Press kit: Mondrian. Evolution

Mondrian. Evolution
October 29, 2022 – February 12, 2023
K20

Press conference and preview
Thursday, October 27, 2022, 11 am, K20

Speakers
- Susanne Gaensheimer, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Beate Gerlings, Embassy Counsellor of Culture and Communication, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- Kathrin Beßen / Susanne Meyer-Büser, Curators, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

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#K20Mondrian
#PietMondrian
#K20
#DerBeatVonPiet
In Celebration of the 150th Birthday of Piet Mondrian – The Evolution of Abstraction in the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

2022 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Piet Mondrian. The Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen is taking this as an opportunity to honor him and his art in the comprehensive exhibition “Mondrian. Evolution.” Many are familiar with Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) as a painter of rigid geometric compositions with black-and-white lines and fields of pure color in red, blue, or yellow. However, the fact that the Dutchman initially chose landscapes and other representational motifs during the first decades of his career and often staged these with surprising colorfulness is hardly known. On the basis of ninety works, the exhibition, which opens to the public on October 29, sheds light on Mondrian’s remarkable path from the early naturalistic paintings to the late abstract works and traces the formal connections that exist between the paintings spanning five decades.

In this process, the concept of “evolution” plays a key role. For Mondrian, evolution meant conducting experiments in an effort to reach a new artistic level. In order to illustrate this systematic progression in Mondrian’s work, visual axes are formed in the chronologically hung exhibition, which allows works from different phases to be juxtaposed with one another. For example, the Impressionist painting “Lighthouse in Westkapelle” (1910) hangs next to the Neoplastic work “Composition in Blue and White” (1936), thus visualizing the artist’s amazingly stringent development. The juxtaposition reveals that, already at a young age, Mondrian was a painter with a distant vision.

Mondrian’s artistic roots lie in the nineteenth century. At the beginning of his career, he worked in the style of the Hague School of Painting, which was influenced by Realism and Impressionism. He thus painted primarily Dutch motifs, interiors, and landscapes under gray, rain-filled clouds. A break with academic painting took place around 1908, initiated by several factors: on the one hand, by the influence of the works of Vincent van Gogh and the Symbolism of Jan Toorop; on the other hand, by mystical-religious approaches of Theosophy that increasingly preoccupied Mondrian in his thinking. From the beginning of his career, the artist searched for a pictorial language that would express the universal, the deepest essence of all that exists. For him, the visualization of this spiritual dimension in painting arose through the perfect balance of all pictorial elements. Mondrian took the decisive step in this direction through his friendship with the women painter Jacoba van Heemskerck and her partner Marie Tak van Poortvliet, who boldly experimented with the intrinsic value of color. As a result, Mondrian’s palette also brightened, and his style became increasingly expressive, free, and sketchy.
A short time later, in Paris in 1911, Mondrian encountered the Cubism of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. These revolutionary paintings made an immense impression on the almost forty-year-old Dutchman. As a result, he radically reduced his color palette. Predominantly gray and ocher tones now determined the overall impression of his paintings, and the line became increasingly important. Subsequently, in a process that can be described as organic abstraction, the famous series of trees was created. By the beginning of the First World War, Mondrian was creating large-scale abstract compositions that only hinted at the original motifs.

When he was prevented from traveling to Paris during the war, he experimented with landscape motifs, again creating paintings of farms and windmills. This retreat into figuration is less a return to naturalism than a reexamination of organic abstraction on the basis of representational motifs.

Within the context of the De Stijl group and parallel with his return to Paris, he developed radical abstract paintings at the age of almost fifty, calling the style of this new abstraction “Neoplasticism” (New Design). The first theoretical substantiation of his abstract art was published in the magazine De Stijl in 1920. These Neoplastic paintings—consisting in principle of the infinite possibilities of combining white and black lines meeting at right angles, and the primary colors red, yellow, and blue—formed the foundation of Mondrian’s fame, which continues unabated to this day. His studio at 26 rue du Départ, which he occupied from 1920 to 1936, became a legendary, frequently photographed location. He furnished it according to the principles of Neoplasticism, so that it appeared to visitors like an accessible work of modern art. Mondrian’s lifestyle, his enthusiasm for jazz, and his unconventional, open mind made him one of the most important protagonists of the Parisian avant-garde.

