

# COSMO - TAKIS

Homage to Takis (1925 – 2019) on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth

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Press release

Takis  
*Télesculture*, 1959  
Iron and electromagnet  
71 x 46 x 51 cm  
Private collection, Switzerland  
Photo: Julien Gremaud  
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**Opening Monday October 20th, 2025**

**Curated by Alfred Pacquement**

One hundred years ago, on October 29, 1925, Panayiotis Vassilakis, known as Takis, was born in Athens.

The Xippas gallery has chosen to celebrate a double anniversary: the 100th anniversary of Takis's birth and the 35th anniversary of the gallery, by bringing together a collection of historical works under the curatorship of Alfred Pacquement.

A major figure in sculpture since the late 1950s, Takis has set magnetic forces in motion, defying gravity in a universe of light and sound. Fascinated by technology, which he imbues with a poetic dimension, by radars that detect metallic objects in the cosmos, by invisible waves that pass through the atmosphere transmitting messages, Takis chose magnetism as the basis of his visual language. Thus, a simple nail or any other metallic element is levitated by a magnet. In 1960, he pushed this approach to its paroxysm by exhibiting *The Impossible, a Man in Space* at the Iris Clert Gallery, a portrait of which appears in the exhibition. Suspended in the void and held by magnets, the poet Sinclair Beiles proclaimed «I am a sculpture.»

The introduction of light and electromagnets, which add continuous vibrations or sudden, random movements to the devices, broadens the artistic vocabulary. This vocabulary would later include sound, introduced through musical sculptures in which an electromagnet attracts and repels a needle, causing a piano string to vibrate. As early as 1961, Takis dreamed of creating an instrument capable of capturing the music of the beyond, as he wrote in “Estafilades”. He further expanded his approach through theatrical performances and monumental installations—such as *Trois Totems – Espace musical* at the Centre Pompidou (1981)—and by engaging with urban environments, notably with the *Light Signals* fountain at La Défense (1987).

Renos Xippas began working with Takis in 1974. Initially studio director, he quickly became Takis's confidant and later his gallerist, starting in October 1990 with the opening of his gallery in Paris. Their relationship was marked by an uninterrupted artistic collaboration that spanned 45 years, resulting in over thirty exhibitions in galleries and international institutions. Renos Xippas inaugurated his Paris gallery 35 years ago with what remains, to this day, Takis's most significant gallery exhibition: a large-scale installation paying homage to Marcel Duchamp, a musical environment, and a forest of light signals that filled every space of the gallery.

This new exhibition takes the form of a retrospective anthology, retracing the key moments of the artist's career. It opens with rare wrought-iron sculptures from 1954, which bear witness to the beginnings of his work, shaped by the dual influence of Giacometti's hieratic figures and the Greek archaic tradition—an influence echoed in their mythologically inspired titles. Within this selection of historical works retracing the main facets of Takis's sculpture, one will also find a rare *Télésculpture – Jeu d'échecs* from 1964, a tribute to Duchamp, as well as a large collection of metal signals, including some of the very first created by the artist. Fascinated by the «iron jungle» he discovered at Calais railway station, Takis began designing his first abstract sculptures by assembling flexible rods with gentle vibrating oscillations, topped with salvaged elements and later enhanced with flashing lights.

An «intuitive scholar» as he described himself, Takis succeeded in merging artistic exploration with scientific innovation in a highly original way. Telepaintings and magnetic walls that question the very notion of painting, spherical interior spaces—sometimes exploded—dials with random flashes, pendulums and magnetic balls in constant oscillation, and sound sculptures generating unpredictable music: all of these elements come together in the exhibition, offering a synthesis of a unique visual universe and one of the most essential artistic approaches of recent decades.

— Alfred Pacquement

**Alfred Pacquement** is an Honorary General Curator of Heritage and former Director of the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Early member of the team at the Centre national d'art contemporain, he joined the newly opened Centre Pompidou, where he became a curator at the Musée national d'art moderne, responsible for contemporary art until 1987. He then became the first Director of the Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, followed by his appointment as Delegate for Visual Arts at the Ministry of Culture, and later as Director of the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts.

In September 2000, he was appointed Director of the Musée national d'art moderne at the Centre Georges Pompidou, a position he held until the end of 2013. During his mandate, numerous acquisitions were made—encompassing key works from the major movements of 20th-century art as well as contemporary creations—many with the support of the Société des Amis of the museum. Several major exhibitions were also held. Among them, he curated retrospectives of Simon Hantai, Pierre Soulages, and François Morellet. He is now an independent curator and cultural consultant. Alfred Pacquement has curated numerous exhibitions in France and abroad. In recent years, he has been responsible for both monographic and thematic contemporary art exhibitions, including projects at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Château de Versailles. He is also the author of numerous essays on contemporary artists.

He has organized several exhibitions dedicated to the work of Takis, including *Trois Totems – Espace musical* at the Centre Pompidou (1981), the major retrospective at the Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume (1993), and, more recently, the exhibition *Takis: Champs magnétiques* at the Palais de Tokyo in 2015.

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**Takis** (1925–2019) work has been the subject of numerous retrospective exhibitions at major institutions worldwide. Among the most significant are those held at Tate Modern in London and the Museu d'Art Contemporani in Barcelona in 2019; Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2015); the Menil Collection in Houston (2015); Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul de Vence (2007); Galeria Credito Siciliano in Acireale and Palazzo delle Stelline, Gruppo Credito Valtellinese in Milan (2004); Jeu de Paume in Paris (1993); Centre Georges Pompidou (1981); Fondation des Treilles in the Var (1982); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1980); and the Centre National d'Art Contemporain in Paris (1972).

In addition to his museum exhibitions, Takis has also influenced public spaces with monumental installations, notably *Le Bassin* (1987) at La Défense (Paris)—a body of water bordered by vibrating metal rods topped with luminous forms—and *Light Trees* (1990), an urban work exploring rhythm and light. Emblematic works such as *Musical Sphere*, *Signals*, *Hydromagnetic Sculpture*, and *Télé magnétique* have been presented at various institutions including Centre Pompidou, the Onassis Foundation, and MoMA. He also created a large-scale musical and luminous sculpture at the Château d'Eau in Beauvais (1992) and a permanent installation of magnetic works at the Crédit Foncier headquarters in Paris.

His work is now featured in numerous leading public collections, including Centre Pompidou (Paris), Tate (London), MoMA and the Guggenheim Museum (New York), Menil Collection (Houston), and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection (Venice).