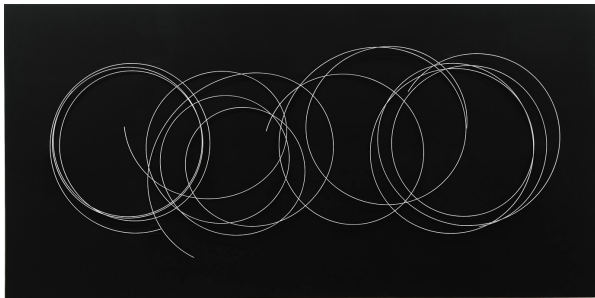


# takis

## *BLACK AND WHITE* *THE FOURTH DIMENSION*

Exhibition September 9<sup>th</sup> – October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Opening September 9<sup>th</sup> from 3pm



Takis, *Magnetic Wall - The 4th Dimension*, 2001  
Painted canvas, magnets, iron wires, 140 x 280 x 6 cm  
Courtesy de l'artiste et Galerie Xippas, Paris

Takis, a major figure in the post-war European artistic scene, explores invisible forces and the omnipresence of energy in all things. Having settled in Paris in 1954, he rubbed shoulders with his contemporaries Klein, Spoerri, Tinguely... and aroused a certain fascination amongst the writers of the Beat Generation.

The energy of magnetic fields is one of the foundations of Takis' work, from the very beginning of his artistic experiments. From the end of the 1950s, Takis invented *tele-magnetic* sculptures, where everyday metallic objects defy gravity with the help of magnets, and float in space. An "intuitive savant", Takis uses physical laws and technology to manage to escape

weightiness and "introduce a new, continuous, living force to sculpture"<sup>1</sup>.

Whilst Takis is considered to be one of the rare innovators in sculpture today, alongside Calder, Brancusi and Giacometti, the liberation of the forces of nature prevails over esthetic form in his work. Takis' pieces, made up of industrial or mechanical parts, are situated at the crossroads between art, technology and science.

In this personal exhibition, the Xippas Gallery will present emblematic pieces of Takis' work, such as *Magnetic Walls*, as well as a *Musical*, pieces which span the entirety of his career to the present day.

Inspired by natural phenomena and the industrial development of the age, Takis used electromagnetism and, from 1965, created the *Musicals* to produce, in his words, the music of spheres. An "instrument" invented by Takis, the *Musical* (1972) is made up of a wooden panel on the back of which is an electromagnetic magnet which attracts and repels a suspended needle. The needle strikes a string which is stretched on the panel and produces a strong and distinctive sound according to the random rhythm of the magnetic waves, creating mysterious music. Takis'

<sup>1</sup> *Takis, past and present*. A conversation with Maiten Bouisset. Takis, Xippas Gallery, Paris, 1991, p.22

taste for chance in sound composition links him to John Cage, with whom he exchanged ideas in the 1960s and with whom he shares an interest in Zen philosophy and mythology. The cosmos is not silent and Takis seeks to make natural forces audible.

*Magnetic Walls* continues with this quest, by transposing it into the field of painting, where metallic forms subjected to magnets fixed on the back of the canvas are attracted to the surface of the paint. These elements are linked to the canvas by the sole strength of the magnet and can therefore be moved easily. The canvas becomes a progressive installation which interrogates the random nature of form.

Presented here in black and white, these monochrome canvases, like Yin and Yang, evoke the complementary principle of magnets. The

force of attraction between the magnets acts in the same way as attraction between men, or between celestial bodies. For Takis, it is a question not only of energy in the physical sense, but also of a breath that animates all living beings.

