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ZERO

COUNTDOWN TO TOMORROW, 1950s-60s

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GUGGENHEIM

Published on the occasion of the exhibition *ZERO: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s–60s*
Organized by Valerie Hillings with Edouard Derom

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
October 10, 2014–January 7, 2015

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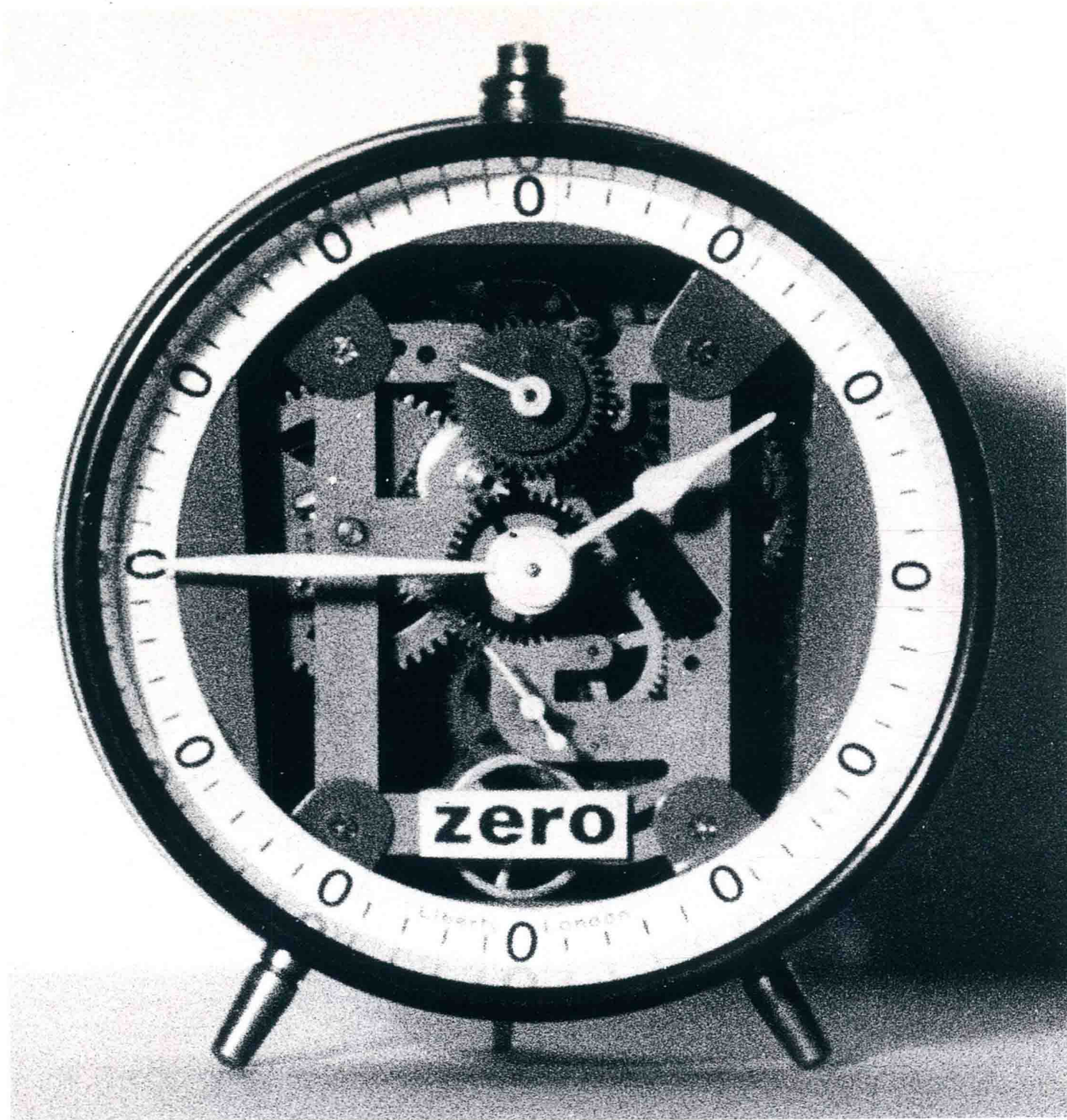
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Additional funding is provided by Rachel and Jean-Pierre Lehmann, LLWW Foundation, the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, Anna and Gerhard Lenz, Mondriaan Fund, The David W. Bermant Foundation, and an anonymous donor.

Support for this exhibition is also provided by Sperone Westwater; Beck & Eggeling International Fine Art; Cees and Inge de Bruin; Sigifredo di Canossa; Patrick Derom; Yvonne and Edward Hillings; Dominique Lévy Gallery; Nicole and Jean-Claude Marian; The Mayor Gallery; Mnuchin Gallery; Achim Moeller, Moeller Fine Art, New York; Robert and Irmgard Rademacher Family; David Zwirner, New York/London; Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. Stuttgart; Walter and Nicole Leblanc Foundation; Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany New York; The Government of Flanders through Flanders House New York; and Netherland-America Foundation.

FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I offer my patronage in support of ZERO: *Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s–60s*, which features a network of artists who worked in various European countries in the late 1950s and the '60s and who consciously and frequently crossed borders to meet and collaborate. An important starting point in the history of this post-World War II phenomenon was the 1957 founding of the artists' group Zero by Heinz Mack and Otto Piene in Düsseldorf. They founded Group Zero the same year that European political leaders came together in Rome to sign *The Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community*, laying the foundation of today's European Union—a fact that points to the shared desire of that generation to reconcile and establish connections, healing the wounds of a continent so recently divided. The more than forty artists in this exhibition displayed an optimism and focus on the future

that reflects a wish, in the aftermath of the destruction of World War II, to build an international community of peace and prosperity, in which one need not be afraid to challenge past traditions with new and revolutionary ideas.

It is most appropriate that the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, a New York-based but truly global institution, serves as the venue for this large-scale survey of ZERO, which brought together artists from Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United States, and Venezuela. The project also testifies to the long, fruitful, and ongoing history of cultural exchange between Europe and the United States.

Herman Van Rompuy

President of the European Council

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

ZERO: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s–60s is the first large-scale historical survey in the United States dedicated to the German artists' group Zero, founded in 1957 by Düsseldorf-based artists Heinz Mack and Otto Piene and joined in 1961 by Günther Uecker. The larger ZERO network of artists from Europe, Japan, and North and South America—including Enrico Castellani, Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Jan Schoonhoven, Jesús Rafael Soto, and Jean Tinguely—shared the core group's aspiration to define a forward-looking vision for art in the aftermath of World War II. That war and its long-lasting effects, social and physical, form a backdrop to all that we see here.

The exhibition demonstrates the role artists in this loose network played in the transformation of art in the late 1950s and the '60s, not only through their experimental artistic production but also because of the international scope of their activities. They sought to advance an approach to art that ran counter to the emphasis on personal expression and existentialism that characterized the then-dominant European art styles known as Tachisme and Art Informel. *ZERO*, which includes more than forty artists from ten countries, highlights the defining artworks, exhibitions, and publications that represent the artists' shared history, pointing to the intersections and commonalities in their strategies. In addition to elucidating the broader history of the ZERO network, whose production anticipated aspects of Conceptual art, Land art, and Minimalism, this presentation acknowledges the achievements of individual artists, a number of whom are still not widely known. At once a snapshot of a specific group of artists and a portrait of a generation, it celebrates the pioneering nature of both their art and their transnational vision.

Over the course of the last three years, a research project dedicated to the international ZERO network has been conducted by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the ZERO foundation, Düsseldorf; and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. The Guggenheim's exhibition and the ZERO exhibitions being organized by the ZERO foundation at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam each derive from that research

project. Valerie Hillings, Curator and Manager, Curatorial Affairs, Abu Dhabi Project, played a leading role in that research project and curated the current exhibition. Drawing on her scholarly expertise and working in consultation with artists, scholars, curators, foundations, and other experts in the field, she developed a show that promotes a greater understanding of the major contributions of both Group Zero and the artists of the ZERO network, thereby encouraging a rethinking of the art-historical canon.

An exhibition of this scale obliges the support of generous and farsighted patrons. We owe tremendous gratitude to the Leadership Committee for *ZERO: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s–60s*, with special thanks to The George Economou Collection, as well as to Larry Gagosian; Axel Vervoordt Gallery; Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson; Rachel and Jean-Pierre Lehmann; Anna and Gerhard Lenz; Sperone Westwater; Beck & Eggeling International Fine Art; Cees and Inge de Bruin; Sigifredo di Canossa; Patrick Derom; Yvonne and Edward Hillings; Dominique Lévy Gallery; Nicole and Jean-Claude Marian; The Mayor Gallery; Mnuchin Gallery; Achim Moeller, Moeller Fine Art, New York; Robert and Irmgard Rademacher Family; David Zwirner, New York/London; and those who wish to remain anonymous. The Guggenheim Museum is also grateful for the generosity of the LLWW Foundation, the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, Mondriaan Fund, The David W. Bermant Foundation, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. Stuttgart, Walter and Nicole Leblanc Foundation, Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany New York, The Government of Flanders through Flanders House New York, and Netherland-America Foundation. And we express our sincere appreciation to Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, for his gracious patronage of this exhibition. Finally, we offer our deep gratitude to the nearly seventy lenders (see p. 7) whose cooperation has enabled us to present a truly historic survey of ZERO.

