

A BIT OF AMERICA  
EGY KIS AMERIKA

OPEN STRUCTURES ART SOCIETY  
NYILT STRUKTÚRÁK MŰVÉSZETI EGYESÜLET 2009

Zsolt Farkas

## OSAS EXHIBITION AT THE VASARELY MUSEUM

„Brief information on Open Structures Art Society (OSAS)

The Society is a privately established high-level, non-profit endeavour. Its objective is to maintain the continuity of the geometric-concrete school – which, as of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has been regarded as a progressive tradition in Hungarian art –, to demonstrate its presence at the highest level, to encourage artists – especially young artists – who work in this direction, to provide opportunities for the presentation of new works in an adequate context, as well as to revive and maintain of longstanding international relations. Furthermore, in the long term, it aims to keep together its member’s artworks, documents and collections spanning many decades as well as to make these researchable.

The Society claims its place in the Hungarian and international art scenes by organising exhibitions and events. The OSAS is in a contractual relationship with the Museum of Fine Arts, which – in its Vasarely museum – provided the exhibition halls for the Society’s 2006 exhibition series as well as the related musical and media art events.“

It appears that the „geometric-concrete“ school – an artistic enquiry conceived in the spirit of the (neo)avantgarde, or, in other words, of radical innovation and methodical research – can regard itself as a traditional, classical asset. This is partly because it has preserved some of its original purity; the spaciness and the determination in examining problems or in pointing out peculiarities or novelties, which most people pass by without noticing because they „are too“ abstract or, as it happens, too concrete. On the other hand, the visual world is also becoming increasingly more intense in the Earth’s softly accelerating evolution. In other words, the special abilities and

achievements that these special artworks – this unique trend – can offer are becoming more explicit and applicable. We can see of this phenomenon in scientific research, philosophy and literature.

And vica versa: these works have something immediate to offer to my more pop culture oriented taste – and in the most varied ways.

Nádler, for example, amuses himself with showing how brushstrokes that have been left as spectacularly obvious brushstrokes – and, thus, are not about the depictions, illusions and simulations of sensory reality – nevertheless reveal their abilities to create illusion. Just like a magician who demonstrates his magic tricks and then makes himself and the performance disappear as well. He wants me to read the 3D – the „something-like“, the depth, the body, the symbol – into it, which, of course, isn't there. Magic is forbidden, and still: secret initiation, didactic studies, this is how the magic paintbrush works.

What David Pagel says about Max Cole's art is basically the opposite of this: „If the viewer observes Cole's works from up close, he can see that there is nothing especially difficult or virtuosic about his individual lines and stripes, from which the paintings are constructed. But the general effect is still unique and defined: this is Cole's work and no one else's. His paintings transform the usual insult directed at abstract painting – anyone could do that – into an inspiring invitation to experience something unique and exciting, which, at the same time, is not exclusive, appropriating or elitist.“

All children most probably enjoy looking at Haraszty's works, just like they favour the art of all those adults with magic-tale tastes – Gaudi, Klee, Hundertwasser. Which is one thing, but Haraszty's art is liked by all mechanical engineers, turners, millers and romantics. It is fascinating to all those with a keenness for the history of design, anyone with even a minimal degree of receptiveness towards the applied arts as well as anyone who is interested in the mysterious world of physics. It makes everyone smile who has ever laughed – or has not had the chance to laugh – at Duchamp. And it makes everyone laugh who has ever smiled, or hasn't yet, about Tinguely.

In Sol LeWitt's case, mathematical, geometrical, architectural and visual artistic attention and research connect, separate, and create unique combinations. This

incredibly copious artist pours out ideas – and inspires us to meditation – in the most varied media, genres, and techniques. On the „signature stock exchange“ of art histories and art trade, he may be the most sought after of the artists exhibiting here, which is strange because he is also one of the most method-centred artists in whose works the differences between aesthetic and scientific enquiry tend to disappear the most – which is alien to the majority of the perceivers and creators of art, or to be more exact, is no longer regarded as art. In any case, Sol LeWitt immersions in the cube can be seen in museums, galleries and public spaces as well as in the columns of the Scientific American.