Beyond earthly phenomena, Takis' work opens up a universal, and therefore timeless dimension. It is not time, but energy, the mysterious force which determines the world and which humans have forever sought to understand, which represents this other dimension, the fourth dimension of the universe. Acting in magnetic fields, sculpture is above all a means to awaken feelings of space in the spectator. "I follow the indications of the matter", says Takis of his work. Not seeking to dominate matter, but on the contrary, to liberate the invisible forces present in the world, Takis follows Plato's idea whereby "the artist is one who takes the invisible and makes it visible"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25

Panagiotis Vassilakis, known as Takis, was born in Athens in 1925. As early as 1946, he discovered the work of Picasso and Giacometti and made plaster busts inspired by Cycladic art. In 1954, he settled in Paris, where he joined Brancusi's studio for a few months. Since this period, he has divided his time between Paris and Athens and began exhibiting in Paris, London and New York.

From 1955, Takis chose iron as his preferred medium, and made sculptures in wrought iron, elongated silhouettes like the Kouroi. During the same period, Takis created the first *Signals*, which gave rise to a whole family of pieces inspired by the technological landscape of the time and which celebrate the energy of the cosmos. From a few centimetres to two or three metres in height, made up of metallic stems with steel parts welded to their extremities, the *Signals* seek, like radars, to capture the energy of the sky. From 1959, Takis began experimenting with magnetic fields, and created his first *Telesculpture*.

In November 1960, a few months before Yuri Gagarin's first space flight, during a performance entitled "Impossible, a man in space" at the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris, Takis launched his friend, the poet Sinclair Beiles, into space with the use of magnetic fields. The latter, suspended in space by a magnet attached to his belt, defied gravity and proclaimed, "I am a sculpture".

In 1961, Takis travelled to the United States, where he met Marcel Duchamp, who called him "the gay labourer of magnetic fields". In the same year, Takis published an autobiography, *Estafilades*, published by Julliard Editions. In 1964-1965, Takis explored painting and introduced colour into his work with the first *Telepaintings* and the *Magnetic Walls*. These two years were also marked by a sojourn in London where he met John Lennon, Yoko Ono, Paul McCartney... Also in 1965, Takis created a *Musical*, his first sound piece, which confirmed his interest in composition.

In 1968-1969, Takis received a grant for a residency at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States, where he worked with renowned scientists. The *Hydromagnetic Sculptures*, as well as a number of exhibitions including one at the MOMA in New York, were the result of this period. Takis, developing his work at the crossroads between art, technology and

science, also holds a number of patents for his inventions.

In the 1970s, Takis created the music and the sets for different shows and in 1979 he collaborated with Nam June Paik for a performance at the Kunstverein in Cologne, as well as with Charlemagne Palestine at the Rath museum in Geneva.

In 1988, Takis was awarded the Grand Prix National de Sculpture in Paris. He is one of the rare foreign artists to have exhibited in the biggest French museums. Retrospectives of his work have been held at the Centre National d'Art Contemporain à Paris (1972), the Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris (1980), the Fondation des Treilles dans le Var (1982), and the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume à Paris (1993).

The Georges Pompidou Centre has exhibited Takis' work on several occasions: in 1981, he presented the spectacular piece *3 Totems - Musical Space*, as part of a personal exhibition; in 1984, he took part in the exhibition *Le Siècle de Kafka*, and in 1985, a *Long Magnetic Wall* was exhibited.

More recently, the Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul de Vence held a personal exhibition of his work in 2007. In 2011, four *Aeolian Signals* were exhibited in the gardens of the Palais Royal in Paris. In 2015, the Palais de Tokyo in Paris held a retrospective entitled *Magnetic Fields*. In the same year, his work was presented at the Menil Collection in Houston in the United States.

The Tate Modern in London will be holding a personal exhibition of his work which will open in the summer 2019.

Takis' pieces are part of different public and private collections all over the world. His sculptures are regularly commissioned and are visible in a number of public spaces in Paris and abroad. A monumental basin of *Light Signals* is visible on the esplanade of La Défense, next to Paris; the *Aeolian Signals* are outside the Unesco headquarters in Paris, an *Aeolian Signal* is installed in front of Athens' National Pinacothèque, along with three 7-metre tall *Aeolian Signals* which are opposite the Benaki Contemporary Art Museum in Athens; his "Solar Energy" *Signals* are also visible in front of the headquarters of the European Commission in Brussels.