With Neoplasticism, Mondrian’s development seemed to have reached a temporary end point. However, when Mondrian emigrated to New York City in September 1940, his style changed once again. Under the impression of the pulsating metropolis, the artist was convinced that his works needed more “boogie-woogie.” Mondrian not only condensed the surface and rhythm of already finished Neoplastic works, he also discovered montage tape as a modern working material for himself. In place of the black line frameworks and the surfaces of white and primary colors, more lively, freer compositions comprised of adhesive strips in red, yellow, and blue appeared.

Following Mondrian’s remarkable development as one strolls through the exhibition, it becomes clear that there are various recurring constants in his work: first of all, from the very beginning, an obvious interest in experimenting with the structures and rhythms of individual motifs and lines. Secondly, Mondrian must have held the view early on that pictures can evoke in viewers the idea of a spiritual dimension that is actually invisible. And finally, Mondrian’s work was presumably influenced in a fundamental way by the idea of concentrating more and more on the essentials of the picture itself, starting from the model of nature, continuing through progressive abstraction, and leading up to the abstract pictures of his later years.
The exhibition *Mondrian. Evolution* is a joint project of the Fondation Beyeler in Riehen near Basel and the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen and was created in close cooperation with the Kunstmuseum Den Haag. The Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen boasts four Neoplastic works by Mondrian that Werner Schmalenbach acquired through the mediation of Ernst Beyeler: "Composition with Yellow" (1930), "Composition with Blue and White" (1936), "Rhythm of Straight Lines" (1937–1942), purchased in the early 1960s, and the famous "New York City I" (1941) with a time lag in 1980.

**UPSIDE DOWN?**

The story of the making of *New York City I* holds a number of further riddles for posterity, and the question still remains as to whether the picture was correctly registered by the executor of Mondrian’s estate. During his lifetime, the artist had already assigned the rights to his works to Harry Holtzman, who allowed a photographer to take pictures in the studio only a few days after Mondrian’s death. In June 1944 the photographs were published as part of a fashion feature in the magazine “Town and Country” *

New York City I* is seen at an angle, perched on an easel and standing, astonishingly, on its head. Mondrian had been working in his studio, possibly even on this very picture, only a few days before his death. Could it be, then, that the photograph shows the correct orientation as Mondrian had intended? Did the inversion occur by chance, or through a mistake, of the kind that can easily happen when works of art are being crated up or unpacked? It may no longer be possible to determine whether the orientation previously considered correct is in fact valid, but the question invites closer attention.

Surprisingly, if we go along with the experiment and rotate *New York City I* by 180 degrees, we find that the picture still “works.” In fact, it functions extremely well: the composition gains in intensity and plasticity. The density of the strips along the top edge lends the work a resemblance to its close relative *New York City*, in which the zone of greatest density is also located at the top edge. The blue strips along the left, top, and lower edges are now positioned in exactly the same places.

A detailed conservator’s examination of the direction of the strips in *New York City I* has yet to be carried out, but an initial visual inspection confirmed the suspicion that by turning the canvas upside down, the adhesive strips on the upper edge are aligned with the edge of the picture, whereas those at the lower edge peter out, with pieces missing here and there. Assuming that Mondrian began by attaching the strips at the top, and, following the principle of gravity, unrolled them downward to attach them at the bottom of the canvas, then the painting has indeed been hanging upside down ever since it was first exhibited in 1945.

It is possible that Mondrian repeatedly turned the picture around while he was working on it, in which case there would be no right or wrong orientation. This may be the truly revolutionary feature of *New York City I*: the fact that it can be read in any direction, like the street map of a big city, in an attitude of open-mindedness, moving every way at once, like couples dancing the boogie-woogie.

