



Press Release / Pressemitteilung

Adolf Luther / Julio Le Parc HLHE DIALOGUE: Interactive Spatial Experiences

Haus Lange Haus Esters, Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld | May 15 – September 25, 2022

In an exhibition dialogue between Haus Lange and Haus Esters, two visionary positions of kinetic art of the 1960s from two continents meet under the leitmotif *Interactive Spatial Experiences*. With Adolf Luther, a native of Krefeld, and the French Argentine artist Julio Le Parc, the art of geometric abstraction in space is presented as an international phenomenon—German art history is complemented by its French counterpart. The focus of both exhibitions is the novel involvement of the visitors. Both artists succeed in breaking down the boundaries between art and viewers by calling for active participation and making subjective perception a significant component of their works. The socio-political dimension of their artistic work is also highlighted.

In 1961, the immaterial center of an exhibition at Haus Lange was an empty, white room. In his legendary last show before his early death, Yves Klein “painted” with fire and created a small, pure white space. The visitors immersed themselves in *Le Vide* (The Void)—among them the Krefeld-based artist Adolf Luther. For a long time, he had already been searching for an artistic method of visualizing reality. Shortly thereafter, he also found it in the immaterial: the appearance of light. At the same time, the Argentine-born artist Julio Le Parc was conducting artistic experiments in order to distance himself from the static image as an entity vis-à-vis the viewer—he found a way to do this in the medium of light. From different contexts and directions, both artists came to the same medium and created works that question traditional conventions of art.

The starting point of the dual exhibitions is a new look at the groundbreaking work of Adolf Luther (1912 – 1990, Krefeld), an artistic autodidact (he was a judge by profession), in his hometown of Krefeld and in the villas designed by Mies van der Rohe that were so important to him. With his work in the field of kinetic, installation-based art, Julio Le Parc (b. 1928, Mendoza, Argentina, lives in Paris), who has played a pioneering role in the renewal of geometric abstraction since the 1960s, is one of the most important artists in France and had already exhibited in the Rhineland early in his career.

Kunstmuseen Krefeld

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Katia Baudin, Director of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld and curator of the dual exhibitions, emphasizes: “Through the interactive exhibitions of Luther and Le Parc, the former private villas Haus Lange and Haus Esters will once again become lively places of encounter. The artworks also raise highly topical issues, such as the spectacle, art and democracy, subjectivity and perception, and even virtual space.” The Kunstmuseen Krefeld are extremely grateful for the funding by the Sparkassen-Kulturstiftung Krefeld, the Sparkassen-Kulturstiftung Rheinland, the Rudolf Augstein Stiftung, and the French and Argentine Embassy.

Public Program

Both exhibitions will be accompanied by an extensive public program which, in addition to classic educational offerings, will focus on participatory, interdisciplinary, and transcultural elements: from guided tours with specialists from the fields of physics, electrical engineering, and computer science to a Franco-German dialogue with Krefeld’s partner city, Dunkirk, the initiation of a youth project under the motto “Open Space” and much more.

Exhibition Guide

A detailed accompanying booklet will be provided.

Catalogue

On the occasion of the two exhibitions, catalogues will be published in German and English.

Curator, Adolf Luther / Julio Le Parc

Katia Baudin, Director, Kunstmuseen Krefeld

Co-Curator, Adolf Luther

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Art Education

Thomas Janzen, Kunstmuseen Krefeld



Adolf Luther

Interactive Spatial Experiences

Haus Esters, Krefeld | May 15 – September 25, 2022

With a solo exhibition in Haus Esters, the Kunstmuseen Krefeld take a new look at the radicality and current relevance of the art of Adolf Luther (1912 – 1990, Krefeld). In many places in Krefeld, Luther shaped public space with his art, such as with the glass lenses on the Ostwall. His fame is both national and international thanks to large architectural interventions such as the spherical concave mirror ceiling for the Federal Chancellery in Bonn and installations such as that in the garden of the Städel Museum in Frankfurt am Main.

Making the Reality of Light Tangible

Adolf Luther sought to make concrete light, with its physical and scientific properties, visible. For him, the reality of light was a counter-world to human reality. The artist, a contemporary of ZERO, created a singular oeuvre of objects, installations, integrations in architectures, and urban models made of mirrors, acrylic lenses—and light. For the year 2000, he planned to illuminate the dark side of the moon with a mirror. Luther's artistic work paved the way for leading contemporary artists like Angela Bulloch, Olafur Eliasson, Alicja Kwade, and Tomás Saraceno. They share Luther's will to combine natural science with aesthetic perception in order to make the "abstract" essence of reality perceptible to the senses.

Instruments for Perception: Reflections of the Viewers in Their Environment

The exhibition emphasizes how the Krefeld-based artist created immersive spaces with his objects and architectural integrations, which place the human being at the center. The material presence of his mirror and glass objects is less important to him than the light they capture and reflect as "instruments for perception". With his radical work *Flaschenschlagen* (Bottle Smashing), which is on view at the KWM, the focus is on the active participation of visitors and the work-in-progress nature of the installation. The public is invited to throw glass bottles at a wall—what remains is a shimmering pile of shards that grows over the course of the exhibition. Luther's reflective works also directly involve the viewer. In each lens, each mirror, their individual, fleeting reality is revealed; at the same time, through the reflection, they become an essential part of the artworks themselves. For Luther—in reference to modernist ideals such as those propagated by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe—glass stands for democratic transparency. In the interaction of the viewer with light, an emancipatory ideal of art is realized. For Luther, life is an "experiment with all kinds of risks"—his art is thus also a series of open experiments that have lost none of their relevance.



Bringing Luther's Art to Life as Interactive Spatial Art in Krefeld

The Kunstmuseen Krefeld, in collaboration with the Adolf Luther Foundation, focus on Luther's notion of a kinetic Gesamtkunstwerk. "The exhibition allows for a new perspective on the artist, in which the architecture of Haus Esters plays a crucial role. In interaction with the light-flooded, flowing spaces of Haus Esters, Luther's works act as catalysts for self-perception and allow visitors to actively participate in the exhibition", emphasizes Katia Baudin, Director of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld and co-curator of the exhibition. Many of Luther's objects can be used and activated. Viewers can, for example, influence the process of light. In a very atmospheric handling of the space, an interactive experience of art is thus created.



Julio Le Parc Interactive Spatial Experiences

Haus Lange, Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld | May 15 – September 25, 2022

With his first major institutional solo exhibition in Germany since 1972, the Kunstmuseen Krefeld rediscover the work of Julio Le Parc (b. 1928, Mendoza, Argentina, lives in Paris), co-founder of the artist group GRAV. Whether paintings, games, or kinetic light sculptures—at the core of Julio Le Parc's artistic interest is always the human as a perceiving and social being. The exhibition follows Le Parc's oeuvre from the 1960s to recent light and virtual reality works, focusing on how his art demands the active participation of the viewer and thus dissolves the boundaries between artwork and viewer. Katia Baudin, Director of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld and curator of the exhibition, emphasizes: "Julio Le Parc's radical approaches are still highly relevant. They take a fresh look at the legacy of the South American and European avant-garde and redefine the role of art in society."

Rediscovery of an Important Pioneer of Light Art

Le Parc came to Paris in 1958 as an art student on a scholarship— The 93 year old artist continues to work there today. He has left a lasting mark in the art world. In 1960, together with François Morellet and other protagonists, he founded the artist group *Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel* (GRAV). Le Parc's early work was informed by Victor Vasarely, South American geometric abstract art, and op art. In 1966, he won the Gran Premi for Painting at the 33rd Venice Biennale. His best-known artworks today alter and dynamize space, are living reliefs and immersive installations. They incorporate simple methods as well as new technologies. In recent years, his groundbreaking oeuvre has been rediscovered through important exhibitions at the Serpentine Gallery, London (2014), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2013), and the Met Breuer, New York (2018), which highlighted his relevance for today's generation and art practice.

From Art on the Street, Ball Games, and Labyrinths to Light Spaces

The exhibition at Haus Lange and the KWM has been created in close collaboration with the artist and his studio. It traces an arc from the radical earlier works with GRAV to his poetic works with light. It becomes clear how Le Parc is constantly working to create new relationships between the artworks and the viewers, making them active participants in a dynamic experience. In Haus Lange, an interactive exhibition layout presents the various aspects of participation in Le Parc's works. The spaces will be transformed into a labyrinthine experience full of surprises with kinetic objects, games, questionnaires, and spaces created since the 1960s. Since the 1960s, Le Parc has experimented with mobiles, reflected light, mirrors, and geometric installations—generally forms that capture movement and chance. Works such as the games and questionnaires evoke the atmosphere of arcades and amusement parks, encouraging chance interactions between people. The playful works often have a socio-political dimension, questioning the role of art and the art system in general.



The exhibition continues at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum with an immersive presentation of the large-scale paintings and expansive light installations for which the artist has gained international recognition. The other rooms on the second floor situate Le Parc's and Luther's artistic investigations within the context of the permanent collection. Visitors can discover further artistic explorations of kinetics and op art, geometric abstraction, light, movement, and the involvement of the viewer in works by predecessors, contemporaries, and younger positions.

Art without Barriers—Le Parc's Political Motivation

Le Parc paved the way for the "Esthétique relationnelle" (Nicolas Bourriaud) of the 1990s and artists such as Tobias Rehberger, Andrea Zittel, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, who create everyday situations in the museum, question the role of the artist and the identity of the white cube, and actively involve the viewers.

Le Parc's innovation and political aspirations are reflected in the interactivity and experimental nature of his art. As an advocate of human rights and a Marxist, he fought against dictatorship in Latin America with numerous anti-fascist projects. His works combine his ideas of political participation with aesthetic experience. He formulated his radical approaches in numerous texts and manifestos. "In general, with my experiments, I have tried to provoke a different behavior in the viewers [...] to fight passivity, dependency, and ideological conditioning by developing skills of reflection, comparison, analysis, creation, and action", explains Le Parc. The artwork becomes demystified and accessible to all as an experiment. It aims to liberate the viewer and, through participation, triggers a positive experience of art in a climate of communication and interaction. Le Parc's ambitious and multifaceted exhibition in Krefeld now allows visitors to share in his generous vision of art.

KUNSTMUSEEN KREFELD

The Kunstmuseen Krefeld would like to thank all funders, sponsors and partners for their generous support:



Cultural partner



Visit

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum

Joseph-Beuys-Platz 1
47798 Krefeld
Tue–Thur, Sun 11:00 am – 5:00 pm
Fri–Sat 11:00 am – 6:00 pm

Haus Lange Haus Esters

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Fri–Sat 11:00 am – 6:00 pm

For special opening hours on holidays
see: www.kunstmuseenkrefeld.de

Kunstmuseen Krefeld is a cultural institution
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