Manfred Mohr

September 25-November 20, 2014
Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery and
Francis T. Eck Exhibition Corridor

CENTER
FOR THE
ARTS
AT VIRGINIA TECH

Evolving Geometries:
Line, Form, and Color

All images and works:

Collection of the artist
Courtesy of bitforms Gallery, New York City

Manfred Mohr

An early pioneer of the digital art genre, Manfred Mohr was one of the first artists to use a digital computer to create works of art. As early as 1969 Mohr began using sets of computer programmed instructions, or algorithms, to explore new territories in the visual arts. In1971 he was the first artist to be presented in a solo museum exhibition (at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris) consisting entirely of works calculated and created with a digital computer.

Originally a jazz musician and Abstract Expressionist painter, Manfred Mohr's thinking about creativity was radically influenced in the late 1960s by the writings of the German professor Max Bense[1] as well as the French composer Pierre Barbaud.[2] Both individuals were instrumental in Mohr turning from a more conventional painting practice to the computer to create his art. In 1969, Mohr gained access to one of the first computer-driven drawing machines or "plotters » at the Paris Institute of Meteorology, used at that time by scientists to draw weather patterns. With this, Mohr developed a series of computer programs based on certain algorithms through which new visual forms could be explored. For Mohr, the computer allowed a rational, precise, and conceptual approach to creating art while opening up visual experiments of increasing complexity.
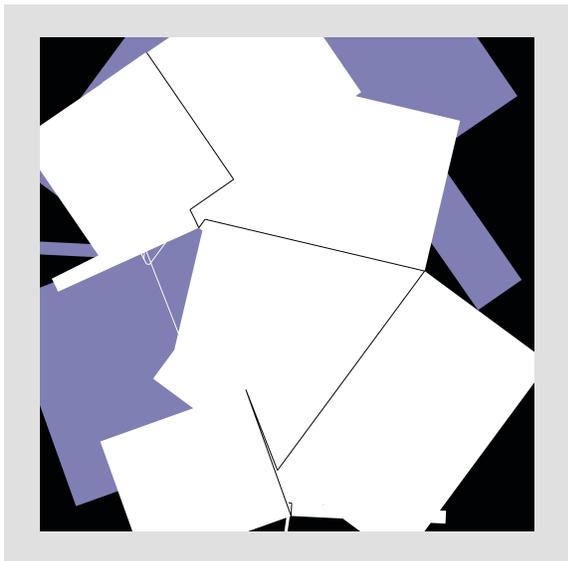
From left:
P1414_4178, 2011 and *P1414_148*, 2010
parallelResonance Series
Pigment ink on canvas
31 x 31 inches each
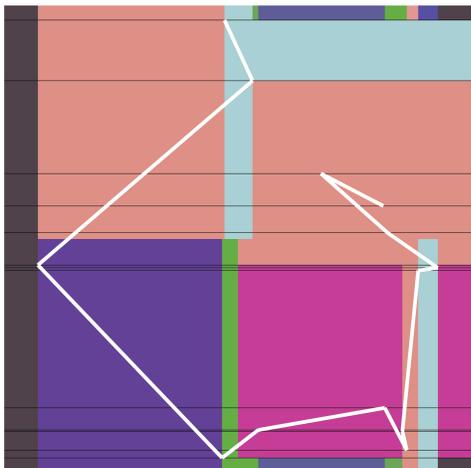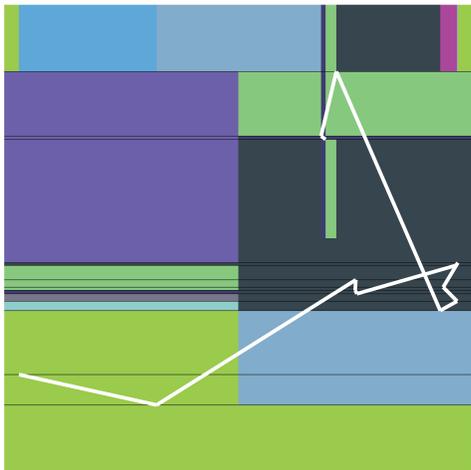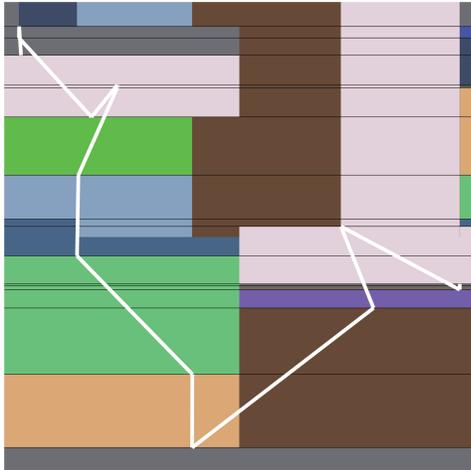
Mohr has since developed a prolific and varied oeuvre based on a rigorous exploration of the logical structure of geometric forms—cubes, hypercubes, lines, and planes, and the relationships among them. Mohr has frequently stated that the rules of geometry, logic, and mathematics are fundamental to the algorithms he creates to generate his work, and that for him the structure of the cube is "a system and an alphabet." He has used the multi-dimensional cube in 3, 4, 5, 6 and 11 dimensions to explore structural relationships and their artistic potential as a system of visual signs or "*êtres graphiques*". At the same time, a constant throughout Mohr's work up to the present has been his interest in developing a visual language comparable in some way to music. Not only does Mohr speak often about his work as "visual music," but he has referred to his visual constructions as "sound in space," or lines that "resound" in a visible equilibrium... similar to the counterpoint of a sequence of notes in music.[3] This sensibility infuses his geometric constellations with rhythm, repetition, and a sense of dynamic movement and lyricism within their structured algorithmic formulas.