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1 The photograph from the fashion shoot was rediscovered by the Italian artist Francesco Visalli, who has engaged intensively with Mondrian in his own works and hit upon the photograph while conducting research that has yielded excellent results. When Visalli communicated his findings to the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in the autumn of 2021, their significance was not immediately appreciated, but we have now been able to take account of it in our own work. The author would like expressly to thank the artist for supplying this highly valuable information.
With the kind support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Curators: Kathrin Beßen, Susanne Meyer-Büser

**Architecture**
The exhibition architecture in the Klee Hall of K20 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen was designed by the architectural team please don’t touch, Dortmund.

**Mondrian and His Fascination with Jazz Music**
Painting, music, and rhythm form a close bond in Mondrian’s work. The artist was an avid fan of jazz who drew inspiration for his painting from music and its rhythms, especially in his abstract works. The first Neoplastic works, created in Paris in the early 1920s, were inspired by ragtime, a precursor of jazz. Mondrian also enjoyed attending concerts and dances and cutting a fine figure on the dance floor. In New York, he even took professional dance lessons before venturing onto the dance floor with boogie-woogie steps. In his writings, Mondrian repeatedly used the term “rhythm,” using it equally to describe phenomena from the realms of music, dance, and the visual arts. In doing so, he emphasized the fact that, for him, music and visual art are not only comparable but forward-looking forms of expression. In 1927, he wrote in the journal "Internationale revue i10" about the affinity in spirit between the two disciplines: “Strangers amid the melody and form that surround us, jazz and neoplasticism appear as expressions of a new life.”

Interpreters include Duke Ellington, Paul Whiteman, Mae West, and Louis Armstrong.

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Action Space “Piet’s Beat”
An extensive educational program accompanying the exhibition contextualizes and updates Piet Mondrian and his artistic work. The action space “Piet’s Beat” sets the tone. In the midst of the exhibition, curious visitors can use the action space set up for them in a variety of ways to actively enter into contact with the surrounding exhibits through various senses. In addition to the individual exchange with other visitors about what they have seen, they can also listen to music to which Mondrian himself danced. For guided tours (in German, English, French, and simple language) and workshops dedicated to Mondrian’s fascination with rhythm as a connecting element between music and visual art, the action space offers the possibility of interaction in a protected atmosphere. By means of adhesive tape, visitors are invited to creatively embellish the walls and floor and thus create an accessible, collective work.

The educational program was developed by Julia Latzel and Sarah Schmeller.

Publication
Mondrian. Evolution
Edited by Susanne Gaensheimer, Kathrin Beßen, and Susanne Meyer-Büser, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, together with Sam Keller and Ulf Küster, Fondation Beyeler
With essays by Kathrin Beßen, Ulf Küster, Susanne Meyer-Büser, Charlotte Sarrazin, Bridget Riley, Benno Temple, and Caro Verbeek

German and English edition
Hatje Cantz Verlag
264 pages
44 euros

Digital Accompanying Booklet K+
The exhibition is accompanied by a digital booklet that provides multimedia insights into the individual creative phases of the artist as well as background information on the work and life of Piet Mondrian. Through QR codes at various stations within the exhibition space, K+ can be accessed via smartphone or tablet while visiting the exhibition.

Exhibition Diary for Children
The exhibition diary for children from the age of six guides them through the exhibition with exciting search games and artistic-creative tasks. In this way, young visitors can playfully discover the work of the artist Piet Mondrian for themselves. The exhibition diary is available free of charge at the ticket desk.
With the kind support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Media Partner of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

Sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia
Supporting Program

Opening of the exhibition
October, 28, 2022, 7 pm
K20

Susanne Gaensheimer, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
Ina Brandes, Minister of Culture and Science of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia
Beate Gerlings, Embassy Counsellor of Culture and Communication, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Kathrin Beßen / Susanne Meyer-Büser, Curators, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
Exhibition Preview

Etel Adnan
April 1 — July 16, 2023

Press Conference: Thursday, March 30, 2023, 11 am at K20

The Lenbachhaus in Munich and the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf are jointly organizing the first comprehensive monographic exhibition of the work of Etel Adnan in Germany. Born in Beirut, Etel Adnan (1925–2021) is an important representative of modernism. Her artistic and literary work is characterized by a great and lived exchange between the Arab and Western worlds.

