

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GEORG KARL PFAHLER



5 NOVEMBER 2021– 8 JANUARY 2022
PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2021, 6-8PM
SIMON LEE GALLERY, HONG KONG

Simon Lee Gallery Hong Kong is proud to present German painter Georg Karl Pfahler's first solo exhibition in Asia, coming ahead of a comprehensive survey at the gallery's London location in Spring 2022. The exhibition explores work made between 1965 and 1975, in a concise presentation that traces the evolution of Pfahler's works from his *Tex* and *Metro* series, begun in the early 1960s, to his later *Ost-West Transit* and *Espan* series that define Pfahler's practice during the 1970s.

Rising to prominence in the early 1960s, Pfahler is internationally recognised as one of the first hard-edge painters in Europe, renowned for his vibrant and colourful works. Born in 1926, he studied at the Kunstakademie Stuttgart under Willi Baumeister, graduating in 1954. Influenced by the tradition of European Art Informel, he quickly adopted an innovative abstract geometric painting style, with block-like forms on crisp backgrounds appearing on his canvases as early as 1962. Pfahler dedicated his entire career to the investigation of the relationship between colour, shape and space, an objective he steadfastly pursued until his death in 2002.

Highlights include three works from the artist's *Metro* series, in which Pfahler created refined compositions, removing the rectilinear structure of the canvas and re-shaping his own sinuous borders with bands of colour, as seen in *Touro VII* (1966-1968). The *Metro* paintings see Pfahler manipulate his medium to construct compositions that have more in common with architecture than traditional painting, engineering space through his devout trust in colour and form. Taking inspiration from close friends Barnett Newman and Josef Albers, Pfahler projected architectural space onto his monumental canvases using pure colour as building blocks, resulting in enthralling spatial explorations of line and colour typified in works like *Orbit I* (1968).

In the late 1970s Pfahler's work became increasingly gestural, as he introduced sweeping blocks of coloured shapes set against minimalistic black or white backgrounds, a stylistic preoccupation that continued to influence his work throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s. Pfahler's *Espan* series, which dominated this period, indicates a great rupture in the artist's direction. The bright luminosity of his earlier paintings is replaced by a more subdued duotone structure. In *Espan Nr.19* (1975) and others from the series we see a ritualistic sense of stature and stability manifested in the works' modular 2 x 2 metre dimensions. These are not simply celebrations of dynamic colour, but rather action paintings within which vibrant hues jostle against one another, in combat for compositional dominance.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Georg Karl Pfahler

Georg Karl Pfahler was born in Emetzheim, Germany in 1926 and died in 2002. He studied at the Kunstakademie Stuttgart under Willi Baumeister, graduating in 1954. Pfahler raised to prominence in the early 1960s as one of the first hard-edge painters in Europe. In 1965 he was included in the seminal group exhibition *Signale* at the Kunsthalle Basel. He represented Germany at the Venice Biennale in 1970 alongside Günther Uecker, Heinz Mack, and Thomas Lenk; and at the São Paulo Biennale in 1981. Other notable solo exhibitions include a major retrospective at Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Chemnitz, Germany (2001) which travelled to Von Der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal, Germany (2002); Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany (1990); Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland (1988) which travelled to multiple institutions in Poland; Kunsthalle Mannheim, Mannheim, Germany (1985) and Kunsthaus Zug, Zug, Switzerland (1979). His work is represented in major institutions and private collections including: Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany; Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Chemnitz, Germany; Bundestag, Berlin, Germany; Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nürnberg, Germany; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany; Folkswang Museum, Essen, Germany and Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, Germany.

About Simon Lee Gallery

Founded in London in 2002, Simon Lee Gallery represents artists of diverse generations whose practices explore a wide range of media, from sculpture and painting to video and photography, and who share a broad interest in an exploration of the conceptual. Aiming to provide a significant international audience for its artists, the gallery also regularly punctuates its programme with historical exhibitions and curated group shows, which present shifts in contemporary art practice and thought, whilst broadening the dialogue with artists outside of the gallery's core programme. In addition to its UK activity, in 2012 the gallery opened a space in Hong Kong, which introduced its artists to a wider public in Asia, with a fully independent programme. In 2014, Simon Lee Gallery opened an office and private viewing space in New York. In 2017, this space was re-launched with a year-round programme of exhibitions and events, showcasing the work of emerging and established artists in dynamic group and solo exhibitions.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @SimonLeeGallery
www.simonleegallery.com

Image: Georg Karl Pfahler, *Metro BB II*, 1965 – 1972. Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 160 x 5 cm (70 7/8 x 63 x 2 in.)
Courtesy of the estate of Georg Karl Pfahler and Simon Lee Gallery. © Georg Karl Pfahler Archive.

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