

Daimler Art Collection

Minimalism Germany 1960s
Daimler Contemporary, Berlin
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Minimalism Germany 1960s
Attempt at defining a location

This exhibition Minimalism Germany 1960s shows important trends in 1960s abstract art in Germany from the Daimler Art Collection: Constructivism, Zero, Minimal Art, Concept und Seriality. Starting from predecessors in the 1950s – such as Josef Albers, Norbert Kricke, Herbert Zangs, Siegfried Cremer – the show looks at developments in abstract art in the cities of Frankfurt, Düsseldorf and Krefeld, Stuttgart, Berlin, Munich and also considers neighboring Swiss approaches.

We are presenting about 60 works by 28 artists from the period 1954 to 1974. One of the key areas of the Daimler Art Collection, founded in 1977, is 20th century abstract art, from the Stuttgart circle around Adolf Hölzel in 1910 via Bauhaus, Constructivism, Concrete Art, Minimalism, conceptual tendencies, Neo Geo to the most recent contemporary art. Groups of works by German artists have been acquired on this basis over the last ten years, representing pioneering abstract trends in the 1950s and 1960s.

Given the acute discontinuity brought about by restorative art policies in Nazi Germany, a young generation of artists in post-war Germany had to seek reconnection with the abstract avant-gardes of the 1910s to the 1930s. At the same time a formal language had to be developed to reflect what had been achieved artistically on to the current cultural and political scene, and to look for successive responses to trends in American art as they emerged. The first major bridges to abstraction were the approaches made in the theoretical

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writings of Willi Baumeister ('Das Unbekannte in der Kunst', 1947) and Paul Klee (his writings on formal and creative theory were published in 1956 as 'Das bildnerische Denken'), and also the reappraisal conducted from the early 1950s onwards of the German Bauhaus tradition.

In the early 1960s in Germany, a new kind of Minimalism developed that was initially largely independent from the developments in America at the time. This German Minimalism was in many cases stimulated by, but also in conflict with, Concrete Art and the European Zero avantgarde, which drew attention to itself from 1957 on, starting in Düsseldorf, Milano or Paris with unusually staged exhibitions and spectacular projects for public space. The steles, cubes, and picture objects produced by the Zero artists, which lay in the space or stood in front of the wall, represent a significant new step for German art in terms of quality around 1959/60.

The following 'chronology' represents a provisional and personal view of developments of reduced and minimalist tendencies in Germany after 1950, and is largely based on artists in our exhibition; hence little attention is paid to artists including Eva Hesse, Blinky Palermo, Imi Knoebel, Reiner Ruthenbek, who fit in with this context, as none of their early works feature in the Daimler Art Collection. The German context is complemented by key European positions and important exhibitions that have formulated essential prerequisites for developing a 'German' Minimalism, or have provided a shape and a program system for this.

Chronology 1950-1968. Constructive, Zero, Minimal in Germany

1950 Josef Albers, 62 years old, having emigrated to the USA when the Bauhaus closes in 1933, professor at Yale University, New Haven Connecticut, conceives the picture series 'Homage to the Square'. He becomes the most important teacher in the USA for many Pop and Minimal artists.

Norbert Kricke, 28 years old, starts to practice radical minimalism in terms of sculptural material in his Düsseldorf studio when working on his Raumplastiken, consisting of thin steel bars forming three-dimensional lines running vertically, diagonally or horizontally.

Erwin Heerich, 28 years old, and Joseph Beuys, 29, work together until 1954 in Ewald Mataré's master class studio at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.

Max Bill works with Inge Aicher-Scholl and Otl Aicher on the concept for financing and structuring of the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm.

The first examples of Concrete Poetry are written, in 1953 Öyvind Fahlström publishes the "Concrete Poetry Manifesto" in Sweden. Eugen Gomringer popularizes the term in Germany and Switzerland in the same year.

Max Bense comes to Stuttgart from Jena, where he takes up a post as reader in philosophy

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and scientific theory at the Technische Hochschule. In 1949 the second volume of Benses "Konturen" is published, subtitled "Mathematics in Art". Here Bense develops his view of style as generalized form, addressing mathematical formal principles in art history in particular. He says that "mathematical spirit of poetry and literature" makes its presence felt in all literary principles, but most obviously in metre and rhythm.

