

"L'acclimatation de l'atmosphère à la surface de notre globe"
... la conclusion technique et scientifique de notre civilisation
est enfouie dans les
entrailles de la terre et assure
le confort par le contrôle absolu du
Climat à la surface de tous
les continents, devenus vastes
Salles de séjours communes.

... C'est une sorte de retour à l'eden
de la légende. (1951)

.. Avènement d'une société nouvelle, destinée à
subir des métamorphoses profondes dans sa
condition même. Disparition de l'intimité
personnelle et familiale. Développement
d'une ontologie impersonnelle.

La volonté de l'Homme peut enfin
s'élever libre au niveau d'un
"merveilleux" constant.

L'Homme libre,
l'est à tel point, qu'il
peut même léviter !
Occupation : les loi sères.

.. Les obstacles autrefois sur les chemins
l'architecture traditionnelle sont
éliminés.

Sous du corps par des méthodes
nouvelles, telles le lit d'air

YVES KLEIN

WITH THE VOID, FULL POWERS

May 20–September 12, 2010



Untitled Blue Monochrome (IKB 67), 1959, Dry pigment and synthetic resin on gauze on panel, Private Collection. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

YVES KLEIN

WITH THE VOID, FULL POWERS

In his short but prolific seven-year career, Yves Klein (French, b. Nice, 1928–1962) helped radically to reinvent the very definition and nature of what art could be. One of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, Klein was an innovator and visionary whose diverse practice included painting, sculpture, performance, photography, music, architecture, and writing as well as plans for projects in theater, dance, and cinema. Inspired by his study of judo, Eastern philosophies, and the mystical sect Rosicrucianism, he shifted the focus from the material object to an “immaterial sensibility,” not only challenging existing notions of art, but injecting it with a new sense of spirituality.

The artist created what he considered his first artwork when he imagined signing the blue sky above Nice in 1947, making his initial attempt to capture the immaterial. Klein primarily sought to achieve immaterial sensibility through pure color, observing, “Through color I feel the sentiment of complete identification with space; I am truly liberated.” Although he initially painted monochromes in a range of colors, in 1956 Klein initiated his “Blue Period” and began to focus mostly on an ultramarine blue of his own invention: International Klein Blue (IKB). For him, it represented complete freedom, the “spirit and sensibility that the color of the sky and the sea alone can produce.”



Above: Installation view of *Bas-Reliefs dans une forêt d'éponges* [Bas-Reliefs in a Forest of Sponges] at Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, 1959. Photo by and © Louis Frédéric; Opposite page: *Untitled Anthropometry* (ANT 100), 1960, Dry pigment and synthetic resin on paper on canvas, from the Hirshhorn's collection. Photo by Lee Stalworth. Both © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris



But it was not merely in his choice to present blocks of pure color that Klein challenged traditional painting. Throughout his career he developed inventive means of applying pigment, increasingly distancing the artist from the artwork. He first used paint rollers and then sponges, which evolved from a tool to a medium in itself as he saturated them with IKB pigment and formed them into both wall-mounted and freestanding sculptures. Eventually Klein conceived the notion of “living brushes”; under the artist’s direction, nude female models were smeared with IKB and then made body prints on prepared sheets of paper. In these *Anthropometries*, which he began in 1958 and which became one of his best-known series, Klein attempted to record the body’s cosmic energy as well as its temporary physical presence.

Natural elements—including reeds, wind, and rain, which he used to create his *Cosmogonies*, and, most notably, fire, which he considered “the universal principle of expression”—also became an essential part of Klein’s work. In his renowned *Fire Paintings*, fire either replaced or was combined with pigment, embodying the concepts of process, transformation, creation, destruction, dissolution, and elemental cosmology that were so essential throughout his career.

