

WHITNEY

Press Release

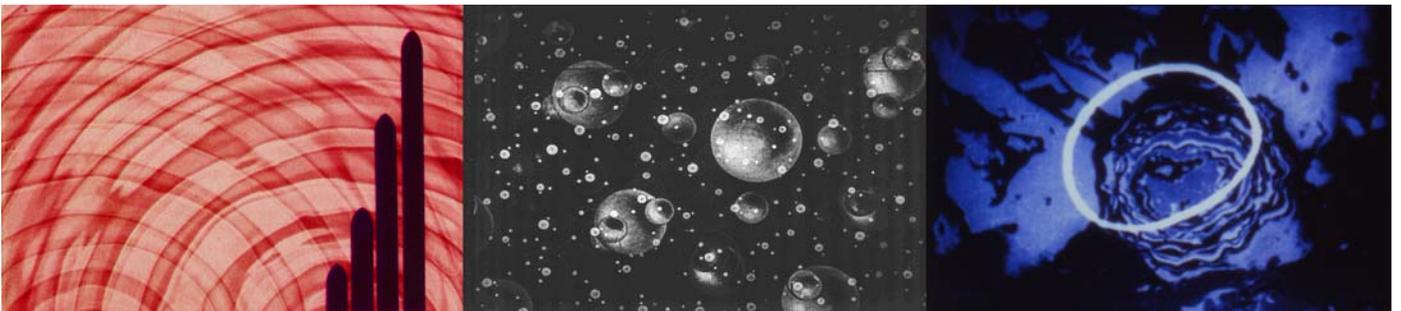
Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street
New York, NY 10021
whitney.org/press

Contacts: Stephen Soba, Molly Gross
Tel. (212) 570-3633
pressoffice@whitney.org

THE WHITNEY PRESENTS

OSKAR FISCHINGER: SPACE LIGHT ART – A FILM ENVIRONMENT

June 28 – October 28, 2012



Oskar Fischinger (1900-1967), *Raumlichtkunst*, 1926/2012. Three screen projection: three 35mm films transferred to high-definition video, black-and-white and color, sound; 10 minutes, looped. (c) Center for Visual Music.

NEW YORK, May 31, 2012 – This summer, the Whitney Museum of American Art presents *Oskar Fischinger: Space Light Art – A Film Environment*, on view from June 28 to October 28, 2012. The exhibition is curated by Chrissie Iles, the Whitney’s Anne & Joel Ehrenkranz Curator, in association with Cindy Keefer of the Center for Visual Music, and features a new re-creation from Fischinger’s restored original nitrate film.

Oskar Fischinger worked in animation, filmmaking and painting. An influential pioneer of abstract cinema, Fischinger started his career in Weimar-era Germany during the 1920s. Working with multiple-projector formats, he redefined abstraction during this period, with spectacular films that explore the interplay of abstract shapes, color, and light. Inspired by the German painter Walter Ruttmann and his

1921 experiments in “painting with time,” Fischinger, working along with Hungarian composer Alexander Laszlo, first combined film and music with projections of abstract color in the mid-1920s.

The Whitney’s exhibition focuses on Fischinger’s *Raumlichtkunst* (*Space Light Art*), one of the first multimedia projections ever made. Debuted in Germany in 1926, this multiscreen film series was radical in format, creating, in Fischinger’s words: “an intoxication by light from a thousand sources.” The projection format and unique combination of abstract shapes and hypnotic patterns was, as Iles states: “decades ahead of its time, establishing Fischinger as a key figure in the history of multi-media projective environments.”

The re-creation of *Raumlichtkunst* on view at the museum was first photochemically restored by the Center for Visual Music, then recreated in high-definition from original 35mm nitrate film material. Using modern digital processes, the restoration re-creates the rich coloration of Fischinger’s originals from the 1920s. The projection on each screen displays layers of geometric animations echoing Fischinger’s earliest experiments with abstract forms, including spirals and staffs, moiré patterns, and tinted liquid patterns.

Exhibition Support

Center for Visual Music acknowledges film restoration support through the Avant-Garde Masters program, funded by The Film Foundation, administered by The National Film Preservation Foundation.

About the Artist

Born in Gelnhausen, Germany, Oskar Fischinger (1900-1967), initially pursued a career in music, studying violin and organ construction, before enrolling in a trade school devoted to architectural drafting and tool design where he eventually earned an engineer’s diploma.

Moving with his family to Frankfurt, Fischinger was introduced to the work of abstract film pioneer Walter Ruttmann in 1921, and soon began to develop his first and most radical films, experimenting with colored liquids and three dimensional structures composed of wax and clay.

Fischinger moved on to Munich and then Berlin to pursue a career as a full-time filmmaker. From this period onward, Fischinger would alternate commercial work and his personal, experimental filmmaking. While he preferred to work in an avant-garde direction, Fischinger's commercial work allowed him both the financial security and access to the latest technology on which his personal work depended. His technical prowess and special effects work soon garnered him the name 'The Wizard of Friederichstrasse,' after the location of his studio.

After the Nazi government declared all abstract films 'degenerate,' Fischinger found it increasingly difficult to obtain necessary permits and moved to Hollywood to pursue his work first at Paramount and later at MGM and Disney. Feeling constrained by the demands of the studios, Fischinger increasingly turned to oil painting as a creative outlet, producing over eight hundred canvases, and did not receive any funding for his personal films after 1947. In total, Fischinger produced more than fifty films.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the world's leading museum of twentieth-century and contemporary art of the United States. Focusing particularly on works by living artists, the Whitney is celebrated for presenting important exhibitions and for its renowned collection, which comprises over 19,000 works by more than 2,900 artists. With a history of exhibiting the most promising and influential artists and provoking intense debate, the Whitney Biennial, the Museum's signature exhibition, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in the United States. In addition to its landmark exhibitions, the Museum is known internationally for events and educational programs of exceptional significance and as a center for research, scholarship, and conservation.

Founded by sculptor and arts patron Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930, the Whitney was first housed on West 8th Street in Greenwich Village. The Museum relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and, in 1966, inaugurated its present home, designed by Marcel Breuer, at 945 Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side. While its vibrant program of exhibitions and events continues uptown, the Whitney is moving forward with a new building project, designed by Renzo Piano, in downtown Manhattan. Located at the corner of Gansevoort and Washington Streets in the Meatpacking District, at the southern entrance to the High Line, the new building, which has generated immense momentum and support, will enable the Whitney to vastly increase the size and scope of its exhibition and programming space. Ground was broken on the new building in May 2011, and it is projected to open to the public in 2015.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

Singular Visions	Through July 15, 2012
...as apple pie	Opens June 8, 2012
Sharon Hayes	June 21-September 9, 2012
Signs & Symbols	June 28-October 28, 2012
Oskar Fischinger	June 28-October 28, 2012
Yayoi Kusama	July 12-September 30, 2012
Wade Guyton	Opens October 4, 2012
Richard Artschwager	October 25, 2012 – February 3, 2013
Sinister Pop	November 15, 2012 – March 2013
Blues for Smoke	February – April 2013
Jay DeFeo: A Retrospective	February 28 – June 2, 2013

The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. General admission: \$18. Full-time students and visitors ages 19–25 and 62 & over: \$12. Visitors 18 & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 p.m. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

###