The work of the poet, journalist, painter, and philosopher, who spent her life between Lebanon, France, and California, combines very different art forms, media, languages, and cultures. After the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), Adnan refused to continue working in French and showed solidarity with Algeria: “I didn’t need to write in French anymore, I was going to paint in Arabic.” Her political clarity, as well as the close connection between writing and painting, became an essential feature of her oeuvre.

An exhibition of the Lenbachhaus Munich, and the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, curated by Sébastien Delot, Direktor LaM, Lille métropole musée d’art moderne d’art contemporain et d’art brut.

The exhibition is sponsored by the Rudolf August Oetker Foundation.
Jenny Holzer
March, 11 — August 6, 2023

Press Conference: Thursday, March 9, 2023, 11 am at K21

Starting March 11, 2023, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen will present a sweeping exhibition of the internationally celebrated American artist Jenny Holzer (b. 1950). Since the 1970s, Holzer has been renowned for her thought-provoking use of text in various media and her pioneering adaptation of new technologies. Holzer’s Düsseldorf exhibition, spanning K21’s Beltage and temporary exhibition galleries, will range from posters to paintings and stoneworks, touching on subjects such as war, absurdity, and populism. In keeping with Holzer’s deeply democratic approach and artistic practice, her works challenge viewers to grapple with conflicting perspectives and find their own empathic, open-minded positions in complex debates. This makes the exhibition a public forum for discussions of current global challenges.

Jenny Holzer has presented her astringent ideas, arguments, and sorrows in public places and international exhibitions, including the Venice Biennale, the Guggenheim Museums in New York and Bilbao, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Louvre Abu Dhabi. Her medium, whether a T-shirt, plaque, or LED sign, is writing, and the public dimension is integral to the work. Starting with her New York City street posters and continuing through her light projections on landscape and architecture, her practice has rivaled ignorance and violence with humor and kindness.

Ströer ist Partner of the exhibition of Jenny Holzer.

The exhibitions in the Bel Étage of K21 are supported by the Stiftung Kunst, Kultur und Soziales der Sparda Bank West.
Einleitung


In diesem Prozess spielt der Begriff der „Evolution“ eine zentrale Rolle. Für Mondrian bedeutet Evolution, experimentelle Erfahrungen zu machen, um auf eine neue künstlerische Stufe zu gelangen. Um dieses systematische Voranschreiten im Werk Mondrians zu zeigen, werden die Bilder zeitlich geordnet. Der Blick durch die Räume zeigt die Entwicklung des Künstlers. Wir sehen, wie sich Mondrians Malstil im Laufe der Jahre verändert.


Der Künstler konzentriert sich auf das Wichtigste. Er bringt die Teile eines Bildes so zusammen, dass sie harmonisch wirken. Trotzdem gibt es eine Verbindung zwischen den frühen und späten Gemälden.

Das private Fotografieren der Bilder ist ohne Blitz erlaubt.

EN – Introduction

Many know the painter Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) as the creator of austere geometric compositions with black and white lines and red, blue, and yellow color planes. However, most people are not aware that, in the first decades of his career, the Dutch artist primarily painted landscapes that often display a strict rhythm and are surprisingly colorful. This exhibition therefore focuses on Mondrian's development from his early naturalistic paintings to his abstract works, tracing the formal connections that exist between five decades of pictures.

From the beginning of his artistic career, Mondrian was searching for a pictorial language to express the universal — the deepest essence of everything that exists. The visualization of this invisible, spiritual dimension was born out of the perfect balance of all pictorial elements, which he finally achieved in his Neoplastic works.