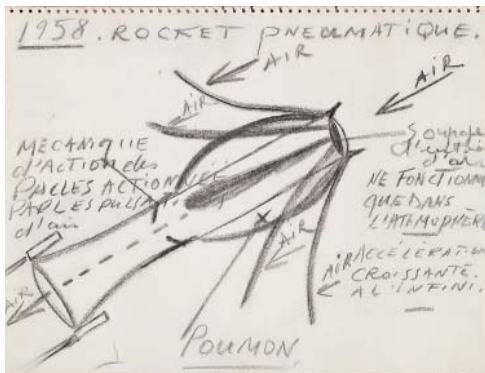
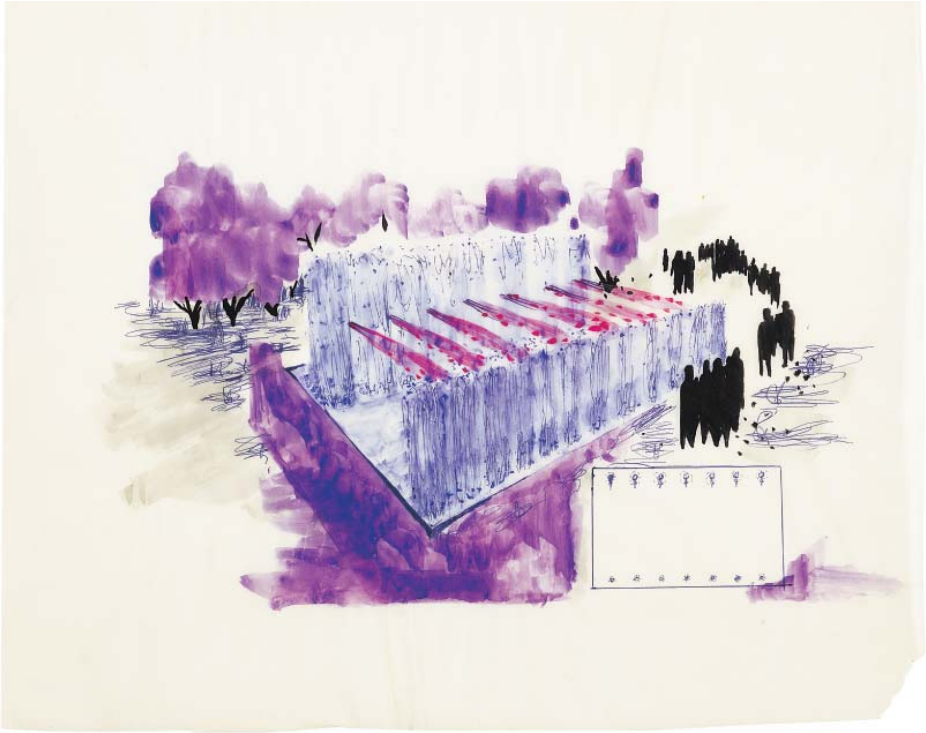


In his most ambitious efforts to capture the immaterial, Klein moved beyond traditional mediums like painting and sculpture altogether. For his celebrated 1958 exhibition *The Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State of Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility*, better known as "The Void," at Galerie Iris Clert in Paris, he emptied the gallery of all artworks, leaving visitors in a white-walled space containing just the trace of the artist's presence. He even sold the immaterial to patrons for gold ingots, which were then thrown into the River Seine before the receipts for the transaction were set on fire by their purchasers so that all that



remained was the experience of the event. And in his famous *Leap into the Void* image by Harry Shunk and Janos Kender, which was published November 27, 1960 in the faux newspaper *Dimanche*, which he created for the second Avant-Garde Art Festival, Klein is actually depicted leaping into space himself, with the artist asserting in the accompanying text, "...to paint space, I must be in position. I must be in space."

Untitled Fire-Color Painting (FC 1), 1961, Dry pigment and synthetic resin on scorched cardboard on panel, Private Collection. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris



Top: "Fontaines d'eau et toit de feu" [Fountains of Water and Roofs of Fire], c. 1959, Ink and watercolor on paper, Private Collection; Bottom left: *Pneumatic Rocket*, 1958, Charcoal on paper, Private Collection; Bottom right: *Pneumatic Rocket (maquette Tallon-Technès)*, 1962, Chrome and rubber, Private Collection. All © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

Beyond charting a new course for art, Klein also envisioned a different, utopian path for society. These ideas are applied directly in his experimental range of “air architecture” projects, in which he proposed public spaces, fountains, and walls constructed out of natural elements like air, water, and fire, elements not traditionally associated with architecture, and elaborated on his vision for cities and dwellings that will “at last be flexible, spiritual, and immaterial.”

