

**PÉTER PAIZS**

painter, teacher, international colour expert

*This paper is based on a public reading and a lecture at the International Conference on Colour Harmony, MTA Budapest, 2007 and at the University of Trieste, Italy, 2007.*

## Colours in Black and White

### **Abstract**

After the early years of wallowing in colours and shapes I have gotten to the period of my career as a painter where the square and the black-and-white, the eternal symbols running through the cultural and art history as a basic experience of visuality are becoming determinant. In prehistoric painting colour coexisted with abstract geometry as a matter of course. Generations have ritually recalled and re-painted these basic forms and shapes carved in rocks and pondered on their meaning. *"...ritual like art is basically the active completion of symbolic transformation of experience."* (Susanne Langer)

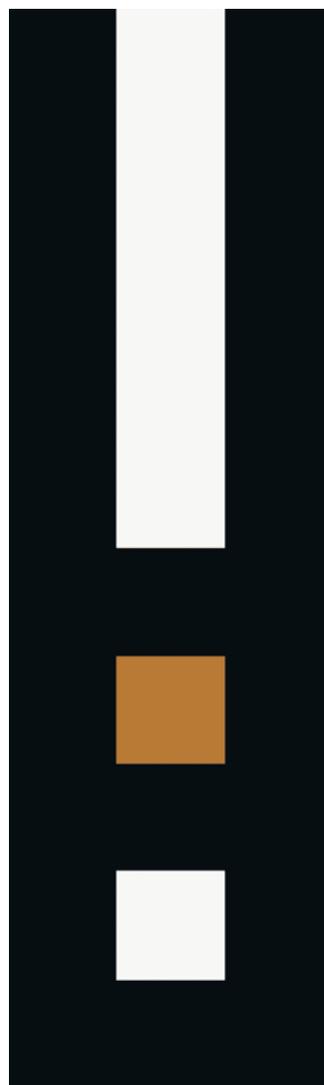
Therefore black-and-white like the square, which is not only about the 20th century and its influential masters, is not only about –and to – our early, monochromatic lemur ancestors. The trichromacy of the human eye as the gift of evolution entitles me, the painter to say: behind each colour there is the black-and-white.

Staggering might it be when a painter and colour expert presents his *black and white* paintings at an international *colour harmony* conference. On the top of it all, apart from colours he also neglects traditional descriptive forms, and what is more, circles and triangles, too from among geometrical shapes. Only square, squares, a series of squares, the rhythm of horizontal and vertical black and whites are transformed into pictures and thoughts. To make matters more absurd he paints, lays on ochre, an earth colour, which is not even a colour in terms of painterly colourism but a coloroid hue, numerical data, definable as saturation and lightness values or rather a place in colour-space. Makes a series from non-colours and non-shapes and claims he recalls the greatest artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From Pompeii through Villa Farnesina (*Rome*) as far as the astonishing maximization of optical view recognition, by the beginning of last century this subject in painting had gradually lost its importance until finally cubism (Picasso and Braque) and the art of the Fauves (Matisse) trampled on all traditions. Boundaries of painting, the visual art which was not originally but traditionally descriptive and had been captured by its own depiction centricity were completely broken down. Though in different ways, Kandinsky, Mondrian and Malevich as well had got to non-objective, pure, abstract painting, where a picture is not the picture of something, it does not describe but rather expresses, reports and freely articulates – just a picture on its own! Regaining its autonomy, painting can be said to be equal in value to music, new architecture, free thought – the Universal.

Nevertheless, even today (2007), at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, exactly 100 years after Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)* (1907) it is frequently claimed that abstract art has nothing to do with nature.

In 1937 Kandinsky in an interview to Karl Nieendorf gave a clear answer: "Abstract painting takes off the skin of nature but not the rules of it. Let me use a big word: cosmic rules. Art can only be great if it's directly contacted with cosmic laws and obeys their rules."



**Hommage**  
acryl on canvas (2002) 200×60 cm

Roughly similarly Le Corbusier in his *Vers une Architecture* wrote: “Architects.... adjust us for the laws of the Cosmos. They reach harmony. Architecture makes order systemizing forms and creates cleared constructions.... produces a strong echo in us since it gives the measure of such an order which we feel is in accordance with the order of the universe.”