Ottomar Domnick, a neurologist in Stuttgart und Nürtingen, art collector, author and curator, makes his first film 'Neue Kunst - Neues Sehen' (New Art, New Seeing), a ten-minute structural analysis of the genesis and phenomenological basis of abstract art. The film is shown in 1951 as part of the International Art Exhibition in Paris.

Karl-Heinz Stockhausen, a student at the Musikhochschule in Cologne, starts work on serial or "punktuell" music under the influence of Olivier Messian.

Sepp Ruff, professor of architecture in Nuremberg and a friend of Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, develops a building style that is new for post-war Germany: minimized construction, transparent walls and light roof structures characterize his Bauhaus-influenced style.

1951 Herbert Zangs, 27 years old, moves into his studio in the Künstlerhaus in Sittarder Straße in Düsseldorf, where he creates his first abstract works. From 1952 develops the first 'Ver-Weißungen' (En-Whitenments) of structures and everyday objects, along with his first collages and objects.

1952 In a working phase lasting from 1952-54 Kricke uses primary colors - white, black, a strong blue, white or red - to accelerate or slow down the speed at which his linear sculptures moved.

1953 Mathias Goeritz, 38 years old, realizes the 'El Eco' house in Mexico City.

Foundation of the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm, abbreviation HfG Ulm, it existed until 1968. It is considered to be the most important design college of the period after the Bauhaus.

Josef Albers visits Germany after twenty years to teach at the HfG Ulm.

1954 Karl Gerstner, 24 years old, works on his Aperspektiven picture concept in Switzerland: this was an attempt to present areas in an image that are limited but at the same time infinite, in the spirit of Einstein.

1955 Charlotte Posenenske, 25 years old, stops working as a stage designer and links back to her student work under Willi Baumeister with abstractions à la Mondrian based on impressions of nature.

Georg Karl Pfahler, 29 years old, completes his studies under Willi Baumeister in Stuttgart and addresses color-form compositions, travels around Europe and gets to know American color field painting through Lawrence Alloway in London.

July: documenta I opens in Kassel.

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1957 Erwin Heerich starts working on his cardboard sculptures, drawings and graphics based on isometric laws.

F.E. Walther, 18 years old, works on his Wortbilder at the Werkkunstschule in Offenbach.

Mathias Goeritz, who was born in Germany and educated at the Bauhaus, works with the architect Luis Barragán to build the Torres de Satélite, a large minimalistic sculpture in the middle of a main road in Mexico City.

Gottfried Honegger, 50 years old, decides during a three-year stay in New York to continue developing his creative oeuvre alongside his work as a graphic artist. Gruppe Zero founded by Heinz Mack and Otto Piene with the '1st Evening Exhibition' in Piene's Düsseldorf studio.

First German solo exhibition by Yves Klein in the Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf, with eleven monochromes, identical in terms of size and color, but offered at different prices.

1958 Heinz Mack, 27 years old, develops light reliefs in corrugated aluminum and first kinetic reliefs which the Rotoren were then based on in 1959. First light cubes and light steles.

Starts work on the Sahara Project.

Siegfried Cremer, 30 years old, by profession a restorer at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum Krefeld, creates his first Weisse Bilder (White Pictures) and Statische Reliefs (Static Reliefs), whose surface components are gradually eliminated until the picture surface becomes part of the picture space.

Five issues of the magazine 'nota' appear in Munich, edited by Gerhard von Graevenitz, 25 years old, and Jürgen Morschel, and in 1960/61 it is also the name of the gallery.

Norbert Kricke wins the Graham Foundation Prize in Chicago, which produces numerous commissions for public sculptures in the USA.

Opening of the 'constructive malerei' exhibition in Paris with works by Joachim Albrecht, 45 years old, Max H. Mahlmann, Gudrun Piper et al., the show features in Hamburg and Wiesbaden in 1959.

Yves Klein is commissioned, through Werner Ruhnau, to paint four large murals in the foyer of the Gelsenkirchen theater. Jean Tinguely creates two large kinetic reliefs 1.35 x 4 Meter in size for the Gelsenkirchen foyer.

