

# ARTFORUM

BERLIN

**Horia Damian**

GALERIA PLAN B | BERLIN

Potsdamer Strasse 77 - 87 Building G, Second Backyard

April 26–June 15



Horia Damian, *Heptagone etoile*, 1952, acrylic on wooden panel, 38 x 38 x 1".

Can looking back at the historical moment in which the avant-garde sought to transform humanity through art be fruitful today? A presentation of drawings, paintings, and models by [Horia Damian](#) (1922–2012) suggests the affirmative. Born in Bucharest, Damian moved to Paris in 1946, where he lived and worked until his death. His monuments, rooted in the early modernist traditions of Soviet Romania and Paris, and set against the backdrop of 1960s Minimalism, reflect neither ideological pathos nor an ironic criticality. Instead, the monument served him as a medium, situated between art, landscape, and architecture.

Each of the works in this exhibition occupies the double status of autonomous artwork and preparatory sketch for a monument. Two captivating early mixed-media pieces serve as scores for Damian's later projects: a trimmed heptagon on wood, *Heptagone etoile*, 1952, and a rectangular work on paper, *Untitled*, 1953, feature white dots perforating a deep-blue background in an order both geometrical and celestial. Elsewhere, variations on structures such as flat-roofed ziggurats, mastabas, and stepped pyramids reoccur. Midway between picture and object, four wooden reliefs of trimmed pyramids in gold (*Pyramide d'or*, 1964), white (*Pyramide blanche*, 1965), red (*Pyramide rouge*, 1967), and blue (*Ziggurat Bleu*, 1980s) show the artist's fascination with holy tombs or shrines—the dwelling places of gods that connect human mortality with the afterlife. Even when the plans for these lyrical monuments-to-come are carried out, as they were in *The Hill*, 1976, for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, they seem to be made of a trembling material that does not impose awe-inspiring authority, but rather engages its beholder in contemplation— aspiring to an ideal, rather than a palpable world order.

— Tal Sterngast