We can see that for the masters of the Russian avantgarde, the Dutch De Stijl, the German Bauhaus their job: art and its education is a matter of intellect, moreover ethics and morality. Attitude of mind. What could our masters have thought, meant by the big word: *cosmic laws or the order of the Universe?* I wonder if they presumed or knew that the rules governing the forms of life on Earth equal the universal laws of space-time, mass-energy and of the nature of light. That is, for a short time, only for the time being we can be and we are a particle of totality. Being in harmony with the order of the universe is the same as to recognise that the human mind is eventually the transformation of the atomic ingredients building up live material into intellect, creative or destructive energy. But where, from what sort of *ylem* (primary matter) does energy which creates intellect and abstraction arise from its origin?

Marcus Chown, the author of the *Magic Furnace* presents a choice from two views, tastes – if you like – writing on the same subject, on nucleosynthesis in stars, that is how atoms building up the universe took their origin and formed, how they, ex-

ploding, built us up. Romantic-spirited can be delighted that their body and whole life was born from the dust and light of the stars, while the less sentimental will look upon their individual as nuclear waste.

Is art – very similarly to life – an attempt to overcome the vainness of existence?

One characteristic of non-figurative art is that it is drawn much stronger than anything else towards infinity, the universal space (and not the illusion of it!) and it is able to express its substance: the light speeding along, that is *the white*; and *colour*, the fairy phenomenon, which can be experienced; and the lack of light, captured, restrained from speeding, the dark, i.e. *the black*.

Behind the infinite, cosmic contrast between black and white, harmony and disharmony, light is running with undiminished energy (sometimes curving a little bit, so human, isn't it?) to *future* carrying *past* on its back. Yet the coincidence of our passing life and the behaviour of matter moving in our rods and cones is so generous to allow us to bathe – quickly but with human dignity – in the narrow spectrum of electromagnetic radiation before we pass away.

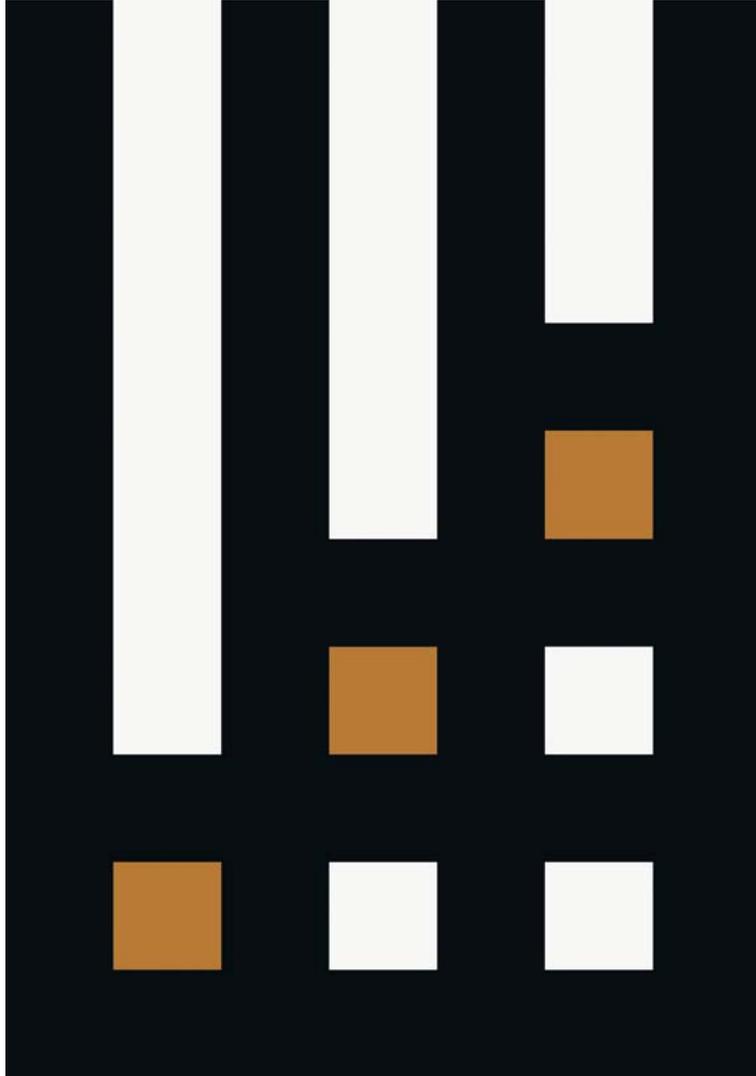
What is it if not the law of the Universe, the echo of the Cosmos?

Obey its rules.