Richard Armstrong

Director, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibition's long history dates back more than fifteen years to the start of my research for a doctoral thesis at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, where my advisors, Robert Lubar and the late Nan Rosenthal and Robert Rosenblum, encouraged and supported my work on artists' groups active in Europe from 1957 to 1968, including ZERO. My "life with ZERO" began with interviews and correspondence with the artists Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, and Almir Mavignier and a visit to the important exhibition *ZERO aus Deutschland 1957–1966: Und heute* curated by Renate Wiehager at the Villa Merkel, Galerien der Stadt Esslingen, Germany, in 1999. Fast-forwarding to 2006, I had the honor of contributing an essay to the major ZERO exhibition organized by the Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf, which two years later established—along with Mack, Piene, and Günther Uecker, and with support from the Düsseldorf City Council—the ZERO foundation. In 2008, New York's Sperone Westwater had the perspicacity to present *ZERO in NY*, a project conceived and realized by David Leiber, then Director at the gallery, and ZERO foundation Director Tijs Visser. This show introduced to a largely uninitiated audience the diversity and richness of the art produced by artists associated with ZERO.

Richard Armstrong, Director, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, recognized the opportunity for the Guggenheim to organize the first ZERO survey at a major United States museum, and entered into a series of conversations within the organization and with the ZERO foundation and Ann Goldstein, then Director of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, about developing such an ambitious project. In 2011 the ZERO foundation established a Scientific Board comprising its staff members and a team of scholars and curators working in different countries on various aspects of ZERO's history; I joined Tiziana Caianiello, Beate Kemfert, Antoon Melissen, Andres Pardey, Johan Pas, Francesca Pola, Dirk Pörschmann, Margriet Schavemaker, Ulrike Schmidt, Tijs Visser, and Thekla Zell on this board. The Scientific Board has held ongoing critical debates among its members, with other experts in the field, and with the artists, to determine how best to map the history of the international ZERO network. We decided that using exhibitions, publications, and demonstrations from 1957 to 1967 to frame this joint project, which we named the "ZEROgraphy," would be fruitful. In parallel with this activity, Schavemaker, Curator/Head of Research & Publications at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Visser, and I, together with my colleague at the Guggenheim, Edouard Derom, Curatorial Assistant, held a series of meetings over a two-year period to assess

how the findings might be translated into exhibitions and publications. The results of this work are three distinctive exhibitions: the Guggenheim Museum's *ZERO: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s–60s*, and shows organized for 2015 by the ZERO foundation at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. In conceiving the current presentation, I worked closely with my colleagues on the Scientific Board, and I wish to thank them all, with special acknowledgment to Melissen, Pas, Pörschmann, Schavemaker, Visser, and most especially Pola. I would additionally like to express my appreciation to the staff of the ZERO foundation for their ongoing research support and assistance with photographic materials.

Chief among the contributors to this exhibition have been the artists, and the families, archives, and foundations of those artists who are no longer with us. First and foremost, I am grateful to Heinz and Ute Mack, Otto and Elizabeth Piene, and Günther, Christine, and Jacob Uecker, who provided initial inspiration in 2012 with their admonition not to underestimate the importance of dreaming, and have since given so generously of their advice, memories, and time. Edouard and I also had the privilege of consulting with Armando, Bernard Aubertin, Enrico Castellani, Jan Henderikse, Almir Mavignier, Christian Megert, Henk Peeters (who died in 2013), Uli Pohl, Daniel Spoerri, Nanda Vigo, and Herman de Vries. This project has benefited greatly from the support and collaboration of Federico Sardella at the Archivio Enrico Castellani, Milan; Corinna De Vecchi at the Archive Gianni Colombo, Milan; Kitty Kemr and Klaudija Kosanović at the Estate Gotthard Graubner; Daniel Moquay, Rotraut Klein-Moquay, and Charlotte Ménard at the Yves Klein Archives, Paris; Géraldine Chaffic at the Walter and Nicole Leblanc Foundation, Brussels; Magdalena Broska at the Adolf-Luther-Stiftung, Krefeld, Germany; Rosalia Pasqualino di Marineo and Agnese Boschini at the Fondazione Piero Manzoni, Milan; and Nathalie Boutin of the gb agency, Paris, who provided vital assistance with the films of Robert Breer. Corice Arman, Velma Bury, Philip Rickey, Leonore Verheyen, and Jan De Vree also offered crucial input. The staff members of Atelier Prof. Heinz Mack were a critical resource, Sigrid Bruijtel and Yvonne Ploum proved tremendously helpful with the selection of Armando's work, and Gloria Franchi at the Archivio Nanda Vigo, Milan, is also to be thanked.

