



GEORGES FOLMER

Il n'y a pas de hasard en Art

There is no random chance in Art

An online exhibition 26th May - 19th June 2020

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An online exhibition

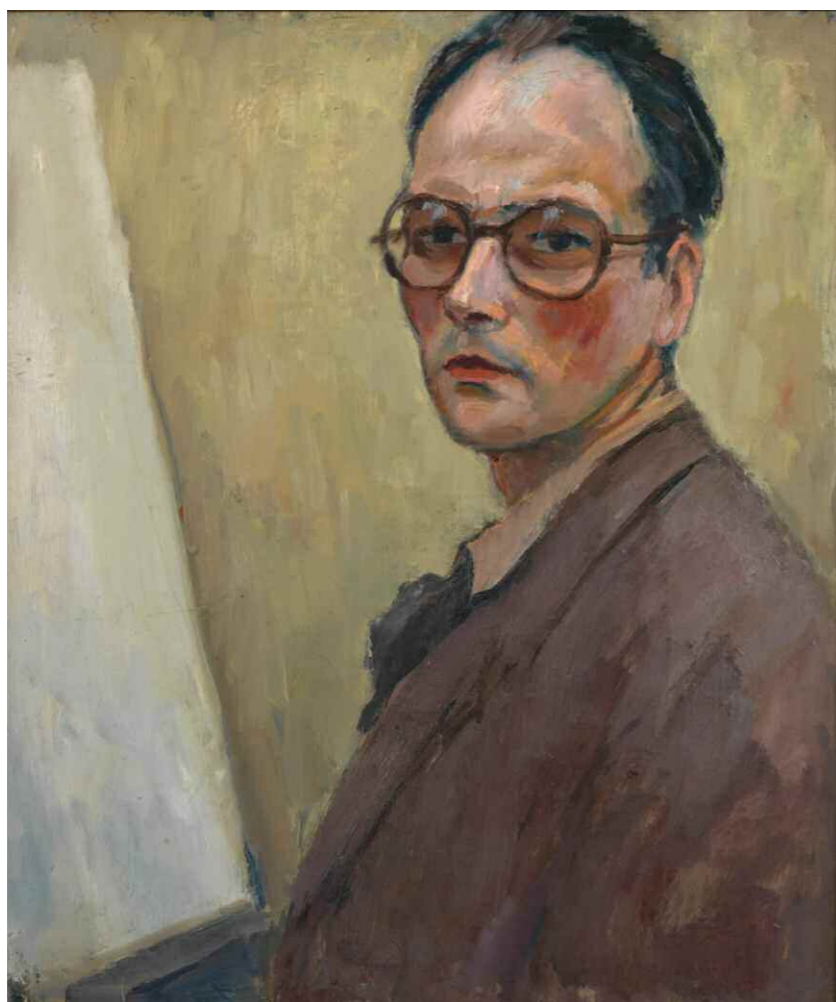
26th May - 19th June 2020

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Self-portrait circa 1930

F O R E W O R D

Towards the end of his life Georges Folmer wrote: "Il n'y a pas de hasard en Art" (There is no random chance in art). This mantra was expressed with the absolute certainty of a pure mathematician. It is not the statement of an artist casting about for eternal truths that he will never fully grasp. Folmer spent his entire career reaching out for those truths, with a clarity of vision, and with a desire to rationalise them and to use them to express the world in terms he at least could understand.

With Folmer's mature works there is never a sense of them having developed on the canvas; instead they have emerged fully formed, as if there was never the possibility that they could have been in any way different. This certainty extends to the radical concept of his polychrome sculptures, that were essentially conceived as constructions of pre-made parts to be assembled like a kit. His 'monotypes' of the late 1940s were constructed as carefully as an 18th century watercolour, with the bare paper providing the highlights kept pristine as he applied the inks around them with rollers and sponges. In the 1960s Folmer turned his experiments to kinetic art, creating a series of 'roto-peintures' with painted elements that could be turned or twisted to change the composition. No matter the number of permutations and combinations of shapes and colours, every variation has been anticipated by the artist. Such complete control is typical of Folmer.

This is not to deny the avant-garde nature of his work, that reaching out into the unknown, but for Folmer the thinking, the experimenting and the planning was all done by the time his brush ever touched the canvas. His career among the avant-garde progressed upon similarly clear cut lines. This selection of 15 works, mostly selected from the estate of the artist, cannot provide an all-encompassing survey of his life, but it serves to give a taste of each distinct phase of his career and its logical progression.