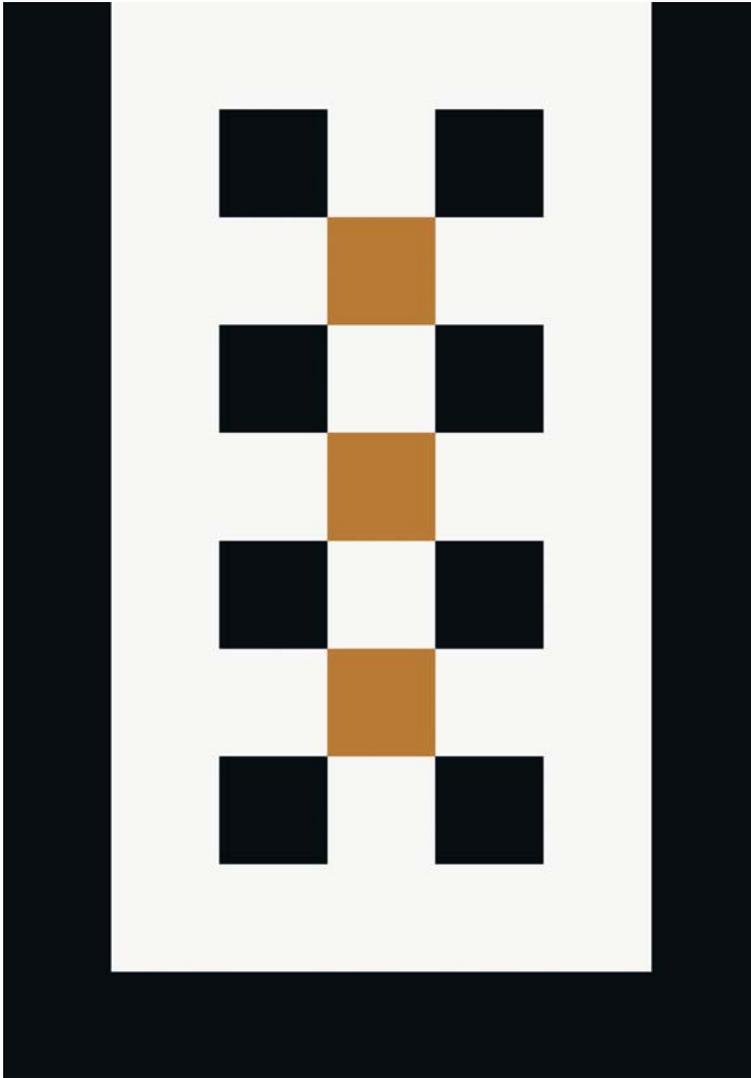
*(Special thanks to my wife, Zsuzsa for the astonishing “milieu” of the translation.)*

