

Fragment of an Infinite Discourse.

Contemporary art from the Lenbachhaus, the gift of Jörg Johnen, and the KiCo Foundation

Opens June 28, 2023

Lenbachhaus

Fragment of an Infinite Discourse is the title of a work of art by the Mexican conceptual artist Mario García Torres. Three glass rings interlock without touching one another. The work serves as the exhibition's opening gambit and visualizes its program. It illustrates how subtly yet inextricably things are interwoven and prompts a variety of associations, sensations, and interpretations. As a basic geometric shape, the ring manifestly instantiates the infinite form of the circle. Adopted as the title of the exhibition, then, *Fragment of an Infinite Discourse* gestures toward the plethora of conceptual positions on view, while also suggesting the manifold ways in which the works can be construed and framed.

In the first room of the presentation, we encounter *Fragment of an Infinite Discourse* in dialogue with pieces by Giorgio Griffa, Prabhavathi Meppayil, and Karin Sander. Taken together, the works lay out a range of artistic methods and cultural traditions that are gathered in the gallery to communicate with, and to illuminate, each other. The show's focus is on the methods and work-specific logics of painting, conceptual art, and applied techniques.

The exhibition brings together the diverse protagonists of and positions in contemporary art represented in the Lenbachhaus's collections: The Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau's holdings of international postwar and contemporary art are founded on the accomplishments of the Blue Rider as the collection's cornerstone. On the one hand, these accomplishments consist of what Wassily Kandinsky called "great abstraction and great realism"—including the emancipation of color from the object. On the other hand, they reside in the artists' alertness to the world around them, their embrace of equality between the sexes and the arts, and always also a transnational dimension of their thinking. We remain committed to these ideas today and carry them forward into the future. They are fundamental to our understanding of our mission as a museum for a diverse society, wide audiences, and critical thinking. They are also evident in the museum's decision to acquire Joseph Beuys's environment *zeige deine Wunde* in 1979/80, which sparked public controversy at the time. The collection has grown steadily ever since: The KiCo Collection, which has complemented our own holdings since 1999, likewise grew out of the collector's enthusiasm for practices in painting that dissolve figuration into color and light. It ranges from works of visual art that forgo any aspiration to painterly representation in favor of a pure experience of color, as in Josef Albers, Mojé Assefjah, and Marcia Hafif, to critical engagements with politics and society in film, photography, and installation art, as in General Idea, Dominique Gonzales-Foerster, and Wolfgang Tillmans. Works by Rosa Barba, Senga Nengudi, and Isa Melsheimer are the most recent accessions we present in *Fragment of an Infinite Discourse*.

In 2023, we welcome another private collection bestowed on the museum as a permanent and unconditional gift: the collection of Jörg Johnen. Its emphasis on painterly and conceptual positions ideally complements the Lenbachhaus's and the KiCo Collection's holdings. Jörg

Johnen's collection derives its specific qualities from the richly varied professional experience and the expertise he gathered in his career. Johnen ran a gallery with an international client base for decades, and one key to his success were his critical ambitions as an art historian, which lent his gallery's programming unusual credibility and won recognition in the art world at large. His work as a collector, that is to say, was fueled not only by passion, but also by the intellectual interests of an open mind.

His repertoire accordingly includes women artists who are only now drawing sustained interest from museums: Maria Bartusová, Maureen Gallace, Beate Kuhn, and Wiebke Siem. It also adds eminent works to our holdings of positions the Lenbachhaus started collecting but was unable to expand on from its own financial resources, including our bodies of work by Rodney Graham, Wade Guyton, and Jeff Wall.

His gift moreover helps us close gaps that have been palpable in the Lenbachhaus's holdings. Much of the collection was focused on the Western arts scene, and Eastern Europe was largely invisible in our galleries. Works by Maria Bartusová, Florin Mitroi, Roman Ondak, and Wilhelm Sasnal mark a major step toward closing this gap. After Sheela Gowda and Tejal Shah, we welcome in Prabhavathi Meppayil another artist who enlarges our collection beyond its longstanding limitation to (Western) Europe and North America. Similarly, the Lenbachhaus had nothing or very little by conceptual "heavyweights" including Katharina Fritsch, Mario García Torres, Rodney Graham, and Stephen Prina.

Last but not least, our collection is enriched by the addition of works operating in the hybrid area between applied design and fine art. They attest to the lively and dynamic interactions between the arts: at the time of the Blue Rider, fine and applied art did not just exist side by side as equally valued disciplines, the latter was a prolific source of inspiration for the former as well. In the KiCo and Johnen Collections and the works by Maria Bartusová, Beate Kuhn, Johannes Nagel, Isa Melsheimer, and Phil Sims, this symbiotic relationship is now also reflected in our holdings.

Fragment of an Infinite Discourse was conceived in honor of the gift by Jörg Johnen. It is presented together with selections from the collections of the Lenbachhaus and the KiCo Foundation.

Rosa Barba
Maria Bartusová
AA Bronson
David Claerbout
Katharina Fritsch
Maureen Gallace
Ryan Gander
Mario García Torres
General Idea
Rodney Graham
Giorgio Griffa
Wade Guyton
Eberhard Havekost
Olaf Holzapfel
Rainer Jochims

On Kawara
Barbara Klemm
Fritz Klemm
Beate Kuhn
Isa Melsheimer
Prabhavathi Meppayil
Florin Mitroi
Johannes Nagel
Senga Nengudi
Roman Ondak
Helga Paris
Stephen Prina
Anri Sala
Karin Sander
Wilhelm Sasnal
Tino Sehgal
Wiebke Siem
Phil Sims
Florian Süßmayr
Rosemarie Trockel
Jeff Wall
Peter Welz