An artist, a showman, a thinker, an innovator, and even a magician, Klein constantly blurred boundaries—between work and life, between painting and performance, between object and idea, between fact and fiction—and defied the common understanding and definition of art. His revolutionary aim was to rethink the world in spiritual and aesthetic terms, and his artworks, projects, and writings demonstrate his acute grasp of the contemporary moment, from the horror of the Second World War to the promise of space travel. Klein’s wide-ranging creative endeavors opened the door for much that followed in the 1960s and beyond, including Pop, conceptual art, Minimalism, monochromatic painting, perceptual experimentation, and performance. Although he died in 1962 of a heart attack at age 34, the artist’s foresight as well as his profound and lasting influence is clear and marks a pivotal transition in the course of twentieth-century art and culture.

Deborah Horowitz
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



Le Saut dans le vide [Leap into the Void], 1960, Black-and-white photograph, Private Collection. Photo by Shunk-Kender, © Roy Lichtenstein Foundation; Front cover: *Architecture de l'air* [Air Architecture] (ANT 102), 1961, Dry pigment, synthetic resin, and charcoal on paper on canvas, Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. Both © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

“I seek, above all, to realize in my own creations that ‘transparence,’ that immeasurable ‘void’ in which lives the permanent and absolute spirit freed of all dimensions.”

—Yves Klein

Yves Klein: *With the Void, Full Powers* is co-organized by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN.

The exhibition is made possible by major support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Martha and Bruce Atwater, and Judy Dayton. Additional generous support provided by Constance R. Caplan and Lewis and Barbara Shrenksy. Major support for the Yves Klein catalogue is provided by Sotheby’s, with additional support from L&M Arts and Heather James Gallery. Glenstone and the Lisa and Steven Tananbaum Foundation provided generous support for the presentation at the Hirshhorn. Special program funding at the Hirshhorn is provided by RBC Wealth Management.

Exhibition Airline Sponsor Delta Air Lines.  **DELTA**

Lead exhibition sponsor at the Hirshhorn: EDF.  **EDF**

RELATED PROGRAMS

THURSDAY, MAY 27, 6:30 PM

EVENT: **THE MANY FACES OF YVES**

Yves Klein's life and art were informed by a diverse body of subject matter, from judo to progressive philosophical and architectural concepts. Exhibition curator Kerry Brougher and experts in a range of fields explore multiple facets of Klein's career in this gallery event.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9, 7:00 PM

IN CONVERSATION: **ROTRAUT KLEIN-MOQUAY AND KERRY BROUGHER**

Rotraut Klein-Moquay, the artist's wife, assistant, model, and muse, discusses Klein's life and works with exhibition curator Kerry Brougher.

FRIDAY, JULY 23, 12:30 PM

FRIDAY GALLERY TALK: **DANIEL MOQUAY**

Daniel Moquay, head of the Yves Klein Archives in Paris, gives a tour of the exhibition and shares his extensive knowledge of the artist's career and creative process.

FRIDAY, JULY 23, 8:00 PM TO MIDNIGHT

AFTER HOURS

This summer, After Hours celebrates *Yves Klein* with gallery talks, live music, and special performances on the plaza.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 7:00 PM

LECTURE: **KAIRA CABAÑAS ON YVES KLEIN**

Kaira Cabañas, art historian at Columbia University and contributor to the exhibition catalogue, discusses Klein's work with particular emphasis on his films and performances.

FRIDAY GALLERY TALKS AND PODCASTS

Throughout the course of *Yves Klein*, gallery talks and podcasts offer visitors in-depth information about the exhibition.

For a complete listing of all programs, please visit our website at hirshhorn.si.edu