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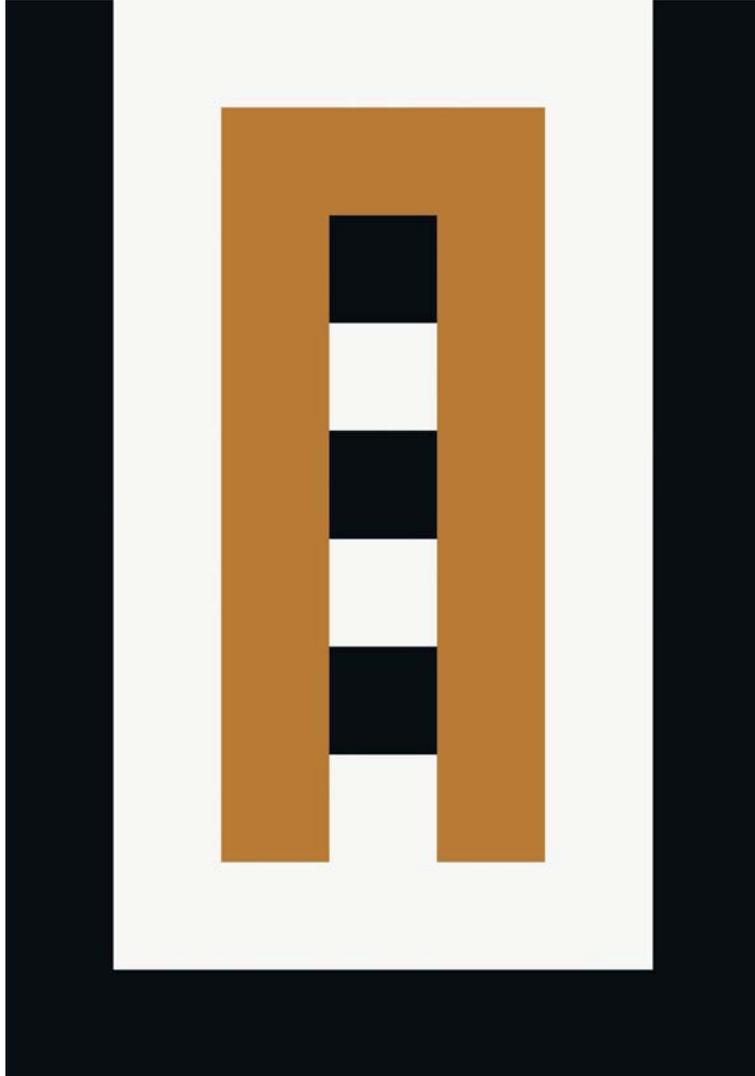
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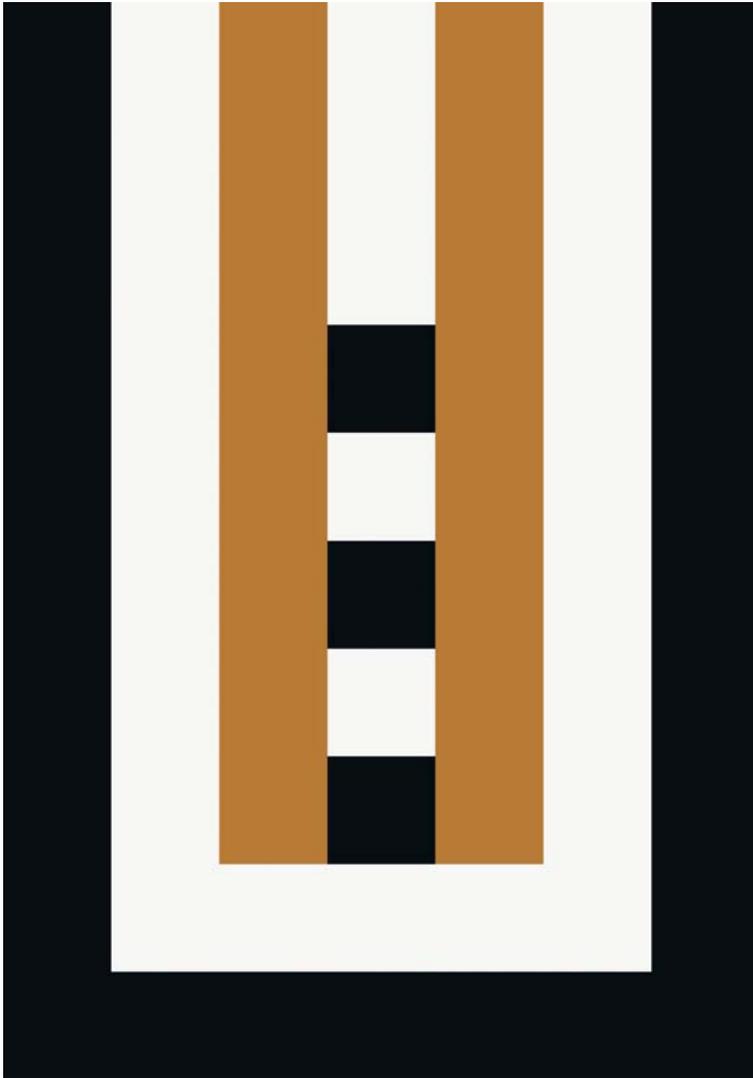
**Hommage à C.R. Mackintosh I.**  
*acryl on canvas (2002) 200×140 cm*