Jerry Zeniuk is a winner from the get go in my book, as I always go weak at the knees for aquarelle. I am compelled to have a closer look even at the less intriguing works. In watercolours, the traces of gesture and movement are sharper; even less trained eyes are forced to think through the technical details. Since, in this scenario, the artist is required to complete the painting with the first, and most economic, gestures, the magic-experience is also more directly felt by the perceiver. Somewhat similarly to (the paintings of) Nádler, Zeniuk evokes all the marvellous features that the technique – and the artist who has mastered it – is capable of: it strictly refuses to depict so-called sensory reality. „Even if I don't necessarily have an idea in my head when I began to paint, in the case of aquarelles, I always do. As this is a medium – or technique – where there has to be a plan because the colours dry immediately. So, first comes the formal, then the spontaneous.“ On the other hand, Zeniuk is obsessed by colour and the works of such artists are always present in the closer-wider circles of interest.

As far as being obsessed by colour goes, Phil Sims is an ever tougher case. He paints multitudes of paintings that are of a single colour or texture (though he also paints other things and works with ceramics, etc.), where the colour or the texture itself is the main protagonist. These are engrossed and impressive paintings; they may not „make sense“, but they are perfect in the aesthetic sense as well, even for those whose concept of art has been conditioned to representational forms. For most people, these are beautiful works, which is indicated by the fact that – and let us not underestimate one of the most common considerations of the perceiver – they would display them at, or around, their home.

But I would not like – and I am sure you would not like me to – say smart things about the work of all 21 (12 international and 9 Hungarian) artists. I only wished to give you an ad hoc impression about the refreshing experience that I owe to this material and my time spent in its company – and to the fact that Dóra Maurer invited me without having met me before (she was trying to find Kukorelly, but because he was otherwise engaged in the Canary Islands, he recommended me) to open the exhibition. I hesitated immediately, I have a million extremely important things to do, things come to a halt, they are delayed... On top of all that, even though I am a heavy duty consumer of culture – maybe too many different kinds of culture – geometric-abstract and geometric-concrete art were never really my cup of tea. But then, more or less because of the exhibiting artists – the list of names counted as notable in the discourse – I thought I would give it a quick go – in the form of an opening speech. I would like to give thanks for the opportunity that allowed me a glance at some of my half-false presumptions and the chance to flow with intense enquiries, which my intelligence hadn't quite reached to before.

I would like to touch on two problems that have haunted me quite intensely. One of them is decorativeness and the other is the question of representing reality. These are two criteria in which more pop art-related concepts – somewhat like mine (a little bit consciously, as it is akin to the democratic) – are prejudiced against this school of art.

I am not especially fond of artists who directly and methodically attack certain general and average senses of harmony and beauty – when I think of fine art, they are not the ones who come to mind. Nitsch or heaps of Picassos. But it is difficult – and I am not sure it is even possible – to make such „strict“ generalisations. Not only in general, but also in reference to myself. For example, there are some Pollock paintings that I like, that appeal to me, I would be happy to hang them on my walls (if I could find the space), but there are also works with the exact same technique, with the same surface texture that repulse me, that are ugly. Now that I have familiarised myself with the many different things that Dóra Maurer has done, I recall my few previous encounters with her works. I conclude that the reason she has not made it

further into my spectrum is that she does not assert my (secret?) „criterion“ of decorativeness enough, or, to put it better, her concept of „decorativity“ clearly differs from mine. I can recall myself ironising about Sol LeWitt (in a text where I evaluated the neoavantgardism of Tandori's writings in a rather ambivalent manner) on account of this hidden claim for decorativity (and maybe a little bit because of a more illusion-demanding concept of art). But, of course, good art(work) is multifaceted – such as, for example, Gödel-Escher-Bach, Mandelbrot, or philosophy oriented interests, or playing around with the logic and permutations of things as are characteristic of Sol LeWitt and Dóra Maurer, are not foreign to me either.