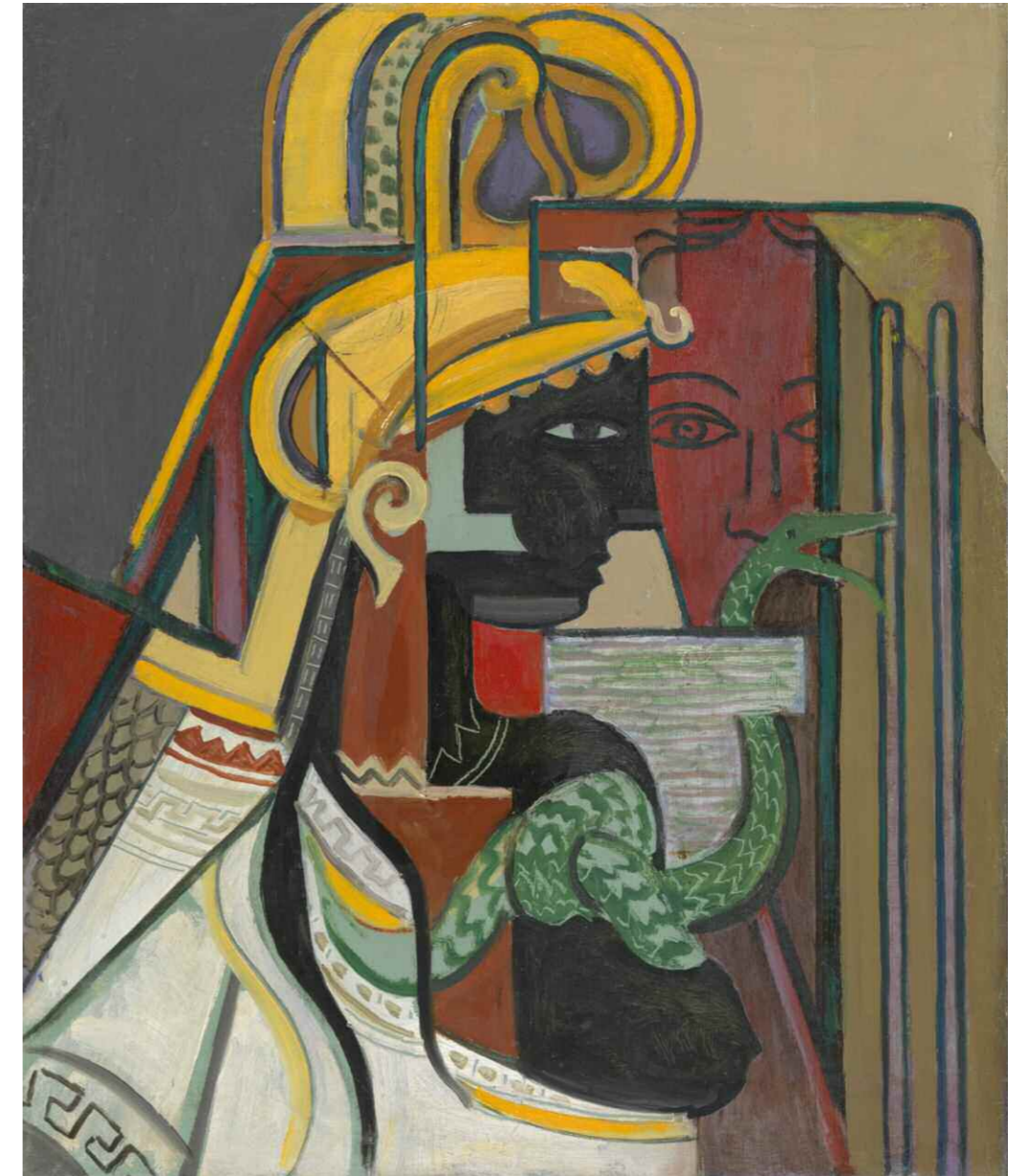
SYNTHETIC CUBISM

In 'Profil et masque', a rare example of Folmer's work from the 1920s, he shows the proud influence of Synthetic Cubism. As he did for the next decade and more, he pulls shapes apart and reassembles them into pleasing spatial arrangements using simplified blocks of bright colours.

'Profil et masque' has a deliberate theatricality that marks many of his works of the period. His wartime experiences included a spell painting scenery for the Prisoner of War theatre in an internment camp in Germany. Later, his his time spent designing theatrical costumes for the actor Charles Dullin at the theatre workshop established by Henri-Gabriel Ibels had a profound effect, bringing him into contact for the first time with the world of modernist art and literature, mingling with writers and artists who constantly sought to renew the ways in which they depicted the world around them.