1959 From 1959, Graevenitz develops white structure pictures with positive-negative forms, dynamic progressions and kinetic objects.

Pfahler starts on his series of 'Formativ' pictures with clearly differentiated color forms.

Hartmut Böhm, 21 years old, conceives his first systematic white relief as a pupil of Arnold Bode in Kassel.

March : opening of the 'Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision' exhibition in Antwerp at the Hessenhuis, the first joint presentation of different European avant-garde tendencies (optical art, kinetics, mono chrome painting, Nouveau Réalisme).

Piero Manzoni creates his first 'Linien', sealed in lettered containers.

July: documenta II opens in Kassel.

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Henri Chopin works on the first recordings of his 'audio-poèmes'. La Monte Young takes part in a Stockhausen seminar in Darmstadt, meets David Tudor. In Stuttgart an 'Experimentelle Poesie' group forms around Max Bense, with Franz Mon and Helmut Heissenbüttel.

1960 January: Yves Klein's first 'Leap into the Void'.

Lucio Fontana opens his first German solo exhibition in the Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf, with painting and Concetti Spaziale.

March: Opening of 'Monochrome Malerei', Städtisches Museum Schloss Morsbroich, Leverkusen, which tries to focus anti-tachist movements in art.

June: Max Bill organizes his '50 Jahre Konkrete Kunst' show in the Helmhaus in Zurich, with works by Malevich and Albers to Mack and Soto.

1961 Kricke is the first German artist to exhibit in the New York Museum of Modern Art.

Graevenitz co-founds the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, Paris and the Nove Tendencije, Zagreb in 1961/62.

Posenenske's first solo exhibition opens the Dorothea Loehr gallery in Frankfurt in 1961, one of the most acclaimed locations for new trends at that time.

Pfahler works with surface forms, clearly differentiated in a painterly manner, and becomes one of the main exponents of 'hard edge' in Germany.

July: Opening of 'ZERO. Edition Exposition Demonstration' in the Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf with exponents of the European Zero movement, on the occasion of the appearance of the 'ZERO Vol. III' magazine. The exhibition is linked with various nocturnal actions in Hunsrückstrasse outside the gallery.

September: First solo show by Christo in the Galerie Lauhus, Cologne. He wraps large machines in Cologne harbor and calls them Monument temporaire. He wraps his first public building in the form of a photo-montage.

October: 'Avantgarde 61' opens in the Städtisches Museum Trier, involving artists including Fontana, Henderikse, Geiger, Girke, Goepfert, Holweck, Piene, Uecker, Klein, Manzoni, Zangs and the Swiss artist Honegger.

1962 F. E. Walther discovers action as material while working on his Papierklebungen [Paper Gluings]. He buys a typewriter and types text pictures, text formations and text strips made up of linked series of words.

Hanne Darboven, 21 years old, starts to study under Almir Mavignier in Hamburg.

Peter Roehr, 18 years old, conceives his first serial object montages by creating series of wooden discs placed at regular intervals. Roehr is influenced by serial object montages by artists such as Piero Manzoni and Jan J. Schoonhoven, and wraps a square picture support up in parcel string as his first picture object using industrially prepared materials. He also conceives and realizes picture objects using tins, buttons, egg boxes, neon and light bulbs at this time.

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Reiner Ruthenbeck, 25 years old, is admitted to Beuys's class at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie.

Gerhard von Graevenitz joins the 'Nouvelle Tendance' group, an international association of artists working with monochrome painting, Op Art and kinetics. His first white reliefs, structure pictures and kinetic objects appear (inspired by Calder's work at documenta II).

Hartmut Böhm works on serially arranged 'Progressionen' with reduced color.

June: German television's 1. Programm shows the film '0 x 0 = Kunst' from 21.05 to 21.35, a 'film about the situation ZERO', by Gerd Winkler.

August: 'Europäische Avantgarde', Schwanenhalle in the Römer, Frankfurt, the subtitle differentiates between 'Monochromie.

Achromie. Kinetik', organized by the Galerie d, Rochus Kowallek, brings together pioneering trends of the day.

In Hans Haacke starts working on his 'systemic researches': physical experiments and their transposition into sociological or art related systems.

