

Aspen Art Museum
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Educator Notes



Installation view: Tomma Abts, *Mainly Drawings*, 2014. Photo: Tony Prikryl

Tomma Abts **Mainly Drawings**

August 9–October 26, 2014

About the artist

Tomma Abts was born in 1967 in Kiel, Germany, and has lived and worked in London since 1995. She is primarily known for her acrylic and oil paintings, which feature repetitive, geometric, abstract forms. Most of her artworks are consistent in size, but diverse in the use of color, and maintain a strong use of negative space. In 2006, Abts was the recipient of the Turner Prize, awarded by the Tate in London.



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About the exhibition

Tomma Abts's rigorous working process combines the rational with the intuitive. Starting with no external source material and no preconceived idea of the final result, she creates complex abstract compositions that ultimately take as their subject the process of their own creation. Abts's exhibition at the Aspen Art Museum is the first to survey the artist's extensive drawing practice. The exhibition features forty-one works from 1996 to the present, including new works created specifically for the exhibition.

For the drawings in this exhibition, Abts used colored pencils, which create a soft line and hue despite the strong geometric, straight lines. Although two-dimensional, the drawings exhibit a sense

of depth and movement through the various uses of lines. Because she generally does not create her drawings and paintings with a set plan, she uses great control and precision in her execution to achieve a pristine quality.

Abts does not say too much about her work, preferring that we develop our own subjective relationships with these drawings. She has commented, "Most painters have the experience that painting 'happens' not when you try really hard, but in the moment when you let go. Things can fall into place in a way you couldn't have conceived of before" (quoted in Christopher Belford, "Dear Painter...", *Frieze* 145 [March 2012]).



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Questions for discussion

What do you notice about the colors? Can you identify how Tomma Abts used primary and secondary colors? Complementary colors?

Why do you think her drawings are one of two sizes?

How can an abstract form speak to you? Do any of these forms remind you of anything or tell a story?

Suggested activities

Canvas control

Have students practice painting abstract shapes and lines using four of the same size canvases or sheets of paper. Do you notice a pattern?

Drawing in space

Have students create repetitions of forms using movement and their bodies. Give each student eight counts to create slow, careful movements while their classmates translate what they see into simple line drawings. The important thing to draw is not the outline of their bodies, but the lines created by trajectories of their movements.

A fully illustrated catalogue will be published by Aspen Art Press winter 2014.

For more information, please contact the Education Department at 970.925.8050 ext. 133 or email education@aspenartmuseum.org.

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