

## **Horia Damian**

GALAXY

Project for a monument in Houston - Texas

**Opening:** January 24, 18 - 22 h

January 24 - April 19, 2014

Tuesday - Saturday, 12 - 18 h

Potsdamer Strasse 77 - 87, 10785 Berlin

Galeria Plan B is pleased to announce the exhibition GALAXY by Romanian-French artist Horia Damian (born 1922 in Bucharest, died 2012 in Paris).

GALAXY was designed in 1972 as a project for a monument in Houston, Texas and constructed for the first time in 1974 at the Neue Galerie in Aachen. Wolfgang Becker, the curator of that exhibition writes 40 years later:

"As the first of Damian's large-scale monuments, GALAXY from 1974 is the masterpiece of the series with the same title; the sculpture was revealed under special lighting in the Neue Galerie in Aachen in such a way that the viewer was 'elated' by the illusion of witnessing a cosmic phenomenon. The 2014 reconstruction (at Plan B Berlin) has preserved this magical power. The slightly smaller 'wedge' appears as his initial version in 'cosmic' blue, three sides and the head are sanded smooth, and a net of thousands of blue balls covers its surface. The wedge reflects from the ground up and loses its materiality to an 'appearance'. When we exhibited the sculpture in 1974 in this baroque ballroom, we were filled with enthusiasm. Galactic fantasies flourished in the years of the Apollo flights. Looking back on that chapter in art history, when the utopian visions of the space age were set in stark contrast to the apocalyptic images that were generated by the Vietnam War, the same enthusiasm is still present today.

Horia Damian is one of the few European artists who developed the most notable alternatives to the dominant American style of sculpture that managed to oppose the 'Superzeichen' of Minimal Art as monuments that should be nothing other than their own monumentality, with powerful symbolic shapes in order to connect the sacred and the profane. Damian created monumental, symbolic sculptures giving them a metaphysical perspective that would distinguish them from the contemporary works of American Minimal Art made by artists like Ronald Bladen, Robert Grosvenor or Tony Smith."

Radu Varia, the Romanian art historian who worked closely with Horia Damian over the years, writes 1976 about GALAXY: "In the 70s he started to use the three-dimensional space and the series GALAXY began; (...) the single color, the single structural element are recurrent in these works; at the same time he works on visionary projects in which the relationship between structured surfaces and smooth planes, the introduction of a subjective geometry, and the apparition of rifts and inclinations define a new vocabulary."

Several further monuments in the series GALAXY were constructed, others remaining as scale models.

Damian's preoccupation continued with the project 'The Hill', constructed for the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1975. The director of Guggenheim Museum of that time, Thomas Messer writes about Damian's works: "in all of these, Damian aims for essentially the same results and all his concepts therefore have parallel meaning within his total oeuvre. Damian's art, based upon impeccable craftsmanship and an obsessive preoccupation with materials, cannot be faulted for lacking concreteness. But despite the sparseness and reductiveness of Damian's structures, minimal and formalistic interpretations do not suffice in this case. For his explicit references are to a celestial rather than a terrestrial space, to an ideal rather than a palpable world order, and to sacral rather than temporal realities.

Horia Damian's work is rooted in a European tradition of monument builders, most admirably exemplified by his fellow Romanian Brancusi in such structures as the 'Column of the Infinite' and 'The Gate of the Kiss'. Through the deliberateness of the choices of his subjects and the analysis in depth

of a very few themes, Damian may be likened to Christo who also reveals the infinite variety of object-ideas through work cycles like 'The Valley Curtain' and 'The Running Face'. But unlike Christo and Yves Klein, Damian's friend and contemporary, Damian is ultimately concerned with the intuition of an extra-terrestrial spatial order."

Horia Damian was born 1922 in Bucharest, where he had his first personal exhibitions, before settling to Paris in 1946. He had encounters and collaborated with artists like Fernard Leger (with whom he studied), Constantin Brancusi, Auguste Herbin, Saldavor Dali, and Yves Klein. His work was exhibited at the Venice Biennial, Bridgestone Museum Tokyo, Leo Castelli Gallery New York, Guggenheim Museum New York, MOMA New York, Stedelik Museum Amsterdam, Stadler Gallery Paris, Musee d'art Moderne Paris, Centre Pompidou Paris, Grand Palais Paris, National Museum of Contemporary Art Bucharest.

For more information, please contact the gallery at [contact@plan-b.ro](mailto:contact@plan-b.ro) and +49.1723210711.