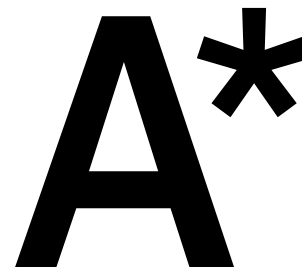


Media Release

Aarau, January 2016



Camille Graeser and Music

30 January - 10 April 2016

Aargauer Kunsthhaus, Aarau

The brightly-coloured squares and bars line up dynamically and rhythmically in the paintings and sketches. The works of the Swiss-born artist Camille Graeser (1892 - 1980) look severely geometrical, sometimes appearing as a dancing structure of moving pictorial elements. The exhibition *Camille Graeser and Music*, looks at an important and hitherto relatively unexamined aspect of the artist's work: Camille Graeser's relationship with music. The exhibition focuses on the "Loxodromic Compositions"¹ produced between 1946 and 1955. The group of around 70 works shows the influence that musical rhythms and patterns of sound had on Camille Graeser's creative work.

Camille Graeser (1892-1980), born in Carouge near Geneva, is seen as the most important pioneer in post-war Constructivist-Concrete Art. In 1933 he moved from Stuttgart to Zurich, where after working as a furniture designer, graphic artist and interior designer, he devoted himself entirely to the visual arts. As a member of the Zurich Concrete School he features among the central positions within the collection of the Aargauer Kunsthhaus. His works are often associated with those of contemporaries such as Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889-1943), Max Bill (1908-1994), Richard Paul Lohse (1902-1988) and Verena Loewensberg (1912-1986). In 2013 - in the context of the thematic group show *Rhythm in it* - the Aargauer Kunsthhaus first drew

¹ The term "Loxodrome" comes from spherical trigonometry and refers to an arc on the surface of a sphere which crosses all meridians at a constant angle. In Graeser's work the concept is a metaphor for the abandonment of ideals in the visual arts such as the compositional distinction between foreground and background.

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attention to Camille Graeser's relationship with music. In the exhibition *Camille Graeser and Music* that initial approach becomes a programme.

As a Concrete Artist, Camille Graeser used a sober formal language free of narrative content. Unlike his fellow artists Max Bill (1908-1994) and Richard Paul Lohse (1902-1988), who pursued a rigorously theoretical approach, Graeser opted for a freer and more poetic method, comparing the creation of pictures with the virtuoso composition of music. Thus, for example, he defined Concrete Art not only in terms of "purity, law and order", but also with reference to "visibly composed painterly sound, similar to music". He first reflected on the analogy between art and music in the lectures given by Adolf Hölzel (1853-1934) at the Academy of Visual Arts in Stuttgart. Johann Sebastian Bach's (1685-1750) cycle "The Art of Fugue" from the 1740s, the free tonality of Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) and Arnold Schoenberg's (1874-1951) twelve-tone technique also served as an inspiration to rethink Concrete Art in compositional terms.

Between 1946 and 1955 he produced the group of "Loxodromic Compositions"². In these, geometrical forms, rhythmical angle and beam constructions join to form dynamic compositions. Titles like *Sinfonie der Farbe* or *Zarte Fuge in Rot-Grün-Schwarz* make the relationship with music even clearer. For his virtuoso treatment of colour, form and material Graeser also draws on his diverse experience of using different materials as a designer in the fields of interior decoration, furniture and advertising graphics.

The exhibition *Camille Graeser and Music* is a collaboration between the Camille Graeser Foundation, the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart and the Aargauer Kunsthhaus. Key works from the collections of the three institutions engage in a dialogue with top-class loans. The exhibition includes about 70 paintings, drawings and sketches for ideas which reveal Graeser's affinity with music. Before the exhibition opens on 29 January 2016 in the Aargauer Kunsthhaus, it can be seen in the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart from 19 September 2015 until 3 January 2016.

Camille Graeser was born in 1892 in Carouge near Geneva. In 1898 he moved with his mother and sister to Stuttgart, where he trained as a cabinet maker and studied with Bernhard Pankok at the School of Applied Art. In 1915 he attended lectures by Adolf Hölzel (1853-1934), which influenced his later work as a Constructivist Concrete painter. He was particularly interested in Hölzel's attempt to create a new abstract "absolute painting" in analogy with symphonic music. Later he ran a studio for interior decoration, graphics and product design in Stuttgart, which enjoyed great success. In 1927 he was commissioned to furnish a model apartment in the

² See footnote 1

block designed by Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) with his own furniture. Following the introduction of the defamatory artistic doctrine in Germany, in 1933 he emigrated to Switzerland. While the political situation suppressed the further development of Constructivist Concrete art in many parts of Europe, Switzerland, and Zurich in particular, became the natural habitat for artistic work and experimentation. In Zurich Graeser didn't find enough work as a designer and increasingly turned to painting. He became a member of the "Zurich Concrete Artists" who, with their sober formal language, devoted themselves entirely to line, colour and plane. Graeser produced his first Concrete oil paintings and Concrete wooden reliefs. Between 1947 and 1951 he produced the Loxodromic pictorial compositions, in which he demonstrated structural and formal analogies between music and art. It was to this group of works that he devoted his first solo exhibition entitled "Optische Musik" at Galerie 16 in Zurich. This was followed by exhibitions in Europe and the USA and public commissions such as the colourful wooden wall design in the monumental post office in Zurich-Enge. In 1972 he was awarded the Prize of Honour of the Kulturkredit of the Canton of Zurich and in 1975 the Art Prize of the City of Zurich. In 1977 he was invited to "documenta 6" in Kassel. Shortly afterwards he was made a Member of Honour of Stuttgart State Academy of Visual Arts. After a long illness he died in 1980 in Wald in the Canton of Zurich.