The other essential partners in realizing this exhibition have been our exceedingly generous private and institutional lenders: A arte Invernizzi, Milan; Arman Marital Trust, Corice Arman Trustee; Armando; Beck & Eggeling,

Düsseldorf; Jane and Allen Boorstein, New York; Clarissa and Edgar Bronfman Jr.; Caldic Collectie, Wassenaar, Netherlands; Enrico Castellani; Mr. and Mrs. Nicolas Cattelain, London; Centraal Museum, Utrecht; Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle; Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros; Archive Gianni Colombo, Milan; Patrick Derom Gallery, Brussels; The George Economou Collection, Athens; Estate Gotthard Graubner; Fondazione Piero Manzoni, Milan; Fondazione Marconi, Milan; Foundation MUSEION. Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Bolzano, Italy; Gagosian Gallery; Galerie Reckermann, Cologne; gb agency, Paris; Glenstone, Potomac, Maryland; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi; Hauser & Wirth; HEART—Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark; Intesa Sanpaolo Collection, Milan; Kravis Collection; Kunstmuseen Krefeld, Germany; Sammlung Lenz Schönberg; Leopold-Hoesch-Museum & Papiermuseum Düren, Hubertus Schoeller Stiftung, Germany; Adolf-Luther-Stiftung, Krefeld, Germany; Almir Mavignier; The Mayor Gallery, London; Collection Christian and Franziska Megert; The Menil Collection, Houston; Moeller Fine Art, New York; Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (M HKA), Antwerp; Otto and Elizabeth Piene; Uli Pohl; Helga and Edzard Reuter, Stuttgart; Rira Collection; Robilant + Voena, London and Milan; Dieter Roth Estate; SCHAUWERK Sindelfingen, Germany; Hubertus Schoeller; Jack and Shirley Silver Collection; Gian Enzo Sperone; Sperone Westwater, New York; Daniel Spoerri; Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main; Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Netherlands; Studio Mack; Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois; Joke and Dick Veeze; Ronny and Jessy Van de Velde; Axel and May Vervoordt Foundation, Wijnegem, Belgium; Archivio Nanda Vigo, Milan; herman de vries; susanne jacob de vries; Manfred Wandel Collection, Stiftung für konkrete Kunst, Reutlingen, Germany; ZERO foundation, Düsseldorf; and those lenders who wish to remain anonymous. I would like to echo Richard Armstrong in expressing my gratitude to the members of the Leadership Committee, especially The George Economou Collection and Axel Vervoordt Gallery, and the foundations and institutions that have lent critical support to ZERO. A number of colleagues in the field provided invaluable advice and assistance throughout the project, among them Catherine Carniaux, Liliane Dewachter, Paul Dujardin, Amy Gold, Kay Heymer, Colin Huizing, Epicarmo Invernizzi, David Leiber,

James Mayor, Alice Richard, Lees Ruoff, Harry Schmitz, Hubertus Schoeller, Philippe Siauue, Skarlet Smatana, Emilio Steinberger, Günther Thorn, Andreas Timmer, Boris Vervoordt, and Beat Wismer.

The scholarly aspirations of this project are richly fulfilled by the essays in this publication, and I am grateful for the contributions of my esteemed colleagues Daniel Birnbaum, Edouard Derom, Johan Pas, Dirk Pörschmann, and Margriet Schavemaker. Jean Wilcox has designed a catalogue that is sensitive to the language of ZERO and reflective of the overall vision of the Guggenheim's exhibition. My thanks to our outstanding Publishing and Digital Media team for their tireless work and professionalism, which is evident in every detail of this book.

I also wish to acknowledge my Guggenheim colleagues listed as the Project Team (pp. 14–15), who have made this exhibition possible—a genuine and impressive achievement given the many artists, lenders, and contributors involved in developing and realizing the final product. I would particularly like to recognize the fundamental roles played by Jennifer Bose, Melanie Taylor, MaryLouise Napier, Eliza Stoner, Yayoi Shionoiri, and Aviva Rubin. I am personally grateful for the encouragement and input of Nancy Spector, Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator; Susan Davidson, Senior Curator, Collections and Exhibitions; and Alexandra Munroe, Samsung Senior Curator, Asian Art. I would like to thank Juan Ignacio Vidarte, Deputy Director and Chief Officer for Global Strategies, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, and Director General, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, and Rita Aoun-Abdo, Executive Director—Culture Sector, and Verena Formanek, Senior Project Manager, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, both of the Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority, for their support. And I must express my profound gratitude to Edouard Derom, who has been my copilot throughout the journey to realize this exhibition. His keen eye, intellect, and unwavering dedication made all the difference, and I cannot imagine the project having come to fruition without him.

Finally, as this book went to print, we lost Otto Piene. Piene remained faithful to the spirit of ZERO to the end of his life, and it is fitting to conclude by noting that this exhibition and publication celebrate an enduring belief in what he referred to as the “pure possibilities for a new beginning.”

Valerie Hillings

Curator and Manager, Curatorial Affairs, Abu Dhabi Project,
Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation