



OTTO PIENE

(Laasphe 1928–2014 Berlin)

Untitled. 1966.

Watercolour and gouache on cardboard.

Signed and dated upper centre: Piene 66.

50 x 70 cm.

Provenance: Directly acquired from the artist, since then private collection Switzerland.  
„The artist is not a refugee from the „modern world“, no, he uses new technical means as well as the forces of nature“. (cit. Otto Piene: Die Entstehung der Gruppe „Zero“ in: ZERO, Cologne 2015, p. 244) Instead of with colour and paint brush, Otto Piene, one of the most important protagonists of the international ZERO movement, experiments with alternative artistic means and makes use of natural elements such as

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light, movement, wind, fire, air and energy since the 60's. In this way Otto Piene interprets art, through incorporating natural scientific findings and an intensive connection of art, technology and nature, as an energetic phenomenon. For him it is about "re-harmonising the relationship between man and nature". In light of this ideal, Piene brings to perfection his famous fire technique, in which the work presented here was created in 1966. In a highly aesthetically refined manner the fire-blossom at the centre of the work, is dynamically cut by an arch. Piene reaches this creative process with help of fire, whereby the colours gel in the space of its short burning cycle. After the fire has expired the autonomously created sculpture is fixated, thus the organic becoming of nature is confronted with the artistic intervention of various techniques and leads to a synthesis. The destructive traces of the fire form residues in numerous shades of colour and modifications, as in our work, over which the artist has only a limited degree of influence. The significance of chance is always an important part of the picture for Piene: "I must admit, that I am always happiest with my work, when it has taken a surprising turn" (Otto Piene). The gouache offered here captivates through its extraordinary composition and harmony of colours. The yellow fire-blossom seems to grow out of the lower margin, unfolds itself to its full width and is nicely accentuated by the red arch at the lower edge. Hardly an artist of the 20th century has given himself over to experimentation, the transboundary trials to turn elements of nature into art, and created such an outstanding oeuvre.

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