Self-portrait circa 1928

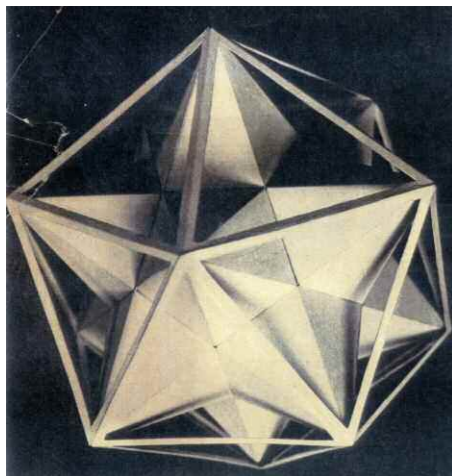


1.
Profil et masque,
1928
Oil on canvas
21.5 x 18 in
55 x 46 cm

SECTION D'OR

Folmer's work became progressively intellectualised – “The eye no longer presides during the creation of a painting, but the mind, the artist's thoughts, prevail.” As he gained in stature and confidence, so his vision sharpened and his ideas crystallised. Folmer's understanding of geometry and mathematical theory deepened with his friendship with the 'mathematician-chercheur et dessinateur' Dimitri Viener, who was his neighbour at his studio in rue Dulac, Montparnasse, from 1928 until his disappearance in 1946.

In the 1930s and 1940s Folmer's art progressed inexorably towards pure geometric abstraction, driven by his obsession with polyhedrons and specifically the closely related 'Golden Ratio' or 'Section d'Or'. An aesthetic theory developed by the Greeks, it states the ratio between the sum of two measurements and the larger of the two measurements is identical to the ratio between the larger and smaller measurements. To be precise the golden ratio is an irrational mathematical constant, approximately 1.61803398874989... But when expressed visually it becomes clearer to non-mathematicians. The proportions are immediately familiar: the Parthenon in Athens (including Phidias's sculptures); the Great Mosque of Kairouan; the Great Pyramid of Giza; paintings and designs by Leonardo da Vinci, Salvador Dali and Le Corbusier; music by Debussy, Bartok, Chopin and Erik Satie; everyday objects such as posters, playing cards, postcards, photographs, even widescreen televisions. All have been made according to the proportions of the Golden Ratio. Even the city of Mecca lies on the golden ratio of North/South.



A dodecahedron constructed by the artist from Bristol Board, circa 1936



2. Composition bleue, 1940-42 Oil on canvas 19 x 18 in / 48 x 46 cm

CONSTRUCTIONS SPATIALES

Folmer's 'bois polychromes' from the years 1945-1950 occupy an important place in his oeuvre and have been identified by no less an authority than Serge Lemoine, former President of the Musée d'Orsay, as ground-breaking artworks that are among the very earliest of their kind in the history of art. Folmer himself called them "constructions spatiales" since, as he would say, "they are neither sculpted, nor modelled by hand." They are constructions: conceived by volume more than surface with the emphasis on the weight of the piece, designed with detailed drawings, carved and painted as individual pieces and then assembled.

The process is a curiously contemporary one, initially dictated by the shortage of materials in the immediate aftermath of the war. Folmer would go scavenging in the area now occupied by the Péripherique that surrounds Paris, picking up discarded pieces of wood mainly from splintered railway sleepers. Shapes would suggest themselves and would be re-envisioned into architectural wholes. Meticulous drawings would be made, shapes re-carved and the individual elements painted according to designs, and then assembled.

In 1950 a group of these 'Constructions spatiales' were exhibited in a separate area of the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, and were subsequently exhibited at Colette Allendy's gallery.



A group of 'Constructions spatiales' at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes, 2010

3.
**Construction spatiale:
Mais chez qui du rêve se
dore, circa 1949**

Oil on wood construction
29 x 8 x 4.5 in
73 x 20 x 11.5 cm



RÉALITÉS NOUVELLES

During the 1940s Folmer freed his paintings from any resemblance to the natural world, developing an art based upon proportions and modulations, and focussed completely upon the internal balances and tensions of the composition. By the end of the decade he had excluded any random element of chance from his works and given absolute pre-eminence to thought.

In 1939 his work was shown together with that of Frédo-Sides at the Galerie Charpentier at the historically important exhibition which included all the major non-representational artists of the time. This event was the precursor of the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles which opened in 1946 after the war. Georges Folmer exhibited there regularly from 1947 onwards and became responsible for the 'geometric section'. In 1956, he was appointed Secretary-General of the Salon, and was described by Michel Seuphor in 'L'Oeil' of October 1959 as "one of the moral pillars of the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles".