The concept of “evolution” plays a key role in this process. For Mondrian, evolution meant having experimental experiences as a way to reach a new artistic level. In order to show this systematic progression in Mondrian’s work, the exhibition is hung chronologically. It also forms sight lines and juxtaposes works from different phases, revealing the artist’s extraordinarily stringent development and his long-term vision already as a young painter.

The K+ is a digital guide through the exhibition that provides additional information about Mondrian’s life and work.

Taking photographs in the exhibition — without lightning and for private purposes — is permitted.

Auf unserer Internetseite finden Sie im Bereich K+ eine digitale Begleitung durch die Ausstellung. Sie bietet zusätzliche Informationen über Mondrians Leben und Werk.

Das private Fotografieren der meisten Bilder ist ohne Blitz erlaubt.

Dieser Text ist in einfacher Sprache. Er soll für möglichst viele Menschen verständlich sein.

In der ländlichen Atmosphäre konzentriert sich Mondrian auf Bauernhöfe, Interieurs und Scheunentore. Flächenaufteilung, Bildstruktur und Linienführung lassen sich an diesen Motiven exemplarisch studieren. Schon zuvor hatte Mondrian, auf der Suche nach der idealen Bildaufteilung, die Landschaft als Objekt gewählt. Vor allem in der Mühle und dem Stand der Mühlenflügel findet er ein geeignetes Motiv, um die Bildfläche zu strukturieren und der Komposition eine Richtung zu geben. In den folgenden Jahren entstehen etliche Serien von Motiven des dörflichen Lebens. An den Variationen der Baumreihen am Fluss Gein lässt sich nachvollziehen, wie Mondrian die Wirkung senkrechter und waagerechter Linien im Prozess des Arbeitsverfahrens experimentell erprobt.

Die frühen Landschaften bleiben Mondrian zeitlebens wichtig. Als er 1941 nach New York auswandert, lässt er sie im Nebenzimmer seines Ateliers auf. Sie bilden den Grundstock für sein gesamtes nachfolgendes Werk und markieren den Beginn der künstlerischen „Evolution“. 

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**EN – Early Landscapes**

After graduating from the academy of art, Mondrian lived the life of a young, aspiring artist in Amsterdam, where he completed commissioned paintings in the naturalistic style of the Hague School. He had a remarkably large group of customers already during these years. Looking for a change, he then decided to move to the village of Uden in 1904.

In this rural atmosphere, Mondrian focused on farm houses, interiors, and barn doors. We can see these motifs as examples of how he divides and structures the picture plane and works with lines. Already before moving to Uden, Mondrian had often turned to landscape in search of the ideal pictorial composition. More than anything else, it was the windmill and the position of its sails that provided him with a suitable motif for structuring the picture plane and giving the composition a direction. In the following years, he created numerous series with motifs borrowed from village life. The variations in the rows of trees along the Gein River reveal how Mondrian experimented with the effects of vertical and horizontal lines in his working method.

Mondrian’s early landscapes remained important to him all his life. When he emigrated to New York in 1941, he had many paintings forwarded to him, which he hung in a room next to his studio. As the foundations for the rest of his entire oeuvre, they mark the beginning of his artistic “evolution.”

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**Einfache Sprache**


Mondrian's departure from academic painting was driven by several factors. First of all, it was influenced by Impressionism, the works of Vincent van Gogh, and Jan Toorop's symbolism. Second of all, it was inspired by the mystical and religious ideas of Theosophy, which had been occupying his mind since 1900.

He did not take the decisive step away from academic painting until 1908, however, when he became friends with the painter Jacoba van Heemskerck, who, like him, was experimenting with translating the spiritual philosophy of nature into painting. After this, his color palette became brighter and his brushwork more expressive, freer, and sketchier. The composition was now defined by a motif, like in "Mill in the Sunlight", while the focus was less on the object and more on how it is painted.

In 1909, Mondrian joined the Theosophical Society. During this phase, he also became interested in the anthroposophical writings of Rudolf Steiner and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's theory of colors. Mondrian was especially fascinated by Goethe's idea that painting could create a visible world that is much more perfect than the real world could ever be. From this time forward, he intended his pictures to be vehicles of a spiritual, universal dimension – an idea that would define the rest of his oeuvre, especially the development of Neoplasticism from 1920 on.