June: Christo barricades the rue Visconti in Paris for two hours with 240 oil barrels. This 'Rideau de fer' is a response to the erection of the Berlin Wall in the previous year.

1963 Walther shows a group of yellow box forms, closed all round, in Fulda. He discovers sewing with cotton fabric as the material valid for his work concept. The first works in the 1. Werksatz are created.

Peter Roehr uses a typewriter to produce typographical and textual montages with echoes of 1950s Concrete Poetry. Numerous object montages using objets trouvés are created.

Yale University publishes Josef Albers's pioneering book 'Interaction of Color'.

1964 Blinky Palermo, 21 years old, is admitted to Beuys's class at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie. 1965 he produces his first blue triangular picture and the Flipper painting, the basis of the screen print of the same name (1970).

Peter Roehr meets Paul Maenz and embarks on his series of photomontage works.

June: Kricke and Faßbender represent Germany at the 32nd Venice Biennale.

Mack, Piene, Uecker take part in documenta III, Kassel 1964, Anthony Caro, George Rickey, David Smith, Norbert Kricke, Ben Nicholson stand out among the international exponents in a context that tends to be determined by figurative-expressive elements.

1965 February: The Museum of Modern Art New York opens its epoch-making show called 'The Responsive Eye', featuring 99 artists from 15 countries and 123 works (artists include Gerstner, von Graevenitz, Mack).

Pfahler appears in the Basel exhibition 'Signale' alongside artists such as Al Held, Ellsworth Kelly and Kenneth Noland.

IMI (Rainer) Giese and IMI (Wolf) Knoebel, who moved from the Werkkunstschule in Darmstadt to the Düsseldorf Akademie in 1964, are admitted to Beuys's class and acquire their own workspace in the since legendary Room 19. Knoebel remains in the pictorial

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tradition at first with his line pictures, created from 1966 onwards, while Giese develops minimalistic abstract work groups based on mathematical systems.

October: Peter Roehr's first solo show opens in the Galerie Adam Seide, Frankfurt, with about 50 works, the first film montages are also premiered here.

1966 Hanne Darboven arrives in New York and develops the basic constants of her work, serial sequences of numbers and geometrical figures in her encounter with Minimal Art, above all with Sol LeWitt.

In her second exhibition in the Galerie Loehr in 1966, Charlotte Posenenske shows her new group of 'Plastische Bilder', in which the picture surface is treated as an object with a front and a back and folded out into the space.

Franz Erhard Walther shows his 1. Werksatz for the first time in public in the 'Galerie Aachen'. Erwin Heerich works on plan drawings on squared paper and his cardboard sculptures work group.

Ulrich Rückriem, 28 years old, comes on to the scene with sculptures made of simple wooden beams.

Pfahler and Lenk exhibit alongside American artists of the period in the 'New Shapes of Colour' show, which moves on from Amsterdam to Stuttgart and Bern.

Open of the 'Tendenzen strukturaler Kunst' exhibition in the Westfälischer Kunstverein in Münster.

July: 1st Cologne Art Market 1967 Posenenske shows her Vierkantrohre Serie D in sheet steel for the first time in the Kleine Galerie in Schweningen, followed by a joint exhibition with Hanne Darboven at Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf, where Posenenske caused her Serie DW in corrugated cardboard to wander through the full height and breadth of the space.

January: F.E. Walther opens a solo show in the Galerie Heiner Friedrich and Franz Dahlem in Munich, showing diagrams, work drawings and all the existing pieces in the 1. Werksatz. The exhibition then moves to New York.

An exhibition called 'Wege 67' at the Museum am Ostwall Dortmund seeks to sum up all the reduced and minimalist tendencies of the day, featuring artists including Graevenitz, Lenk, Mack, Pfahler, Rückriem.

Maenz and Roehr curate an evening exhibition called 'Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören' for the Galerie Löhr in Frankfurt (with artists including Dibbets, Long, Flanagan, Roehr), with Minimal performances and actions. Posenenske has helpers dressed in white Lufthansa overalls constantly rebuild the plastic elements of the *Vierkantrohre der Serie D* to her instructions as components of a temporary, sculptural-performative action.