Georges Folmer at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, standing in front of the poster had designed, 1961

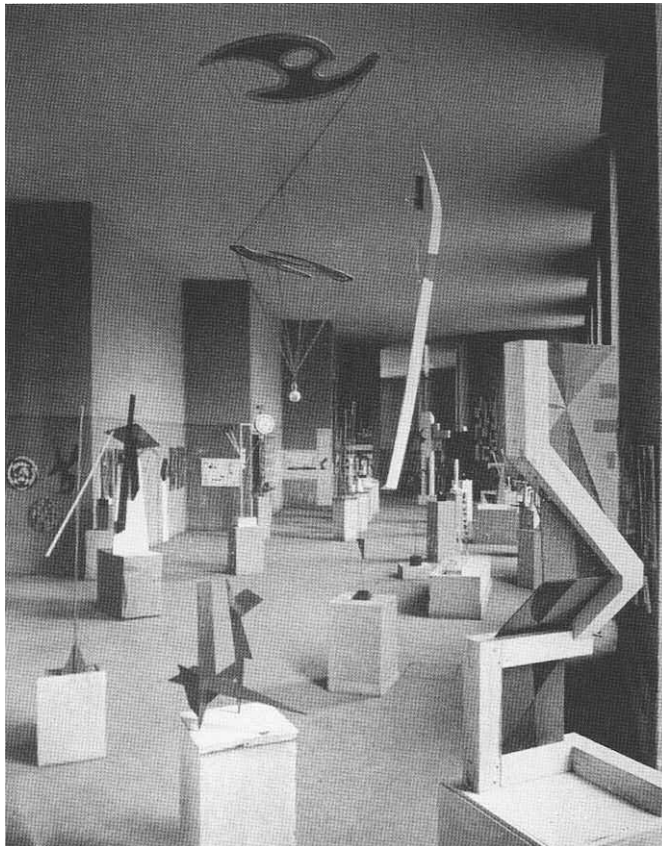


4.
Contradiction, 1948
Mixed media on canvas
51 x 35 in / 130 x 89 cm

RÉALITÉS NOUVELLES & THE SALLE ESPACE

At the 1950 Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Folmer was entrusted with setting up a separate room, the 'Salle Espace'. Here he and the artists of his immediate circle could give full expression to their theories about the alignment of the visual arts with architecture and the various other applications of art and design. Thus sculptures and wall-works, kinetic art and mobiles were displayed alongside story-boards and maquettes for interior designs.

As Folmer noted: "We no longer paint a descent from the cross, we decorate libraries. We no longer sculpt allegoric groups, nor busts of generals, but we make fountains, stadiums."



The 'Salle Espace' organised by Folmer at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles of 1951



5.

Aérographe, 1952

Mixed media on canvas 19.75 x 25.5 in / 50 x 65 cm

MONOTYPES

During the 1940s, lacking the materials for painting, Folmer acquired inks from a printer and neighbour in La Ruche and set about inventing new ways of painting. He hand-made an array of rollers and other tools for applying ink to paper, that could create a myriad of different textures and finishes. Backgrounds of subtle gradations of tones would be created by painting onto textured papers, applying it to another sheet and then ripping it away. Stronger lines and forms would be created from elegant curves and sweeps of the rollers and other implements, and, when gouache became available once again, he would bring colour to these dynamic and expressive works.

He called them 'monotypes' and in different variations they sustained his creativity throughout the rest of his life. In English the word monotype suggests a form of off-set printing, whereas Folmer's 'monotypes' are simply paintings - albeit ones where the painter, like innumerable post-war artists, has employed alternatives to the traditional brush and palette knife.



The suitcase of rollers and other hand-made implements that Folmer created to apply the inks for his 'monotypes'

6.

Sans titre, encre, 1947

Ink on paper 18.25 x 13.75 in / 46 x 35 cm



7.