1913 entwickelt Mondrian großflächige, abstrakte Kompositionen, die die ursprünglichen Motive — Bäume und auch Häuserfassaden — nur noch erahnen lassen. Diese Arbeiten bestehen aus einer Struktur ineinander verschachtelter Formen, die meist durch den rechten Winkel bestimmt sind. Am Rand der Gemälde löst sich das Bildgefüge auf, so dass die Kompositionen wie dreidimensionale Erscheinungen im Raum wirken.

Begegnung mit dem Kubismus 1911—1914

The first time Mondrian lived in Paris for a longer period was from the end of 1911 to the summer of 1914. On a short visit to the city in May 1911 a few months before, he had seen works in the style of analytic Cubism by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso for the first time. These revolutionary pictures, in which the visible world is represented in a fragmented way while showing several viewpoints at once, left a lasting impression on Mondrian and encouraged him to employ abstraction in his search for the essence of things — the absolute truth.

After this, Mondrian reduced his color palette. The overall impression of his paintings became defined by gray and ochre hues, and lines grew more and more important. He created his series of trees in a process that could be called organic abstraction. These works are perfect examples for tracing the artist’s evolution.

In 1913, Mondrian developed abstract compositions with large planes of color in which the original motifs — trees and the facades of buildings — are hardly recognizable anymore. These works consist of a structure of intertwined forms that are, for the most part, defined by a right angle. The pictorial structure dissolves at the margins of the paintings, letting the compositions appear like three-dimensional shapes within the pictorial space.

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EN – Encounter with Cubism

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Es sind kubistische Bilder. Die Gemälde stellen das Motiv in geometrischen Formen dar, zum Beispiel als Wörfel oder Kugeln. Sie werden optisch zerteilt und aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln gezeigt. Es gibt nur wenig Farbe.


Mondrians Stil wird immer fokussierter: 1918 entstehen schwarzweiße Rautenbilder mit regelmäßigen diagonalen Linien, 1919 Gemälde mit einem horizontalen und vertikalen Gitterwerk aus Linien und farbigen Flächen. Sie sind die letzte Stufe vor der neoplastischen Phase ab 1920.

Die erste theoretische Begründung seiner abstrakten Kunst, die Mondrian Neoplastizismus (Neue Gestaltung) nennt, erscheint 1920 in der Zeitschrift „De Stijl“. Mondrian betont, dass die Bilder Resultat eines Prozesses der Abstraktion von Natur sind.

Die Gemälde bestehen im Wesentlichen aus dem rechten Winkel, der aus schwarzen Vertikalen und Horizontalen gebildet ist, Weiss und den drei Grundfarben Rot, Gelb und Blau. Die Reduktion und Konzentration auf das Essentielle des Bildes führen, so Mondrian, zur Darstellung einer „reinen Realität“, die nur durch eine „Ausgewogenheit der dynamischen Bewegung von Form und Farbe Ausdruck verliehen werden kann“.

Mit dem Neoplastizismus, den Mondrian in den folgenden zwei Jahrzehnten experimentell weiterentwickelt, scheint er an einem vorläufigen Endpunkt gekommen zu sein. Doch als Mondrian im September 1940 nach New York auswandert, ändert sich sein Stil ein weiteres Mal. Impresed by the pulsating metropolis, the artist was convinced that his works needed more „boogie-woogie.“

Mondrian verdichtet nicht nur Fläche und Rhythmus bereits fertiger neoplastischer Werke, er entdeckt auch das Montage-Band als modernes Arbeitsmedium für sich. An die Stelle der schwarzen Linien der Flächen aus Weiß und Primärfarben treten lebendigere, freiere Kompositionen aus roten, blauen und gelben Klebestreifen. Bis zu seinem Tod 1944 entstehen insgesamt vier Werke der „New York City“-Serie.

