

The Museum of Modern Art

No. 34

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIRST PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF MONDRIAN'S STUDIO WALL COMPOSITIONS OPENS AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ON JULY 14

The first public showing of the environmental compositions that were pinned to the walls of Piet Mondrian's studio at the time of the great Dutch artist's death in New York in 1944 will take place in MONDRIAN: NEW YORK STUDIO COMPOSITIONS, an exhibition that will open at The Museum of Modern Art on July 14, 1983. Featuring material from the collection of Mondrian's friend, the artist Harry Holtzman, the exhibition will recreate Mondrian's studio wall arrangements. It will also present original photographic documentation, a video presentation of the studio, and a selection of related drawings and paintings, including Mondrian's last finished painting Broadway Boogie Woogie and his uncompleted final work Victory Boogie Woogie. Organized by Magdalena Dabrowski, Assistant Curator in the Department of Drawings, the exhibition will remain on view in the Museum's ground floor galleries through September 27, 1983.

As early as 1924, Mondrian used his studio as a laboratory for testing and developing his abstract, Neo-Plastic theories of universal harmony, which he had enunciated in the magazine de Stijl in 1917. Neo-Plasticism expressed Mondrian's conviction that the universal order underlying all the variations and irregularities found in Nature could be conveyed in a system of definite relationships based on such fundamental elements as the straight line, the right angle, and the primary colors red, blue, and yellow.

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In his studio, Mondrian explored his theory of art as an environment, which formed the basis of his idea of an architecture for the future. He attached squares of colored cardboard directly to the white walls of his studio and arranged the furniture to reflect the rectangular relationships of the compositions on the walls so that the rooms themselves became large still lifes. The ultimate goal of Mondrian's theories was the creation of a "harmonious material environment," in which all elements--furniture, household objects, and architecture--formed a unified whole.

The elements reconstructed for the exhibition consist of four distinct compositions that were executed in fall 1943-winter 1944 on four different walls of Mondrian's studio at 15 East 59 Street, New York. These compositions, notes Magdalena Dabrowski, "represent fragments of a larger decorative scheme that unified Mondrian's studio, document the nature of his "laboratory," and show the tangible methods by which he worked out his desire to impart to the picture a "real" existence." Information about the studio comes from Mondrian's friend Harry Holtzman, who at the time of the artist's death, filmed and photographed the entire studio, made tracings of the walls to document the arrangements of the squares of colored cardboard, and then removed and preserved the elements.

In addition, the exhibition will present in enlarged format about a dozen black-and-white photographs of Mondrian's various studios and a continuous video presentation of 20 color views of his last studio at 59 Street. A number of drawings and paintings that Mondrian was working on during the last years of his life will also be included.

June 1983

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