Mohr's astute investigation and transformation of geometric concepts and structures into works of art have taken the form of abstract

From top:
P1611_21, *P1611_10*, and *P1611_24*, 2012
Artificiata II Series
Pigment ink on canvas
35.5 x 35.5 inches each

drawings, paintings, film, and works on LCD screens. He has said:

"I am profoundly interested in abstract relations. An abstract construct, for the purpose of my work, is a visual entity created or invented from a set of rules showing new relations and meanings as well as solutions. An abstract entity is therefore never a re-interpretation of a world we already know. It is, so to speak, a door to the unknown of understanding human thinking. An abstract content of a work is the purest form of transmitting aesthetic information."[4]

Though grounded in prescribed processes of seemingly rigid mathematical systems, the aesthetic results are captivating and sometimes unpredictable works of art that stretch our cognitive apprehension of line, form, and composition, while conveying the expansive, even potentially infinite capability of computer-generated geometric formations.

Margo Ann Crutchfield
Curator at Large
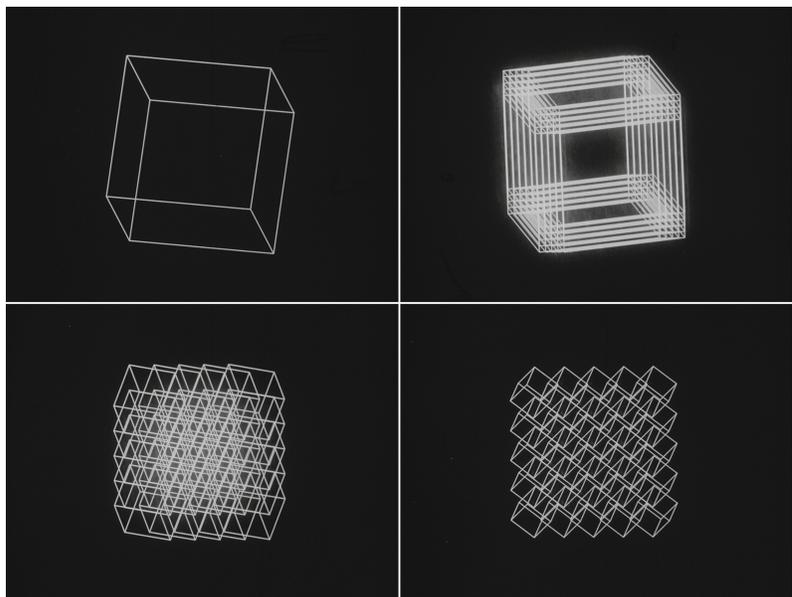
Stills from *Cubic Limit,* 1973-1974
16 mm computer-generated film
Duration 4:01
Dimensions variable

