

ENGLISH

GALLERIACONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA ROMA SAO PAULO PARIS DUBAI

Via del Castello 11, San Gimignano (SI), Italy

tel. +390577943134 fax +390577940484|info@galleriacontinua.com|www.galleriacontinua.com

CARLOS CRUZ-DIEZ

THE EUPHORIA OF COLOUR

27/05/2023 - 10/09/2023

Opening on Saturday 27 May 2023, via del Castello 11, 4-9pm.

The gallery is open from Monday to Sunday 10am - 1pm / 2pm - 7pm.

Carlos Cruz-Diez is one of the main protagonists of contemporary art. His work and his writings make him **the last great thinker of the 20th century in the field of colour**. On the occasion of the **centenary of his birth**, Galleria Continua is pleased to welcome, for **the first time in its exhibition spaces** in San Gimignano, **a solo exhibition by the French-Venezuelan artist. Pioneer of kinetic art** and undisputed master of colour, he proposed the latter as an autonomous and evolutionary reality in which the implication of our senses reveals chromatic events as they develop. **"The Euphoria of Colour"**, as the title of the exhibition, presents the highlights of the artistic career of Carlos Cruz-Diez, exploring the **artist's colour theory, through some of his most iconic works, including an installation in San Gimignano's historic city centre**. A rich archival documentation completes the exhibition.

"Colour is not simply the colour of things which surround us, nor the colour of shapes. **It is an evolutive situation - a reality which reacts on the human being with the same intensity as cold, heat or sound**, for example. It is a basic perception which our cultural tradition prevents us from isolating from artistic colour and its esoteric or anecdotic notion."

says Cruz-Diez. And he continues, "I wanted my work to be a phenomenological situation, where true **colour would be liberated from all aesthetic and symbolic meaning** and would therefore reach its maximum potential."

Carlos Cruz-Diez describes himself as an **artist** who applies the discipline of a **scientist** to his work: "because the supports that I have managed to structure are a source of surprise and are imponderable... In my works, **nothing is left to chance**; everything is planned, planned and scheduled. Freedom and emotion are present when it comes to the choice of colours, a task with only one self-imposed restriction: being effective in what I want to say. It is a **combination of rationality and emotion**. I don't let myself be inspired: I reflect".

Carlos Cruz-Diez's body of work, based on **three colour conditions (subtractive, additive and reflected)** is **developed through eight lines of research: Couleur Additive, Physichromie, Induction Chromatique, Chromointerférence, Transchromie, Chromosaturation, Chromoscope and Couleur à l'Espce**. Each of them responds to different colour behaviours.

The work that occupies the **stalls** of the former cinema-theatre headquarters of the gallery is **a participative**

experience and is part of the series *Environnement Chromointerférent* (Paris, 1974). The goal of these iconic colour environments is to **create a situation in space involving the dematerialization, transfiguration and ambiguity of colour through movement.** The constant movement of the projection makes people and objects appear transparent which, in this virtual state, change shape and become "actors" in the experience and "authors" of a chromatic event which evolves in real time and space. **"Environnement Chromointerférent alters the space, thus transforming everything inside it.** The first one, in 1974, had fewer colours than the more recent ones, but it already generated what I call a relationship between a constant and a variable. The variable was the moving pattern and the constant was the shadow [that viewers] cast on the moving patterns. The interplay between variable and constant caused a feeling of instability similar to the experience of sitting on a train and thinking that "your train" is moving. But that is not so; the train next to yours is the one that moves. **Chromointerference produces an ambiguity of perceptual instability"** (Cruz-Diez, 2011).

The rooms of the gallery display a sharp and mesmerizing selection of three of the eight seminal series developed by the artist.

The *Physichromies* (1959) are structures designed to reveal certain circumstances and conditions related to colour, mutating according to the movement of the viewer and the intensity of the light, and thus projecting the colour in the space to create an evolutionary situation of additive, reflective and subtractive colour. A *Physichromie* acts as a "light trap" in a space where a series of colour frames interact; frames that transform each other, generating new ranges of colours not present on the support. The colour thus fills the confined space between the vertical sheets - modulators of light - which cover the entire work. Furthermore, due to the effect of the viewer or the light source, a series of chromatic variations are created in them, similar to those observed in

the real space of the landscape.

The *Couleur Additive* (1959) is based on colour radiation. When one plane of colour touches another, a darker vertical line appears at the point of contact. This virtual line brings in a third colour which is not in the medium. By isolating this optical phenomenon, Cruz-Diez obtains the so-called "Chromatic Event Modules" responsible, in a certain sense, for the continuous transformation of colour.

