

TAKIS: THE FOURTH DIMENSION

FIRST U.S. MUSEUM SURVEY FOR
THE GREEK ARTIST MARCEL DUCHAMP DUBBED “THE HAPPY
PLOUGHMAN OF MAGNETIC FIELD”

On view exclusively at the Menil from
January 24 through July 16, 2015



HOUSTON, Texas - November 26, 2014 — Since the mid-1950s Takis (born Panagiotis Vassilakis, 1925) has pushed into new aesthetic territory by creating three-dimensional works of art that incorporate invisible energies as a fourth element. A self-described “instinctive scientist” who has been a visiting researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and now runs the Research Center for

the Arts and Sciences in Athens, Takis, now 89, has explored the use of electromagnetism and other invisible forces to generate the compositions, movements, and musical sounds of static and kinetic works of art.

From January 24 through July 16, 2015, the Menil Collection will present the first exhibition in any U.S. museum to survey Takis’s half-century of achievements. Organized by Toby Kamps, curator of modern and contemporary art for the Menil Collection (the exhibition’s exclusive venue), *Takis: The Fourth Dimension* will feature approximately 25 sculptures, paintings, and kinetic works, all drawn from the museum’s holdings, the largest outside of Europe. This artist’s concerns and methods call to mind Jean Tinguely, who incorporated movement, time, and performance into

his artworks, and Yves Klein, who used elemental materials such as fire and human paintbrushes in his search for a more profound dimension of art.

“Takis is a kindred spirit to several radical European artists who are roughly his contemporaries, including Yves Klein, Jean Tinguely, and Lucio Fontana,” said Menil Director Josef Helfenstein. “Yet this artist is entirely distinctive in his approach to science and his way of harnessing the social and political energies. We are honored to bring greater attention to his work by presenting this long-overdue survey.”

Takis’s earliest works are small sculptures inspired by the simplified, geometric forms of ancient Cycladic sculptures; egg-like bronze forms referencing interior volumes and centrifugal forces; and the ongoing *Signals* series of antenna-like sculptures inspired by radio and radar that move in the wind. Later works from the 1960s, dubbed *télé-peintures* and *télé-sculptures* by French critic Alain Jouffroy (from the Greek word meaning “at a distance”), incorporate magnetism into their designs. The Menil’s *Magnetic Painting No. 7* (1962) uses strong magnets behind a yellow monochrome canvas to make metal objects hover above its surface. *Ballet Magnetique I* (1961) uses an electromagnet to make a metal sphere orbit above the plane. Two of Takis’s more recent works, which the artist has donated to the museum in memory of the de Menil family, are *Magnetic Wall - M.W. 038* (1999) and *Musical - M. 013* (2000), continue the use of magnets: in the first instance to shape a drawing made of coiled steel wire and in the second to create sounds that the artist calls “naked music.”

The exhibition is generously supported by the City of Houston.

Image Credit: *Takis: Magnetic Painting No. 7*, 1962. Oil on canvas, magnets, silk ribbon, and cork. Overall: 57 1/4 x 49 3/8 in. (145.4 x 125.4 cm)
The Menil Collection, Houston. Photo: Hickey-Robertson, Houston © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

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