Notes

[1] Max Bense (1910-1990) was a German philosopher known for his work in the philosophy of science, logic, aesthetics, and semiotics. He believed that classical humanism and modern technology constructively complemented one another and considered any artifact as an object for aesthetic analysis and mathematical evaluation. He facilitated the first exhibition of computer art, the *Colloquy on Aesthetics*, in Stuttgart in 1965.
[2] Pierre Barbaud (1911-1990) was the first musician in France, and the second in the world, to compose music with the computer.
[3] Kurtz, Thomas, et al. "The Courage of One's Convictions." *Manfred Mohr*. Zurich: Wasser Verlag, 1994. Print.
[4] Waelder, Pau. "Interview with Manfred Mohr: Art as a Calculation." June 22, 2012. Print.

P-1011/I1, 2011
Pigment ink on canvas
66 x 51 inches each

About the Exhibition

This exhibition presents a focused selection of works in which Mohr's systematic, yet creative exploration of the world of geometry is evidenced. Included are:

o Five of Mohr's classic film shorts from the early 1970s are presented on iPads. These works visualize a three-dimensional cube that is rotated, multiplied, divided, and abstracted for four minutes, moving through seemingly endless variations of what the cubic form can be.

o Three custom software, Mac mini, and LCD screen works in which compositional elements of line, shape, and color are continually formulated and reformulated, constantly moving and evolving through space. A work from each of the *parallelResonance* Series (2010-2014), the *Artificiata II* Series (2012-2014), the *Subsets* Series (2005-2014) are represented.

o Ten pigment ink on canvas paintings from 2004–2013. These works are still frames from the *parallelResonance*, *Artificiata II*, and *Subsets* Series printed on canvas.

Works in the Exhibition
All works from collection of the artist and courtesy of bitforms Gallery, New York City

P1622-H, 2012-2014
Artificiata II
LCD screen + Mac mini
18 x 18 x 4 inches

P1411-I, 2010-2014.
parallelResonance
LCD screen + Mac mini
18 x 18 x 4 inches

P1011-ml, 2005-2014
Subsets
LCD screen + Mac mini
18 x 14 x 4 inches

P1611_10723, 2012-2013
Artificiata Series
Pigment ink on canvas
48 x 48 inches
Collection of the artist

P1611_2, 2012
Artificiata Series
Pigment ink on canvas
35.5 x 35.5 inches

P1611_24, 2012
Artificiata Series
Pigment ink on canvas
35.5 x 35.5 inches

P1611_21, 2012
Artificiata Series
Pigment ink on canvas
35.5 x 35.5 inches

P1611_10, 2012
Artificiata Series
Pigment ink on canvas
35.5 x 35.5 inches

P1414_12214, 2011
parallelResonance Series
Pigment ink on canvas
31 x 31 inches

P1414_4178, 2011
parallelResonance Series
Pigment ink on canvas
31x 31 inches

P1414_14046, 2011
parallelResonance Series
Pigment ink on canvas
31 x 31 inches

P1414_148, 2010
parallelResonance Series
Pigment ink on canvas
31 x 31 inches

P1011-M, 2004
parallelResonance Series
Pigment ink on canvas
51 x 51 inches

Complementary Cubes, 1973-1974
16 mm computer-generated film
In digital format displayed on iPad
Duration 5:39