Non couleur, encre, 1947

Ink on paper 21.75 x 14 in / 55 x 35.5 cm

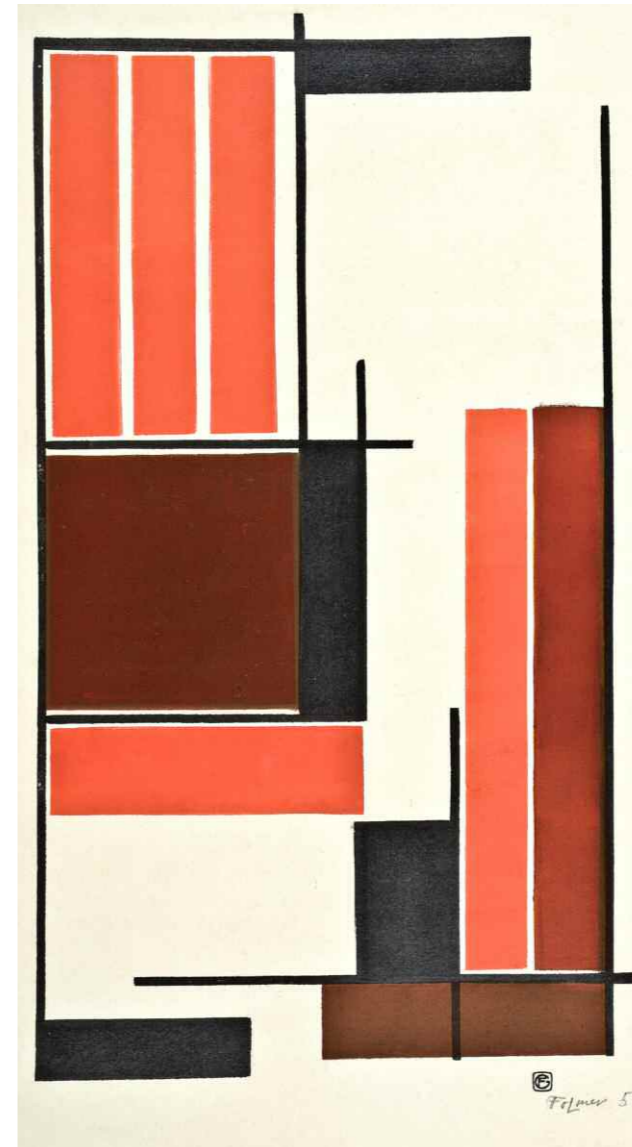


8.
Sans titre, encre, 1948
Ink on paper 19.75 x 12.25 in / 50 x 31 cm

9.
Sans titre, encre, 1951
Ink on paper 12 x 9 in / 30 x 22 cm



10.
Composition, encre, 1951
Ink on paper 22.5 x 17.75 in / 57 x 45 cm



11.
Composition, encre, 1949
Ink on paper 21.75 x 16.25 in / 55 x 41 cm

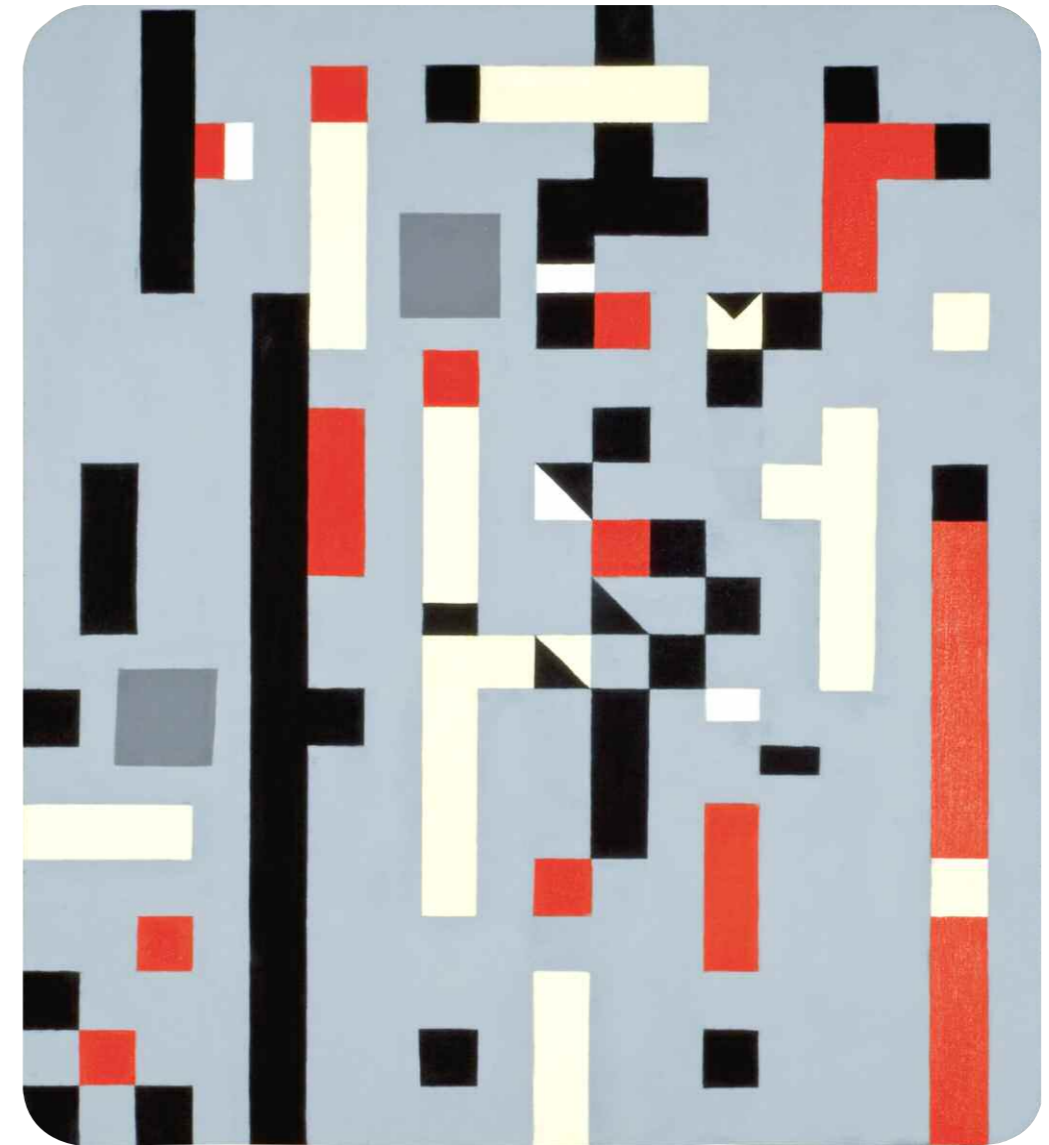
GROUPE ESPACE AND GROUPE MESURE

After more than a year of discussion with the artists Gorin, Servanes, Beöthy and Del Marle, in 1951 Folmer signed the manifesto of the Groupe Espace along with nine other artists. One of the founding principles of the group was the equality of all the Arts, enshrined in the motto "l'Art dans la vie".

Folmer initiated co-operation with architects and designers in the introduction of Geometric Abstraction into both interior and exterior spaces, and worked with some of the leading avant-garde architects of the 20th century including Walter Gropius and Gabriel Guevrekian. Meanwhile he himself created monumental mosaics in association with Melano, his neighbour in La Ruche.



Interior of Folmer's studio at La Ruche, circa 1960



12. Composition, 1958 Acrylic on Masonite 39.75 x 35.5 in / 101 x 90 cm

GROUPE ESPACE AND GROUPE MESURE

The 1950s saw a general movement in abstract art towards Tachism, and at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles the geometric and constructivist artists gradually found themselves outnumbered. Soon Folmer was the only representative of constructivist art on the committee. He categorically rejected the Tachist movement's thesis, declaring "Tachism simply uses the same principles as figurative painting, with the absence of realistic expression being the only difference between them."

In the spring of 1960 Folmer founded the Groupe Mesure, "une groupe expérimental de recherches plastiques formelles." He was the President and Jean Gorin the Vice-President and the Groupe Mesure held exhibitions in France and Germany until 1965.



The Salon des Réalités Nouvelles,
1956

13.

Composition, 1960

Mixed media on board
