

ARTFORUM

“Une brève histoire des lignes”

CENTRE POMPIDOU-METZ

1, parvis des Droits-de-l'Homme

January 11–April 1

Writing in 1926, Wassily Kandinsky defined “line” as a force that “hurls itself upon the point which is digging its way into the surface, tears it out and pushes it about the surface in one direction or another.” This energetic description, along with illustrations from the didactic illustrated book in which it first appeared, *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche* (Point and Line to Plane), ushers us into the Centre Pompidou Metz’s sweeping investigation of the form and function of line in modern and contemporary art.

Culled from the Pompidou’s permanent collection, the Metz survey boasts an impressive roster of artists whose diverse practices include Land art, animation, performance, sculpture, cartography, photography, and film. Certain unexpected presences benefit from the suggested linear reading more than others. Freeing line from two dimensions, Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s temporarily installed 24.5-mile white fabric fence, *Running Fence*, 1972–76, and Július Koller’s antihappening *Time-Space Defining Psycho-Physical Activity of Material – Tennis*, 1968, in which the artist redrew tennis court lines with a chalk dispenser, are convincing examples of conceptual and corporeal linear experiences. Attempts to depict naturally occurring lines, however—whether Dove Allouche’s elegantly drawn lightning bolts or Toni Grand’s sculpture made from a vertically split tree branch—are too facile and ultimately dilute the curatorial focus.

The show’s best moments are straightforward compare-and-contrasts of deceptively simple acts of mark-making, which reveal seemingly infinite stylistic nuance. From Lee Ufan’s delicate repetitive graphite strokes (in the “From Line” series, 1964–82) to Brice Marden’s gestural gouache contours (*The muses drawing*, 1991–93) to Julije Knifer’s hard-edged bands of thickly applied graphite (*untitled [Méandre]*, 1993–99) to Vera Molnár’s zigzagging black thread installation, the predominantly black-and-white show is delightfully diverse.

— Mara Hoberman



Július Koller, *Time-Space Defining Psycho-Physical Activity of Material - Tennis (Antihappening)*, 1968, black-and-white photo, 7 1/2 x 7”.

All rights reserved. artforum.com is a registered trademark of Artforum International Magazine, New York, NY