Curator: Dr. Thomas Schmutz, Curator / Deputy Director, Aargauer Kunsthau

Assistant Curator: Julia Schallberger, Research Assistant

Catalogue

A richly illustrated catalogue will be published in conjunction with the exhibition. Edited by the Camille Graeser Foundation, the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, and the Aargauer Kunsthau, it includes a preface by Ulrike Groos and Madeleine Schuppli and essays by Vera Hausdorff, Eva-Marina Froitzheim, Rudolf Koella, Roman Kurzmeyer, and Fabian Czolbe.

Published by Wienand Verlag in Cologne, 2015, 168 pp.

CHF 29.-, CHF 20.- for members of the Aargau Art Association

Preview for the Media

Thursday, 28 January 2016, 10.30 am

Welcome address by Madeleine Schuppli, Director Aargauer Kunsthau;

Introduction by Thomas Schmutz, Curator / Deputy Director.

Followed by a reception in the foyer.

Opening

Friday, 29 January 2016, 6 pm

6.15 pm Welcome address by Madeleine Schuppli, Director; Thomas Schmutz, Curator / Deputy Director; Vera Hausdorff, Curator Camille Graeser Foundation; and Katrin Weilenmann, Assistant Curator.

Followed by a reception in the foyer

5 - 6 pm Preview for members of the Aargau Art Association

6 - 8 pm Children's Opening

Meet at 6 pm in the studio, lower floor (children of 5 - 13 years)

**Between Language, Art, and Music:
Camille Graeser's Loxodromic Compositions
Sunday, 10 April 2016, 3 pm**

Composed by the Swiss composer Roland Dahinden, "Loxodrom" is a piece for solo cello and 4 channel electronics performed by Scott Roller, cello. The composition artfully juxtaposes recurring sequences, thereby reflecting Graeser's compositional style on a musical and spatial level. Followed by a short tour of the exhibition with Vera Hausdorff, Curator of the Camille Graeser Foundation. Selected works are explained with the aid of sketches by Camille Graeser. In conclusion, the musicians Scott Roller (cello), Felix Borel (violine), and Michael Kiedaisch (percussion) will improvise to works of Camille Graeser. Followed by a reception. Admission + CHF 12.-

Guided Tours with Music

40-minute art historical guided tour of the *Camille Graeser* exhibition
20-minute concert "neue Töne" (new sounds): the pianist Tomas Dratva plays short compositions for piano by Brahms, Debussy, Schönberg, Bartók, and Honegger, in the process providing audible insights into the revolutionary changes the world of music went through in the period from 1890 to 1920.

Thursday 6.30 pm

17 Mar. with Thomas Schmutz, 31 Mar. with Brigitte Haas

Sunday 11 am

31 Jan. with Astrid Näff, 14 Feb. with Astrid Näff, 28 Feb. with Brigitte Haas

Combined Guided Tours Camille Graeser / Ceal Floyer

Thursday 6.30 pm

11 Feb. with Brigitte Haas, 7 Apr. with Brigitte Haas

Sunday 11 am

21 Feb. with Astrid Näff, 27 Mar. with Astrid Näff

Art Education

Open Studio

Sunday 31 Jan. / 28 Feb. / 27 Mar., 11 am - 4 pm

The studio is open for young and old creative minds.

Introduction for Instructors

Wednesday 3 Feb. 2.30 - 4.30 pm

Family Sunday

Sunday 14 Feb. 11 am / 1 pm and 3 pm

Interactive guided tour of the exhibition *Camille Graeser* and workshop. For families with children ages 5 and up

Art Hunt

Saturday 20 / 27 Feb. and 5 / 12 / 19 Mar.

10 am - 12.30 pm (ages 9 - 13); 1.30 - 3.30 pm (ages 5 - 8)

Children are introduced to art.

For additional events for schools, families, children, and adolescents, as well as barrier-free events please refer to the separate programme.

Opening Hours

Tue - Sun: 10 am - 5 pm; Thu: 10 am - 8 pm

Holiday Opening Hours

Open 10 am - 5 pm: Maundy Thursday 24 Mar., Good Friday 25 Mar., Holy Saturday 26 Mar., Easter 27 Mar., Easter Monday 28 Mar.

Images for the media

Images are available for downloading on our website
www.aargauerkunsthhaus.ch > **Media**. Please consider the copyright.

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