The *Inductions Chromatiques* (1963) are closely related to the phenomenon of afterimage, or retinal persistence. In other words, the retina of the eye, having fixed a plane coloured in red for a certain period of time, retains, even after looking away, an image of the plane - in green; which is the induced colour or complementary colour. This phenomenon takes place in two phases, however, the *Induction Chromatique* realises it simultaneously. In other words, it **stabilises and makes visible a phenomenon that can only be captured momentarily and under very particular circumstances.** The colour that appears is and is not - it has a virtual existence - yet it is as real as the pigments used. This is demonstrated by the *Induction du Jaune*, which is obtained by superimposing black, blue and white; the *Induction du Orange*, produced with blue, yellow and black; or the *Induction du Rouge*, by means of green, white and black.

The installation created for the exhibition in Piazza delle Erbe is part of this cycle of works. Since the late 1960s, Carlos Cruz-Diez has worked in the urban space through the creation of large participatory works by intervening on pedestrian crossings and walkways. With these works, the artist **breaks with the known and established codes that citizens face on a daily basis,** inviting them to interact directly with his creations, to experience space and the city in a new way, **overcoming the automatisms** of urban space and immersing themselves in an **aesthetic, poetic and sensorial experience.** "One of the functions of art is to cause amazement. If you create objects and new situations on the street, you inspire amazement. The

colours change depending on the time of day or where you are. There is always an element of surprise. In a sculpture, in a traditional painting, the discourse is unchanging. On the street it changes constantly. As a result, **kinetic art is really suitable for the urban dimension**", declares the artist.

The exhibition itinerary ends in the gallery's garden with **Environnement de Transchromie Circulaire (1965/2017)**, a **circular, immersive and shining structure**, in which the viewer is invited to rediscover his **natural or urban environment**. Created to be experienced *hors les murs*, **the work takes its external surroundings into account and transforms it by subtracting the colour**, thanks to the transparent strips that blend together. The artist unfolds a singular conception of abstraction, which began in 1969, when he elaborated his first *Projet pour un environnement de couleur soustractive*.

"More than once, I thought that a melody would come from his sculpture in what Cruz-Diez himself defined as, referring to some of his works, **"music in colour"**. The maestro was a music lover, he always had his guitar at hand: this is how he won the heart of his wife, Mirtha Delgado, and raised her three children. With his guitar, he played many serenades with his close friend Jesús Rafael Soto. That influence resonates in the numerous references to chromatic harmonies in his work. The close connection in every phase of his life with contemporary intellectuals made **him a man of his time up until the very end**. He was unquestionably a contemporary artist **capable of envisioning the technology of his times. His vision expanded the artist's sphere**, the field in which the artist works. He was often **the inventor of the machines he needed** to deepen his research, his **experimentation**, and his mixing with colour." (Laura Salas Redondo, Carlos Cruz-Diez, *El Color En El Espacio*, Gli Ori, 2023).

Carlos Cruz-Diez, 1923, Caracas (Venezuela) - 2019 Paris (France). Carlos Cruz-Diez was thirty-seven years old

when, in 1960, he decided to leave Caracas to settle in Paris with his family. After studying at the academy of fine arts and a long experience as an illustrator for magazines and advertising agencies, he realised that only in Europe would he have the opportunity to maintain a constant dialogue with the new developments in the investigation of perceptive-sensory dynamics. Inclusion in the seminal *Bewogen Beweging* group exhibition in Amsterdam in 1961 proved him right. Putting aside the traditional techniques learned at school and the early tests with geometric wooden modules, in France, his research took on eight main lines of action developed in a rather limited time frame, testifying to an active mind in constant experimentation. Cruz-Diez's work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world. His works are part of prestigious collections; Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; Tate Modern, London; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Center Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne; Geffen Contemporary, Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk just to name a few. Among the numerous awards received: Presentation of Honoris Causa Doctorate posthumously to the artist Carlos Cruz-Diez, Central University of Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela; Human Rights Friendly Personality, International Solidarity for Human Rights, Miami, United States; Prize Penagos de Dibujo, Fundación Mapfre, Madrid, Spain; Rank of Officer of the National Order of the Legion of Honour, Paris, France; Golden Medal, Americas Society/Council of the Americas, New York, United States; Gold Medal, Norwegian International Print Triennial, Oslo, Norway; International Painting Prize, IX São Paulo Biennial, São Paulo, Brazil; Grand Prize, III Bienal Americana de Arte, National University of Córdoba, Faculty of Science, Córdoba, Argentina.

In 2005, on the initiative of the artist and his family, the Cruz-Diez Foundation was born, a non-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation, dissemination and promotion of the artist's artistic and conceptual heritage.

For more photographs or information:
Silvia Pichini press office,
press@galleriacontinua.com
cell. + 39 3474536136