Cubic Limit, 1973-1974
16 mm computer-generated film
In digital format displayed on iPad
Duration 4:01

Square Roots, 1972-1973
16 mm computer-generated film
In digital format displayed on iPad
Duration 3:48

Transformation I, 1972-1973
16 mm computer-generated film
In digital format displayed on iPad
Duration 1:20

Cube Transformation Study, 1972
16 mm computer-generated film
In digital format displayed on iPad
Duration 0:27

P-1011/F1, 2005
Pigment ink on canvas
66 x 51 inches each

About the Artist

Born in Germany (1938 in Pforzheim), Mohr studied at the École de Beaux Arts in Paris where he lived for 20 years before moving to New York City, where he has lived since 1981. His work has been shown in and is in the collections of major museums in the United States, Europe, and Japan, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Museum Ludwig, Cologne; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, among others. Mohr has been the subject of major retrospectives, most recently at the ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie) in Karlsruhe (2013), as well as numerous solo and group exhibitions, such as those at the Kunsthalle Bremen, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, and the Museum of Modern Art San Francisco.

Mohr is the recipient of an ACM SIGGRAPH Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement in Digital Art; Golden Nica from Ars Electronica; the Camille Graesser-Preis, Zurich; D.velop Digital Art Award; and a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship.
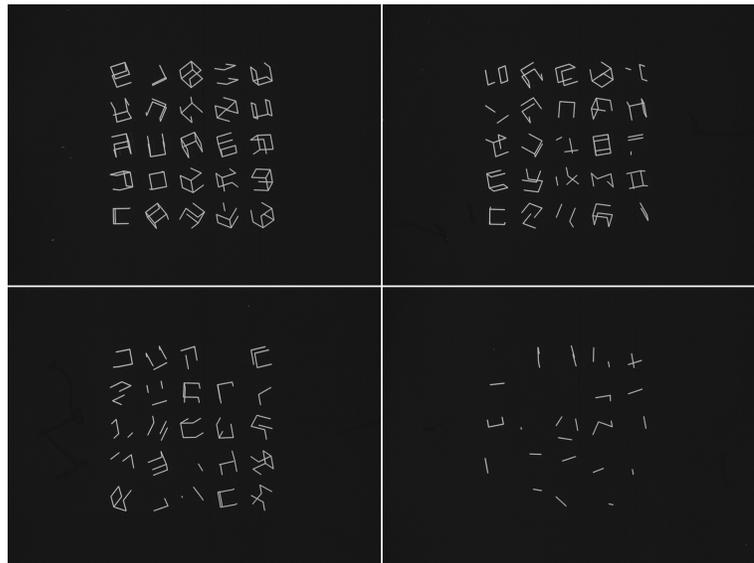
For more information visit:

emohr.com
bitforms.com/artists/mohr

Stills from *Cubic Limit,* 1973-1974
16 mm computer-generated film
Duration 4:01
Dimensions variable

About the Center for the Arts

Launched in 2005 as an arts initiative, Arts at Virginia Tech encompasses all efforts within departments and colleges and at the university level to expand creative practice and support interdisciplinary learning, engagement, and discovery through the arts. The cornerstone project of Virginia Tech Arts is the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech professional presenting program, which is housed in the Moss Arts Center. The university-level Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT), with which the Center for the Arts is uniquely partnered, is also housed in the Moss Arts Center.

For more information about this and future exhibitions, performances, and events, please visit **www.artscenter.vt.edu.**

Evolving Geometries: Line, Form, and Color
September 25-November 20

Building on the rich tradition of geometric abstraction, three one-person exhibitions take the visual language of line, form, and color in compelling directions.

Manfred Mohr

Francis T. Eck Exhibition Corridor
Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

Odili Donald Odita

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery
Grand Lobby

Patrick Wilson

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Gallery Hours

Tuesday-Friday, 10 AM-6 PM
Saturday and Sunday, 10 AM-4 PM
Closed Saturday, Sept. 27 and Nov. 1 (Virginia Tech home football games)

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