1968 Ulrich Rückriem starts working with reduced cubic or rectangular stone blocks by means of minimal interventions by simple divisions or doublings.

First joint exhibition by IMIs Giese and Knoebel in Copenhagen, Giese shows drawings of simple geometrical-mathematical configurations, Knoebel a Papierraum: a paper

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cuboid almost as large as the room, leaving scarcely enough room for people to move round it. In the same year, joint conception of the Raum 19 hard fiber room at the Düsseldorf Akademie and (Knoebel) the Hartfaserprogression: simple series of hardboard sheets whose widths continually increase while the height remains the same – 160 cm, the commercial production standard.

Peter Roehr and Paul Maenz undertake an advanced summary of American and European positions in Serial and Minimal Art called 'Serielle Formationen' in Frankfurt. Representatives of a specifically German Minimalism: Charlotte Posenenske, Franz Erhard Walther, Hanne Darboven, Peter Roehr and others

The Düsseldorf Kunstakademie played an important role in the transition to a specifically

German Minimalism from 1962 until around 1970.

Joseph Beuys took over the chair of monumental sculpture here in 1961; his sculptural vocabulary of reduced everyday forms – crates, felt and iron panels, angle iron, display cases, simple shelves, fabric objects, metal cubes – was interpreted from 1957 in the context of his work with actions, among other things. In the 1960s, it provided many of his students with a basis for examining minimized sculpture. As a student of Karl Otto Götz, the young Franz Erhard Walther developed his first proto-Minimalist objects starting in 1962, followed in 1964/65 by Imi Knoebel, Imi Giese, and Blinky Palermo, students with Beuys in Düsseldorf. At the same time, Hanne Darboven in Hamburg, a student of the Zero artist Almir Mavignier, Posenenske in Offenbach (she studied with Willi Baumeister in Stuttgart 1951/52), and, outside academic contexts, Peter Roehr in Frankfurt conceived their first attempts at Minimalist works.

In the 1960s, the German artist Charlotte Posenenske (1930–1985) produced groundbreaking sculptures and reliefs: they are in part accessible, arbitrarily reproducible, freely positionable in space, and made from industrial paints as well as 'needy' materials, such as pressboard, corrugated cardboard, or sheet metal. The work group acquired and exhibited by the Daimler Art Collection since 2002 was a crucial step to rediscover her minimalist works of art, before only circles of experts were familiar with the artist. Charlotte Posenenske began producing abstract paintings in primary colors in the late 1950s. She later bent sheet aluminum or produced objects made out of square tubing for public spaces and performances. These extremely reduced three-dimensional works, with which her name is closely associated today, were all created in the brief period between 1966 and 1968.

Deeply impressed and affected by American Minimalism, the artist Konrad Lueg, then under the name of Konrad Fischer, opened his legendary gallery in 1967 in Düsseldorf. As early as 1967, Posenenske, together with Hanne Darboven, exhibited her work here alongside that by American protagonists such as Carl Andre and Donald Judd. In 1968, Posenenske completely

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ceased all of her sculptural activities “for political reasons,” as it was generally put – but which was also artistically consistent.

In 1965 Posenenske travelled to New York for the first time and came in contact with American Minimal Art, her journey came at the beginning of a wave that in the second half of the 1960s took the most important artists working within a specifically European Minimalism to New York, along with pioneering German art critics, curators, gallery owners, and collectors. In 1966, Hanne Darboven arrived in New York and developed one of the essential constants within her oeuvre in her encounter with Minimal Art, above all with the work of Sol LeWitt. Her serial sequences of numbers and geometrical figures – along with Posenenske’s sculptures, Peter Roehr, F.W. Walther’s action-oriented work forms, and sculptures by Eckhard Schene, Imi Giese, or Ulrich Rückriem – are among the most significant European contributions to a Minimalism with a Conceptual quality. For the Konstruktion (Construction) series, developed in New York, Hanne Darboven worked with punctures and perforations on graph paper, they can be seen as variations on the dot grid in pictures and reliefs of her teacher at the Hamburg academy, Almir Mavignier, who was part of the Zero group. Darboven first showed the Konstruktionen at the ‘Normal Art’ exhibition organized by Joseph Kosuth, beside Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Donald Judd, On Kawara et.al. LeWitt arranged for Darboven’s first solo exhibition – together with Charlotte Posenenske – at Konrad Fischer’s newly opened gallery in Düsseldorf, which was a crucial step in terms of the German response to her work after she returned from New York.