74.5 x 48.75 in / 189 x 124 cm



GROUPE ESPACE AND GROUPE MESURE

The Group Measure held to the principles of geometric abstraction and constructivism across the whole range of the arts, making deliberate connections to architecture and design. As the word 'mesure' suggests, their works were characterised by order, harmony and precision, and all the artists aimed for a purity in their creations.

At this time Folmer uses colour sparingly in all his works. Conforming to the principles of the Groupe Espace and Groupe Mesure, he adopts the range of colours that were available to like-minded architects - taking a single brighter colour that is offset against various shades of grey and cool blues.



Georges Folmer in his studio in La Ruche, 1964



14. Composition, 1960 Acrylic on canvas 36.5 x 32 in / 93 x 82 cm

TABLEAU - RELIEF

In 1960 Folmer started to experiment with Kinetic art, producing artworks with one or more movable parts that enabled the viewer to twist or turn elements to create different combinations and compositions. Building these artworks required Folmer to learn a new set of skills, and between 1962 and 1965 he put these to use to create a series of Tableau-reliefs, three-dimensional wall-works that he exhibited alongside the 'roto-peintures'.



*Galerie Raymonde
Cazenave, Paris, 1966,
exhibition 'Folmer -
Rotopeintures, Rotocorps,
Interdimensionel, Giration'*

15.
Tableau-relief, 1964
Oil on wood
23.5 x 12.5 in / 60 x 32 cm



CATALOGUE OF WORKS

1. Profil et masque, 1928

Studio stamp on verso Oil on canvas 21.5 x 18 in / 55 x 46 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Waterhouse & Dodd, New York

Private collection, New York

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.160, illus. p.100

2. Composition bleue, 1940-42

Signed on verso Oil on canvas 19 x 18 in / 48 x 46 cm

Provenance:

Private collection, Luxembourg

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.324, illus. p.33

Exhibited:

Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Folmer et l'abstraction

géométrique, 1993, cat no.3, illus. p.39

Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Georges Folmer, 2010, illus. p.41

