



ABC - ARTE
Contemporary Art Gallery

Via XX Settembre 11 A
Genoa 16121 - Italy

www.abc-arte.com



Tomas Rajlich **Black Paintings 1976-79**

8 October 2020 - 07 January 2021

catalogue curated by Michele Robecchi
with critical text by Flaminio Gualdoni

The ABC-ARTE gallery will inaugurate *Black Paintings: 1976-79* at 18:00 hrs on Thursday 8 October. This large-scale exhibition is dedicated to the work of Tomas Rajlich. In a partial retrospective, it concentrates on a cycle of works that was originally exhibited in a one-man show at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague in 1979. This marked the end of a period in which the artist had conducted an in-depth exploration of the potential of the colour black in dialogue with a geometric approach that made Rajlich one of the protagonists of Fundamental Painting in Europe.

Faithful to the idea of monochrome and interested in a fundamental interpretation of the minimalist aesthetic, Rajlich's approach to painting coincided with a historical moment in which the arrival of conceptual art seemed to have relegated painting to a secondary position. Setting out from a core of works characterised by an industrial look and a modular quality, Rajlich successively set out to explore the combination of the impersonal, the gesture and the creative force of light. The latter is combined with several variations of intensity and colour, radically modifying the surface of the painting and bringing out the two-dimensionality of the object.

The group of works that form *Black Paintings* bears witness to one of the most important stages in Rajlich's career. After exhausting the stimulus that had driven him to explore the rigorously monochrome potential of painting, the artist went on to introduce gold in his compositions, continuing to appeal to the sensibility of the viewer and to question the potential of the painting without abandoning the basic principles of his investigation.

The opening of the exhibition will also be the occasion for the presentation of the new monographic volume dedicated to the artist by ABC-ARTE edizioni, edited by Michele Robecchi and with a critical contribution by Flaminio Gualdoni.

Tomas Rajlich
Black Paintings: 1976-79

8 October 2020 - 7 January 2021

Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday 9:30 - 13:30 and 14:30 - 18:30

Sunday and Monday by appointment

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Tomas Rajlich - short biography:

Born in Prague in 1940, Tomas Rajlich studied there at the School of Decorative Arts and the Fine Art Academy. In 1967 he founded the group Klub Konkretistů, which was orientated towards the international neo-avantgardes represented by Azimut in Italy, ZERO in Germany and Nul in the Netherlands. In 1968 his work was first presented on the international scene when he participated in the exhibition *Sculpture Tchécoslovaque* in the Musée Rodin in Paris.

He went into exile from Czechoslovakia in 1969 after the Soviet invasion and moved to Amsterdam, where he became a teacher at the Vrije Academie. Rajlich's interest in the construction of monochrome works on geometrically regular grids was immediately viewed favourably in the climate of Dutch conceptualism.

He held fundamental solo exhibitions in 1974 in the Yvon Lambert gallery in Paris, Art & Project in Amsterdam, and Françoise Lambert in Milan, which were his key galleries for many years. In 1975 he featured with Brice Marden, Robert Ryman, Gerhard Richter and others in the memorable exhibition *Fundamentele schilderkunst : Fundamental painting* in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. It was a milestone in the international recognition of analytical painting.

In the following years Rajlich was invited to show his work in such fundamental exhibitions as *Elementaire Vormen* (travelling exhibition, 1975), *Fractures du Monochrome aujourd'hui en Europe* (Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1978) and *Bilder ohne Bilder* (Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn, 1978).

His work soon moved towards the recovery of a full colour dimension open to symbolic and poetic suggestions, more open gestures and an irrational vitalism when he admitted a spectrum ranging from yellow to red, pale blue to pink and even gold, without altering the process of rigorous elementary structuration of monochrome.

His first retrospective was held in Palazzo Martinengo, Brescia in 1993. His adoptive country, the Netherlands, honoured Rajlich with the prestigious Ouborg Award for his artistic contribution in 1994. On that occasion the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague inaugurated a second retrospective. Ten years later, in 2005, the same museum marked his sixty-fifth birthday with a retrospective of his works on paper.

In Czechia the Dům umění města Brna organised an anthological exhibition in 1998, while in 2008 the National Gallery of Prague opened a retrospective with 27 large canvases, followed by a one-man show in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague in 2016, Museum Kampa in Prague in 2017, and Museum Boijmans-Van Beuningen in Rotterdam in 2018.

Rajlich is rightly recognised as one of the leading figures of the international neo-avantgarde. From 1999 to 2002 he was artist in residence at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, whose collection includes works by him.

His works are also held by the Centraal Museum, Utrecht, the Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, Saint Étienne, the Musée Cantini, Marseille, Museum Boijmans-Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the National Gallery, Prague, the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation, Amsterdam, the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, the S.M.A.K., Ghent, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam, the Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden, and the Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft.



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List of attached works:

- 1 Tomas Rajlich, Untitled, 1978, 250x210cm, acrylic on linen
- 2 Tomas Rajlich, Untitled, 1978, 250x210cm, acrylic on linen (detail)
- 3 Tomas Rajlich, Untitled, (4 el.), 1976, 88x70cm each, acrylic on hardboard
- 4 Tomas Rajlich, Untitled, 1969, 23x23 cm, acrylic on wood
- 5 Tomas Rajlich, Untitled, 1977, 120x180 cm, acrylic on canvas
- 6 Tomas Rajlich. Black paintings: 1976-79 installation view
- 7 Tomas Rajlich. Black paintings: 1976-79 installation view