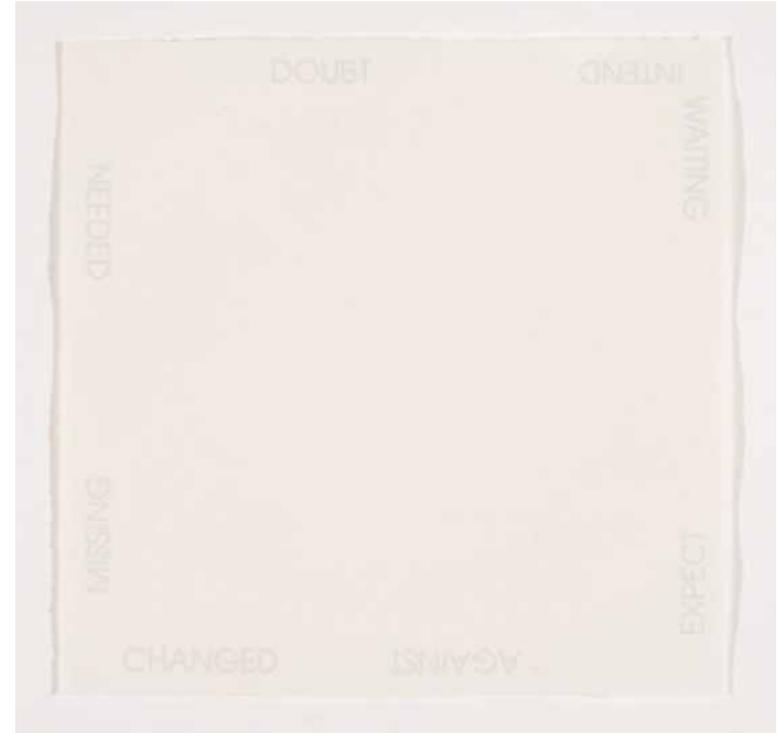
Now I had no choice but to admit, however, that she is more accomplished in terms of decorativity than I had earlier figured.

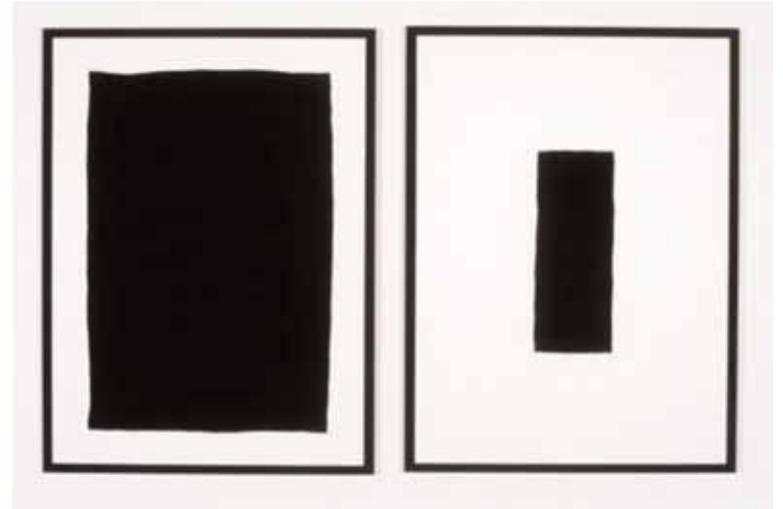
I have very clear memories about my enjoyment of Tom Wolf's work entitled *The Painted Word* – after reading Göncz Árpád's translation, I also read the original English version. This enjoyment was perhaps more ambivalent to, for instance, the artists exhibiting here in so far as, for Tom Wolf, abstract art is always the business of snobs while pop-oriented tastes are the healthy approach – which is of course what the snobs secretly like as well. He scoffingly depicted, ad absurdum, what he perceived to be the logic and negative utopia of the abstract (impressionism) – or, rather, snobbism, or elitism, perhaps: in the gallery of the future, huge texts on the wall explain why this particular artist or artwork is epoch-making and, by way of illustration, a few works will also be thrown in just so you know what they are talking about. In any case, Wolf precisely identified the determination which radically or dogmatically rejects – but also simultaneously regards as an indication of high quality – this need for the representation of reality and illusion-making.

In Wolf's case, a pretty general approach to art is at work, which, thus, demands an explanation from visual art for the imitative representation of certain objects, themes, and things. On top of that, it could be considered to have a relatively strong tradition, though this tradition precludes the decorative and applied arts – which also have a long-standing tradition behind them – from its concept of art and the artwork. I am sure that the artists exhibiting here know exactly what I am talking

about. Of course, for this concept of art, a „reality“ concept (that is equally as general as lacking in generosity or circumspection) is also part of the package. Because, of course, how in hell would the connections, objects, and medial phenomena – however abstract or concrete – that are embodied, demonstrated, imitated, represented, etc. by this direction in visual art and research not be what is most real?

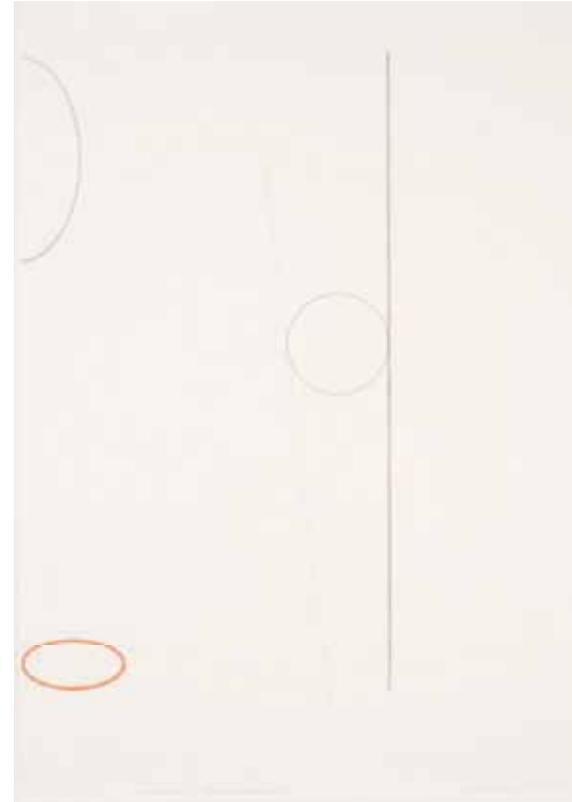
In any case, what stood out for me this time was that the art of those exhibiting here is directly relevant in this traditional reality-representation, illusion-making sense as well. I am picking up on the above mentioned magic everywhere; where a special and intense interest, on the one hand, continues its search in spite of decades of the commonest clichés, and, on the other, proudly, wisely and neatly flashes us with the techniques, possibilities, ideas, nuances, and tricks (that could be „made pop“ at any given moment) of illusion-making that open from this direction of interest. This is clearly an important ambition, or aspect, of these artists and artworks.







Robert MANGOLD  
Without Title, *Cim nélkül*



David RABINOWICH  
Construction of Vision, 1973



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David RABINOWICH  
Altan Ruthe 1–3, 2004



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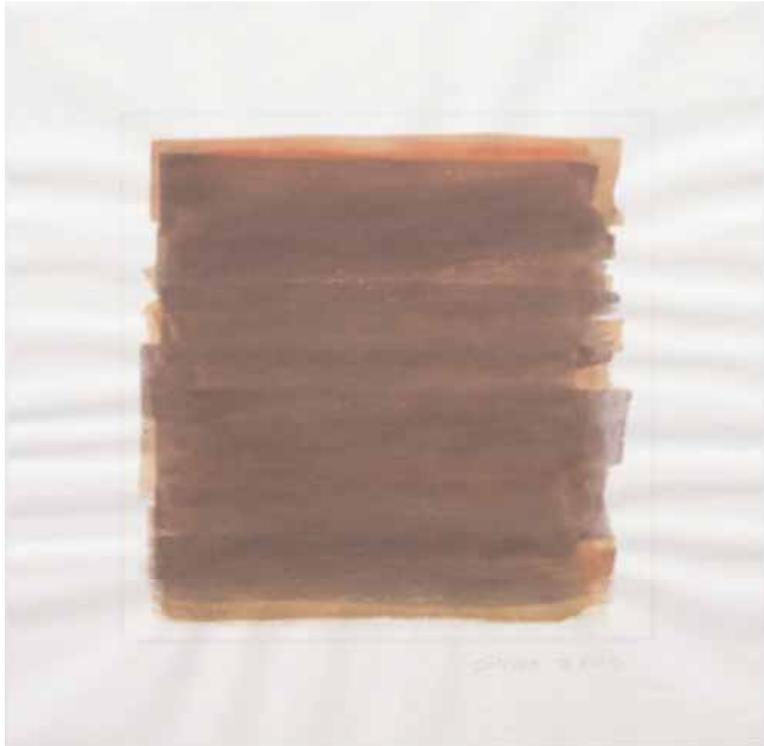
James REINEKING  
Without title, *Cim nélkül*, 1986



Ed RUSCHA  
Mainstreet, 1990

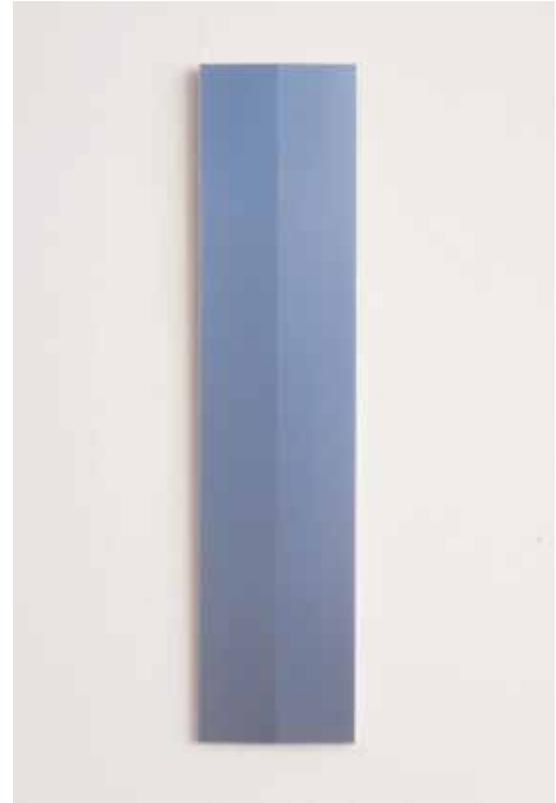


Richard SERRA  
out-of-round X, 1999/2008



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Phil SIMS  
Without Title, *Cim nélkül*, 2003



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Roy THURSTON  
Without Title, *Cim nélkül*, 2006/8



Shawn WALLIS  
Fatimas Hand II, 2000



Jerry ZENIUK  
Without Title, *Cim nélkül*, 2004

## EXHIBITED ARTWORKS / KIÁLLÍTOTT MŰVEK

**Robert BARRY** (1936 New York)  
Teaneck/New Jersey-ben él, *lives in Teaneck/New Jersey*

- Cím nélkül, *Without Title*, 1996 szitanyomat, *screenprint*, 56/100, 30 x 30 cm

**Max COLE** (1937 Hodgeman County, Kansas)  
Ruby-ban N. Y. él, *lives in Ruby, N. Y.*

Cím nélkül, *Without title*, 2004 akril Arches papíron, *acrylic on Arches paper*, 37 x 36,5 cm

- Cím nélkül, *Without title*, 2004 akril Arches papíron, *acrylic on Arches paper*, 37 x 36,5 cm

*Mirage*, 2007 akril, vászon, *acrylic on canvas*, 41 x 48 cm

**Soi LEWITT** (1928 Hartford Connecticut – 2007 New York)

- Cím nélkül, *Without Title*, szitanyomat, *screenprint*, 45 x 69 cm

**Robert MANGOLD** (1937 North Tonawanda) Washingtonville-ben N.Y. él, *lives in Washingtonville N.Y.*

- Cím nélkül, *Without Title* szitanyomat kézi merítésű papíron, *screenprint on handmade paper*, Ed. 100, A. P., 76 x 58 cm

**David RABINOWICH** (1943 Toronto)  
Düsseldorfbán és New Yorkban él, *lives in Düsseldorf and New York City*

- Construction of Vision, 1973 grafit és színes ceruza papíron, *pencil and colour pencil on paper*, 70 x 49 cm
- Altan Ruthe 1 – 3, 2004 fametszet japán papíron, *woodcut on Japanese paper*, Ed. 35, egyenként, *each* 69 x 50 cm

**James REINEKING** (1937 Minot, North Dakota)  
Münchenben él, *lives in München*

II 1:7 I, 1979 tus, akvarell papíron, ink and watercolour on paper, 42 x 37 cm

Cím nélkül, *Without Title*, 1986 akvarell papíron, *watercolour on paper*, 43 x 40 cm

- Cím nélkül, *Without title*, 1986 szitanyomat, *screenprint*, 30/100, 50 x 50 cm

**Ed RUSCHA** (1937 Ohama, Nebraska)  
Los Angelesben él, *lives in Los Angeles*

- Mainstreet, 1990 litográfia, *lithography*, 84/250, 20,5 x 25,8 cm

Intersecting Streets, 1999 litográfia, *lithography*, 34/50, 49 x 73 cm

**Richard SERRA** (1939 San Francisco)  
New Yorkban él, *lives in New York City*

- *out-of-round X*, 1999/2008 duplexnyomás Tintoretto papíron, *Novaton-print (Duplex) on Tintoretto-nesso-paper*, Ed. 251, 69,4 x 59,4 cm

**Phil SIMS** (1940 Richmond, California)  
Pennsylvániában él, *lives in Pennsylvania*

Cím nélkül, *Without Title*, 2003 akvarell, papír, *watercolour on paper*, 31 x 31 cm

Cím nélkül, *Without Title*, (MG 919), 1991 Olaj, fa, *oil on wood*, 57 x 54,5 cm

- Cím nélkül, *Without Title*, 2003 akvarell, papír, *watercolour, paper*, 31 x 31 cm

**Roy THURSTON** (1949 Huntington, N. Y.)  
Los Angelesben él, *lives in Los Angeles*

• Cím nélkül, *Without Title, 2006/8*  
akril, polyurethan, aluminium, *acrylic-Polyurethan, aluminium, 61 x 14 cm*

**Shawn WALLIS** (1964 Houston, Texas)  
Texasban él, *lives in Texas*

• Fatimas Hand II, 2000  
fa, vászon, gipsz-alap, olaj, *wood, canvas, gesso, oil*  
46 x 46 x 10 cm

Observation Of The Behavior  
of Solids # 18, 2001  
papír, gipsz-alap, olaj, *paper, gesso, oil, 75 x 57 cm*

In Obedience To Secret  
Gravitations, # 1, 1998  
papír, gipsz-alap, olaj, *paper, gesso, oil, 75 x 57 cm*

**Jerry ZENIUK** (1945 Bardowick)  
Münchenben és New Yorkban él,  
*lives in München and New York City*

• Cím nélkül, *Without Title, 2004*  
olaj, vászon, *oil on canvas, 34 x 32 cm*

(NYC), 1999 / 2000  
akvarell, *watercolour, 25 x 31 cm*

(NYC), 1999 / 2000  
akvarell, *watercolour, 25 x 31 cm*

Thanks to the Galleries Peter Lindner, Vienna and Rupert Walser, Munich for lending the works of American artists

Köszönet a Peter Lindner, Bécs és Rupert Walser, München galériáknak az amerikai művészek műveinek kölcsönzéséért