The first theoretical explanation of Mondrian’s abstract art, which he called Neoplasticism (New Design), appeared in the magazine “De Stijl” in 1920. Mondrian emphasized that his pictures are the result of a process of abstraction from nature.

The paintings are essentially based on right angles consisting of black vertical and horizontal lines, along with white and the three primary colors red, yellow, and blue. According to Mondrian, the reduction to and concentration on the picture’s essential elements led to the representation of a “pure reality,” which can only be expressed “through the equilibrium of dynamic movement of form and color.”

In the next two decades, Mondrian continued the experimental development of Neoplasticism, with which he seemed to have reached a preliminary end point. Then, when he emigrated to New York in September 1940, his style changed once more. Impressed by the pulsating metropolis, the artist was convinced that his works needed more “boogie-woogie.”

Mondrian not only condensed the plane and rhythm of his already finished neoplastic works; he also discovered adhesive tape as a modern artistic material. In place of the black grid of lines and planes of white and primary colors, he used livelier, less rigid compositions of red, blue, and yellow tape. Before his death in 1944, he made altogether four works in the “New York City” series.

Mondrian hat nach einer langen Entwicklung seinen Stil gefunden. Er nennt ihn Neo-Plastizismus (Neue Gestaltung). Die Theorie dazu veröffentlicht er 1920 in der Zeitschrift „De Stijl“.


In diesem Raum ist eine Auswahl der Musikstücke zu hören, zu denen Mondrian gemalt und getanzt hat.

Für die Entwicklung seiner späten Werke wie „New York City I“ – zu sehen am Ende dieses Ausstellungsrundgangs – verwendet Mondrian ab den 1940er Jahren bunte Klebebänder. So kann er Linien auf der Bildfläche immer wieder neu anordnen, bis er eine für ihn ausgeglichene künstlerische Komposition gefunden hat.


Piet Mondrian loved to dance. He liked Boogie-Woogie and Jazz, collected records, and used every chance he could get to move to the music in hip clubs in Amsterdam, Paris, and New York. Beats and rhythms accompanied Mondrian all his life, and they had a decisive impact on his artistic production.

In this room, one can hear a selection of musical pieces that Mondrian liked to dance to or listen to while painting.

Mondrian used colored adhesive tape for the creation of his later compositions in the 1940s, like “New York City I”, which you can see at the end of this exhibition tour. This way, he could rearrange the lines on the surface of the picture over and over again until he found a balanced artistic composition.

The title „Piet’s Beat“ is quoting Caro Verbeek, Kunstmuseum Den Haag.

EN

When Mondrian lived in Paris, Jazz was the hippest music in nightclubs and cafés. It originally came from New Orleans, Louisiana, and began to spread all over Europe in 1920. At this time, everyday life in the US was influenced by racism, the Southern states of the US were defined by the laws of racial segregation. For African Americans, whose parents and grandparents had often been slaves, Jazz was a powerful expression of self-confidence and identity. In Germany Jazz was denounced by the Nazis as “degenerate” music.

Einfache Sprache


Für die afroamerikanische Bevölkerung war Jazz ein Teil ihrer Identität. In Deutschland hielten die Nationalsozialist*innen diese Musik für „entartet“. Mit „entartet“ beschimpften sie Menschen als „krank, nicht normal“.

Interpret*innen/Performers

Roger Wolfe Kahn — Clap yo’ hands, 1926
Louis Armstrong — Blue, turning gray over you, 1964
Billy Cotton & his band — Super Tiger Rag, 1945
Jess Stacy — The World is waiting for the sunrise, 1937
Duke Ellington — Swampy River, 1974
Duke Ellington — Jazz Cocktail, 1974
Duke Ellington — Hot Feet, 1974
Mae West — I’m No Angel, 1996
Paul Whiteman — Oh, You Have No Idea, 1987
The Harlem Footwarmers — Rocky Mountain Blues, 1973
Nat Gonella & His Georgians — It’s the rythm in me, 2005