such as lenses, aluminium, corrugated glass or Plexiglas, they arrived at astonishing visual effects.

Nor has artistic interest in light waned since that time. While some contemporary artists feature opulent plays of vibrant colours and create emotionally charged works that fill the atmosphere of the space with radiance, others prefer the cool sensuality of white or bluish neon light. Some works fascinate with their changing hues or sophisticated illusions of depth, which are skilfully created by redirecting the light and combining it with reflectors or one-way mirrors. Also among the exhibits are some that do not require their own light source. These are made, for instance, of fluorescent acrylic glass that produce a magical glow under the influence of the light outside. It is above all these auratic qualities that make light a constantly fascinating material for art.

Your contact at MUSEUM RITTER _____

Milena Franziska Schäufele
Press and Public Relations

+49 (0)7157.53511-30
schaeufele@museum-ritter.de