Franz Erhard Walther lived in New York from 1967 to 1973 and entered into an intense exchange with American exponents of Minimal Art. Walther gained important early impressions from encounters with the work of the European Zero artists, above all Piero Manzoni and Lucio Fontana. It was during this period that Walther discovered the material process as a work form and developed paper works and picture objects that were conceptually and formally close to contemporary works by New York Minimal artists. Walther, who worked between Düsseldorf and Fulda around 1960, started experimenting with processual structures and temporary production and treatment forms such as folding, separating, dividing, pasting, packing up, piling, gluing, cutting, and laying out, using materials that were not considered artistic at the time, such as hardboard, primer, paste, untreated cotton, packing paper, or felt. Around 1962/63, Walther developed his series of *Stapel-Auslege-Arbeiten* [Piling-Laying-Out Works] with two different states: the pile as storage and at the same time work form, and the various ways in which they can be laid out on the floor, defined individually by the viewer. The act of laying out the work is considered one of its components, which means that the temporary element, the period of time it serves as sculptural material, becomes part of the work.

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In two exhibitions in Fulda in 1963, Walther tested the relationship between material, serial sequences, space, and imaginative 'use' – these can in fact be regarded as prototypical pronouncements of a specifically German Minimalism. In the summer of 1963, he presented a Braune Matrazenform [Brown Mattress Form] and two pillow works, each consisting of sixteen parts out of colorful pages taken from illustrated magazines, at the Galerie Junge Kunst. The following December, he exhibited Fuldaer Raum, a space-related installation of various sculptural objects: the works were encircled by a hemp string; there was a yellow cardboard box and a vertical, five-part row of pillows on the front wall, a pillow made of muslin on a chair, and on the floor a large air-filled paper pillow.

At around the same time, Peter Roehr, then twenty years old, was working on his typographic and photographic montages in Frankfurt. The latter type of montage involved a fixed base pattern of quadratic or crosswise rectangular cut-outs from newspaper advertisement photos, mounted using a simple principle of uniform rows with no gaps. Up until 1965, the artist continued with sound and film montages, all this with hardly any contact with the Frankfurt art scene, but enjoying a deep friendship with Charlotte Posenenske. Roehr decided to create up to five copies of each montage rather than treat them as one-of-a-kind works of art. Roehr exchanged letters with Jan Dibbets in 1966 on the concept of an "association of mass art producers." The Frankfurt gallerist Adam Seide helped Roehr to stage a radical show entitled 'Ausstellungs-Ausstellung' (Exhibition-Exhibition) – ten wholly identical works in black paper on cardboard, 119 by 119 centimeters, the so-called Schwarze Tafeln [Black Panels].

The lean group of sculptures created between 1966 and 1968 by Imi Giese bears the greatest formal resemblance to Posenenske's work at this time. Giese had also initially allowed himself to be guided by the material purism of the Zero artists in the early 1960s, but then developed modular, multipartite sculptures from it using basic geometrical forms. These were set up temporarily, indoors or outdoors, forming variable constellations. In 1966, Erwin Heerich began work on his plans drawn on lined paper and his cardboard sculptures – groups of works whose groundwork had been laid in the 1950s and involving an austere concept, precise regularity, and economic serial reproducibility (Heerich, however, refused any association with Minimalist exhibitions, such as René Block's Minimal Art exhibition in 1968). Eckhard Schene and Peter Benkert created their reduced three-dimensional picture objects and sculptures amid the vigorous figurative painting scene of 1960s Berlin. Between 1968 and 1971, Schene created a group of sculptures, mostly varnished black, dealing with illusory spatial penetrations and perspectives. Benkert exhibited his Minimal Luschen [Minimal Wimps], which leaned against the wall, with the Berlin Grossgörschen group. In the summer of 1968, René Block included art from the German scene in two Minimal Art exhibitions in his

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Berlin gallery, featuring Giese, Palermo, Posenenske, et al. besides Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt.

