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The Museum of Modern Art

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EXHIBITION PRESENTS A DIVERSE SELECTION OF WHITE MONOCHROMATIC WORKS

White Spectrum
November 5, 2000-January 30, 2001
Third Floor

New York, November 2000 - *White Spectrum* features a selection of white monochromatic works that reflect a rich variety of the formal effects, as well as the ethical positions and the social undertones, that are attainable within the white spectrum. In the history of modernism, the choice of an all-white palette has meant different things to different artists, ranging from mystical purity to emotional detachment. Starting with Kasimir Malevich's 1918 painting *White on White*, the exhibition highlights paintings, sculptures, drawings, and photographs from more recent decades, emphasizing the ways in which contemporary artists have revisited the idea of the white monochrome. *White Spectrum* includes some 30 works by Uta Barth, Marcel Broodthaers, Jasper Johns, Glenn Ligon, Agnes Martin, Vik Muniz, Robert Ryman, Karin Sanders, and Rachel Whiteread. Organized by Lilian Tone, Assistant Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, the exhibition is on view as part of *Open Ends* from November 5, 2000 through January 30, 2001.

Malevich's Suprematist painting *White on White* was one of the most radical paintings of its day. Although the geometric abstraction is nearly devoid of color, the work is not impersonal, showing texture and subtle variations in the whites to create a sense of floating and transcendence. For Malevich, art represented a universal language free of associations with the real world.

The white monochrome has been revisited in numerous ways by contemporary artists. Glenn Ligon's painting *White No. 19* (1994), which in contrast to its title is a black monochrome painting, addresses social and racial questions about whiteness. Another work, Vik Muniz's provocative series, *The Sugar Children* (1996), comprises six portraits of children of sugar plantation workers he met on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts. After taking Polaroids of his subjects, Muniz recreated the images using white granulated sugar on dark paper and photographed the results.

Other works are more subtle and ethereal. For instance, Karin Sander's *Wallpiece* (1994) is a small, nearly invisible square of polished wall paint, while the circular shapes in Robert Irwin's Untitled work from 1968 are created from an interplay between light and shadow. And like Muniz, Wolfgang Laib uses an unlikely pairing of materials in *Milk Stone*, a nearly flat slab of white marble coated with a layer of milk. Also featured in the exhibition is Rachel Whiteread's room-sized installation, Untitled (*Paperbacks*) (1997), a ghostly plaster cast of shelves of paperbacks that suggests a library without books.

SPONSORSHIP

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