Geneva, Organisation Mondiale de la Propriété Intellectuelle,

Georges Folmer, 2010, cited p.8 and illus. p.14

3. Construction spatiale: Mais chez qui du rêve se dore, circa 1949

Signed under the base with Greek letter "phi" & studio stamp

Oil on wood construction 29 x 8 x 4.5 in / 73 x 20 x 11.5 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Exhibitions:

Paris, Galerie Colette Allendy, 1951

Pontoise, Musée de la Ville de Pontoise, 1988

Chabeuil-Valence, Espace Oroeil, 1993

Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Folmer et l'abstraction

géométrique, 1993, cat no.83, illus. p.120

Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Georges Folmer, 2010, illus. p.98

Vulaines-sur-Seine, Musée départemental Stéphane Mallarmé,

Georges Folmer, peintre mallarméen, 2013, illus. p.28

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.472, illus. p.209

4. Contradiction, 1948

Signed Mixed media on canvas 51 x 35 in / 130 x 89 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Exhibitions:

Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Folmer et l'abstraction

géométrique, 1993, cat no.10, illus. p.37

Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Georges Folmer, 2010, illus. p.45

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.417, illus. p.35

5. Aérographe, 1952

Signed Mixed media on canvas 19.75 x 25.5 in / 50 x 65 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Exhibitions:

Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Folmer et l'abstraction

géométrique, 2010, illus. p.63

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.610, illus. p.170

6. Sans titre, encre, 1947

Signed Ink on paper 18.25 x 13.75 in / 46 x 35 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.362, illus. p.124

7. Non couleur, encre, 1947

Ink on paper 21.75 x 14 in / 55 x 35.5 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.378, illus. p.124

8. Sans titre, encre, 1948

Signed Ink on paper 19.75 x 12.25 in / 50 x 31 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.400, illus. p.121

9. Sans titre, encre, 1951

Signed & dated Ink on paper 12 x 9 in / 30 x 22 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.555, illus. p.121

10. Composition, encre, 1951

Signed, dated & studio stamp

Ink on paper 22.5 x 17.75 in / 57 x 45 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.567, illus. p.133

11. Composition, encre, 1949

Signed, dated & studio stamp

Ink on paper 21.75 x 16.25 in / 55 x 41 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.461, illus. p.135

12. Composition, 1958

Acrylic on Masonite 39.75 x 35.5 in / 101 x 90 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Private collection, Paris

Exhibitions:

Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Georges Folmer, 2010, illus. p.53

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.674, illus. p.181

13. Composition, 1960

Signed on verso

Mixed media on board 74.5 x 48.75 in / 189 x 124 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Exhibitions:

Pontoise, Musée de la Ville de Pontoise, 1988

Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Folmer et l'abstraction

géométrique, 1993, cat no.42, illus. p.77

Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Georges Folmer, 2010, illus. p.82

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.719, illus. p.187

14. Composition, 1960

Signed Acrylic on canvas 36.5 x 32 in / 93 x 82 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Exhibited:

Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Georges Folmer, 2010, illus. p.83

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.722, illus. p.185

15. Tableau-relief, 1964

Signed on verso Oil on wood 23.5 x 12.5 in / 60 x 32 cm

Provenance:

The estate of the artist

Private collection, Netherlands

Literature:

Catalogue raisonné, 2015, cat no.841, illus. p.215

MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

- 1917 Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, drawing Camp de Holzminden, Germany
- 1934 Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts
- 1935 Ville de Paris, 'Paysage'
- 1938 Ministère de l'Education Nationale et des Beaux-Arts, 'Nature morte cubiste'
- 1939 Direction des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, Hauts Fourneaux de Pompey
- 1940 Ministère de l'Education Nationale et des Beaux-Arts, 'Pont Saint Louis'
- 1941 Ministère de l'Education Nationale et des Beaux-Arts, 'Rue à Montmartre'
- 1942 Ministère de l'Education Nationale et des Beaux-Arts, 'Paris Port Brançon'
- 1943 Ville de Paris, 'Hippodrome de Longchamp'
- 1943 Ministère de l'Education Nationale et des Beaux-Arts, 'Paysage'
- 1947 Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris, 'Symphonie Harmonique'
- 1961 Fond National d'Art Contemporain Paris, 'Le blanc souci de notre toile, 1959'
- 1962 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, 'J'ai troué dans le mur de toile une fenêtre'
- 1962 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes
- 1962 Kunstgalerie, Kaiserslautern, Germany
- 1962 Musée de Céret, 'Tableau-relief, 1959'
- 1973 Ville de Paris, 'Appel, 1958'
- 1973 Ville de Paris, 'Que la vitre soit l'Art, 1958'
- 1973 Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris, 'J'ai de mon rêve épars connu la nudité, 1964'
- 1981 Amsterdam Museum, Netherlands
- 1982 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Cholet, 'Horus, 1952/55'
- 1990 Musée de la Ville de Grenoble, 'Triade, 1951'
- 1991 Musée de la Ville de Grenoble, 'Polychrome, 1950'
- 1993 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy, 'Espace, 1945'
- 1993 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy, 'Toile 1954'
- 1993 Musée de la Ville de Grenoble, 'Roto-peinture, 1964'
- 1994 Ville de Bordeaux Mérignac, 'Composition, 1964'
- 2008 Musée du Château, Montbéliard, 'Composition, 1959'
- 2010 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes, 'Composition, 1951' and 'Composition, 1956'
- 2013 Musée Mallarmé, Fontainebleau, 'Ni la clarté déserte de lampe'