As for other active forces at work in this context, which are not represented in our actual exhibition – In 1963/64 Hans Haacke exhibits his first process orientated sculptures with water, air, snow, presented in perspex boxes following basic geometrical forms. Eva Hesse spent 1964 working in Cologne after finishing her studies in the United States, creating her first picture object in the summer she spent there by threading strings through the holes in a piece of wire mesh she had found and covering it with plaster. In 1964/65, Blinky Palermo created his first structural paintings, which grew out of an interest in Constructivism and Suprematism. These were followed in 1967 by a series of uniform format picture objects created by laying fabric over stretcher frames and Minimalist wall objects. In 1966, Reiner Ruthenbek, working in the Düsseldorf context, also began to minimize his formal vocabulary. He created the *Leitern, Löffel* und *Schirme* [Ladder, Spoon, and Umbrella] groups. It is no coincidence that Franz Erhard Walther organized an exhibition of this early work in Fulda in 1966.

If we regard Walther's Fulda space of 1963 as the beginning of a specifically German Minimalism, then the hardboard space *Raum 19* by Imi Knoebel und Imi Giese marked a preliminary high point in 1968: this consisted of plastic-constructive basic forms such as cubes, rectangular plates, and arch segments stacked on the floor and around the walls, turning the space that surrounds them into a structure for viewers to enter. Two exhibitions in European museums took place at the same time as the opening of the room in the Akademie known as *Raum 19*. These were finally trying to establish Minimal Art as a purely American phenomenon – as part of a colonizing American culture policy: in March 1968 'Minimal Art' opened in The Hague's Gemeentemuseum, featuring leading New York artists; the large retrospective called 'The Art of the Real: USA 1948-1968' arranged by the Museum of Modern Art showed about 35 artists at its second venue in Paris. Two positions contrast with this, offering Minimalism for discussion as a convergence of European tradition and American definition of work: in 1968, René Block showed 'ABC Art, Cool Art, Minimum Art, Minimal Art, Primary Structures, Neue Monumente, IMI Art' in his Berlin gallery; in 1969, Harald Szeemann also brought together American and European artists from the context of Minimal, Land Art, Process Art and Environment under the title 'Live in your head. When Attitudes Become Form. Works-Concepts-Processes-Situations-Information' in the Kunsthalle in Bern.

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Symbolic material – Banal material

One of Minimal Art's key driving forces was replacing the ideologically contaminated materials of the traditional art genres – plinth, bronze casting, canvas, frame – with industrially processed mass goods, so that it was possible on the material plane as well to assert the demand for de-individualization and objectification categorically, and quite frequently with shock impact as well. Visitors to the early Minimal Art exhibitions were confronted with brass, perspex, sheet metal and aluminum (Judd), rusting Cor-Ten steel (Serra), rough wooden cuboids and iron sheets (Andre), plywood and PVC sheeting (Schene), steel and car lacquer (Posenenske), air pockets, wrappingpaper and cotton fabrics (Walther), pressboard and Wiedolux laquer (Giese), press photos and TV images (Roehr), bulbs and tinfoil (Pfisterer), wooden ledges and wire (Cremer). This was linked with rigorous formalization and reduction, a return to primary structures, to a clearly recognizable quality for geometrical phenomena, to the interplay between positive and negative forms and logical spatial functions.

As a next step, the developments in the late 1960s that the art critic Robert Pincus-Witten referred to as “post-minimalistic” when dealing with the work of Keith Sonnier, Eva Hesse, Richard Tuttle, Bruce Nauman et al. (Pincus-Witten, in: Artforum, Nov. 1966) put attention to artistic processes, processuality and the constitutive significance of aspects relating to the aesthetics of production and reception back in the foreground. The changed approach to material, addressing artistic production and including viewers in the work creation process, are relevant for a variety of precise reasons to contemporary trends in Minimalism. Classical Minimal Art placed the accent on ‘context’, but by the early 1990s this was seen not just as a question of space but as involving extended perception and processing for phenomena from the fields of politics, communications and economics, for design and language, and also for our awareness of key signs and structures from computer aesthetics.

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