

1992

Zdeněk Sýkora (1920-2011)

Line No. 97, 1992

Zdeněk Sýkora's painting *Line No. 97* of 1992 has been a gem of the gallery's permanent exhibition since we acquired it in 1993. Although the gallery collections of works from the 2nd half of the 20th century are extensive, the examples from Zdeněk Sýkora's oeuvre always formed part of the strict selection due to its unique character. His geometric and Constructivist approach to painting, in which he pioneered using a computer program (personally developed with his friend mathematician) in art work, is very original. The artist designed the painting composition at the beginning, when he chose a random series of numbers (originally by rolling the dice and later via a random number generator). These numbers were then processed by a computer and the resulting printout determined how many lines the future image would contain, how wide they would be and in which succession and colors they would zigzag. The artist then used a pencil on white canvas to draw exactly the tangle of lines, angles and curves in which the lines would twist and cross. In the final and almost meditative stage, Sýkora used his own swatch containing numerous colors and hues, which he carefully and accurately applied to large-dimensional canvases. In the end, almost all underlines disappeared and the result was a breathtaking color composition.

Sýkora's paintings are full of unrestrained energy. It may be surprising for some viewers that the source of inspiration for their tangles of lines in dark, light, warm or cold hues was always Nature. Zdeněk Sýkora was fond of Nature for his entire life. He launched his artistic career with landscape paintings capturing his beloved Central Bohemian Highlands and *Gardens*, the latter being abstract compositions with landscape subjects and a relaxed expression of color surfaces and stains. In the 1970s, rivers and streams, roads and paths, contours, flight lines in the sky and other natural current-forming processes transformed into abstracted graceful color curves. Linear compositions of simple beauty radiate unbridled energy, freedom and joy, as well as the order and harmony of the world in the constant movement of natural flow. No wonder that Sýkora's oeuvre has many admirers – his works have always been the most frequently exhibited. Except the period between 1970 and 1988, when he was among artists banned by the Czechoslovak communist authorities. They also rank to the best-selling Czech art of the 2nd half of the 20th century.

Zdeněk Sýkora, an extraordinary figure of Constructivism, was one of the first artists in the world to incorporate computer to the preparatory stage of his work. He was a painter, graphic artist, and long-time popular university pedagogue, as well as a passionate athlete (hockey, volleyball, skiing, cycling, surfing, and yachting). He was known for riding a bicycle to paint in the open air, carrying a canvas in a blind frame instead of a backpack on his shoulders. His artistic career developed from painting landscapes and natural motifs, eventually arriving at Geometric Abstraction. His first programmed structures employing computer and its combinatorial potential date to as early as 1964. Viewers may be familiar with the monumental example of this stage of Sýkora's oeuvre – the glass tiles on the ventilation chimneys of the Letná tunnel in Prague. From the 1970s, Sýkora produced line paintings. He again employed computer, but also the principle of accident, which resulted in a number of large-dimensional paintings. They include the *Line No. 24*, today in the Paris Center Pompidou permanent exhibition, and the twelve-meter realizations in the entrance hall of company Selmoni in Basel and the Air Traffic Control building in Jenč near Prague. He holds the prestigious French title of the Knight of the Order of Arts and Literature and his works are part of numerous gallery collections worldwide. titulu rytíře Řádu umění a literatury a jeho díla najdeme ve sbírkách mnoha světových galeriích.