The entrance to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes, February 2010

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

- 1926 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille
- 1927 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Mulhouse
- 1952 Paris-Sorbonne, Union des Artistes Modernes
- 1956 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Toulon
- 1961 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes
- 1962 International Exhibition, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Ceret
- 1962 Pfäzische Landesgewerbeanstalt Kaiserslautern
- 1962 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes
- 1964 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Saint-Etienne
- 1964 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Namur, Belgium
- 1967 Toulouse Cultural Centre, Toulouse
- 1982 FNAC, Musée Municipal de Cholet
- 1988 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pontoise
- 1988 Les années 50, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
- 1993 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy
- 2008 Musée du Château, Montbéliard
- 2009 La Ruche, Palais des Lumières, Evian
- 2010 Organisation Mondiale de la Propriété Intellectuelle, Geneva
- 2010 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes
- 2013 Musée Mallarmé, Fontainebleau
- 2015 Mairie du 16ème arrondissement, Paris
- 2016 Cercle de l'Union Interalliée, Paris
- 2018 Centre Pompidou, Paris, Union des Artistes Modernes



Exhibition of Georges Folmer at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy, 1993



Exhibition of Georges Folmer at the Mairie of the XVIème arrondissement, Paris, 2015



Georges Folmer on the steps to La Ruche, where he maintained a studio from 1934 to 1969.

GEORGES FOLMER

Born on 19th November 1895 in Nancy

- 1911 Student at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Nancy to 1913
- 1914 Civilian prisoner in Germany
- 1917 Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Geneva
- 1919 Living in Paris, working with Nabis painter Ibels
- 1922 Exhibits at Nancy, Galeries Mosser and Majorelle until 1924
- 1926 First meeting with Del Marle
- 1926 Exhibits in Lille with the 'Vouloir' group
- 1927 Exhibits at the Musée de Mulhouse
- 1928 Exhibits at the Salons d'Automne, des Indépendants, des Tuileries until 1934
- 1932 First meeting with Herbin. Attracted by abstraction
- 1933 Exhibits at Galerie Billiet-Worms
- 1934 Moves to 'La Ruche'
- 1935 Exhibits at the First Salon of Mural Art with Gleizes, Gorin and Kandinsky
- 1937 State commission for the Exposition Internationale: 'Jupiter lançant la foudre'
- 1939 He is one of the exhibitors brought together by Frédo-Sides for the international abstract exhibition at the Galerie Charpentier
- 1941 Makes first coloured wood sculptures
- 1942 He perfects a new technique for ink drawings which he calls 'monotypes'
- 1947 Exhibits at the Second Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, until 1972
- 1950 One-man exhibition of polychromatic wood forms at Galerie Colette Allendy
- 1951 One-man exhibition of monotypes at Galerie Voyelle

- 1951 One-man exhibition of spatial paintings and structures at Galerie Colette Allendy
- 1951 Signs the manifesto of the Groupe Espace, with Sonia Delaunay, Walter Gropius, Del Marle and Gorin
- 1956 Appointed Secretary-General of the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles
- 1960 Founds the Groupe Mesure, of which elected President with Gorin as Vice-President
- 1961 One-man exhibition at the Galerie Hautefeuille
- 1964 Works with the Foundation Guoin-Lang at Royaumont Abbey
- 1964 Becomes member of the AFCC (Association Française des Coloristes Conseils)
- 1965 Organises the exhibitions of the Groupe Mesure in France and Germany
- 1966 One-man exhibition of Kinetic art including roto-peintures and mobiles at the Galerie Cazenave
- 1967 Organises exhibition of abstract art in Toulouse with Denise René
- 1968 Retires to the banks of the Rhine
- 1969 One-man exhibition of recent work at Galerie Landwerlin, Strasbourg
- 1972 Folmer Jubilee exhibition organised by the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles
- 1975 Devotes himself to drawing and to writing his reflections on art

Dies on 4th January 1977 in Neumühl, Germany, and is buried in the Kork cemetery

He had previously written:

"Don't go to the cemetery, that is not where I am ..."

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