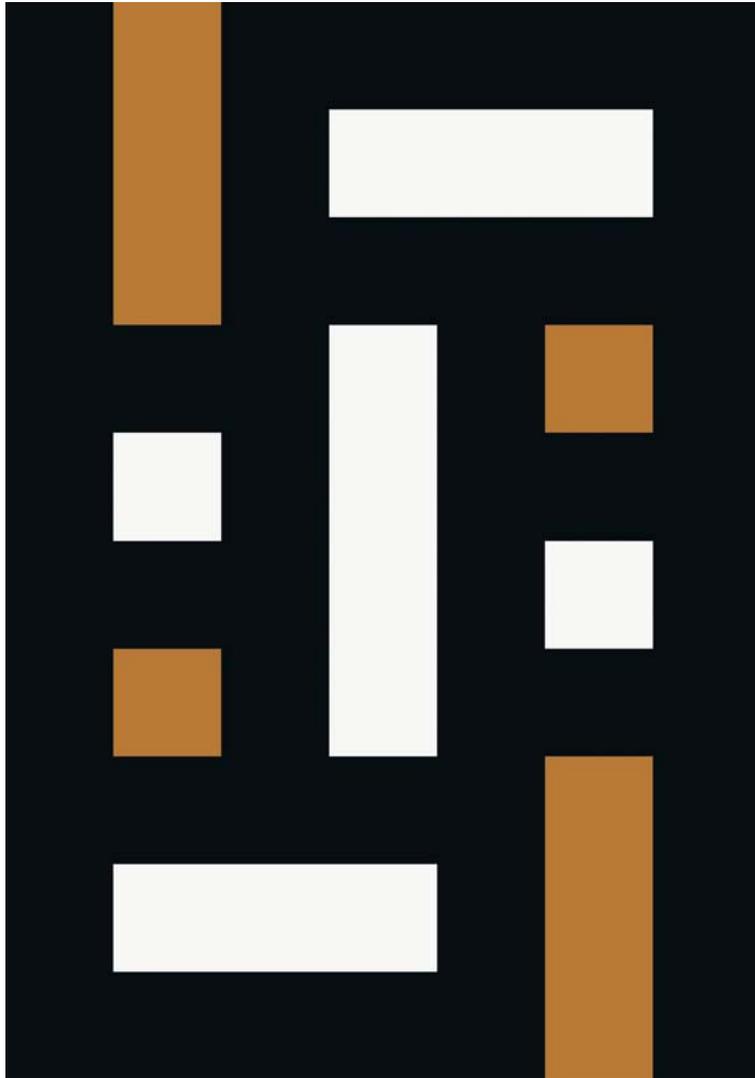
**Homage à Koloman Moser**  
*acryl on canvas (2003) 200×140 cm*



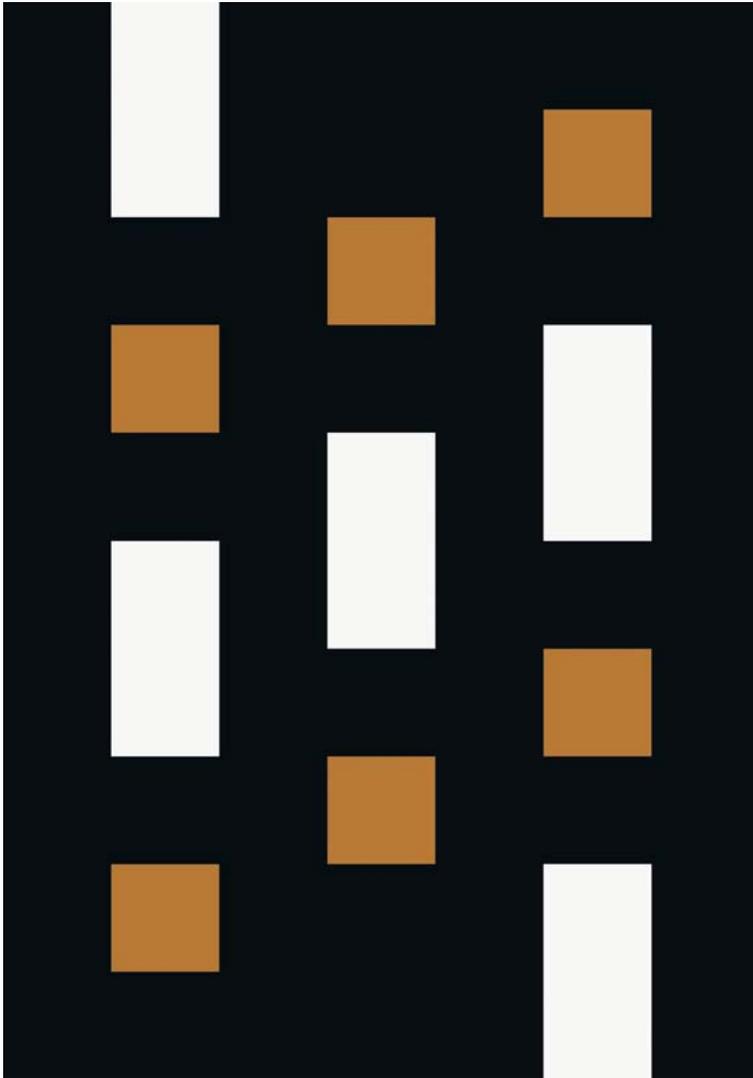
**Hommage à Josef Hoffmann I.**  
*acryl on canvas (2003) 200×140 cm*



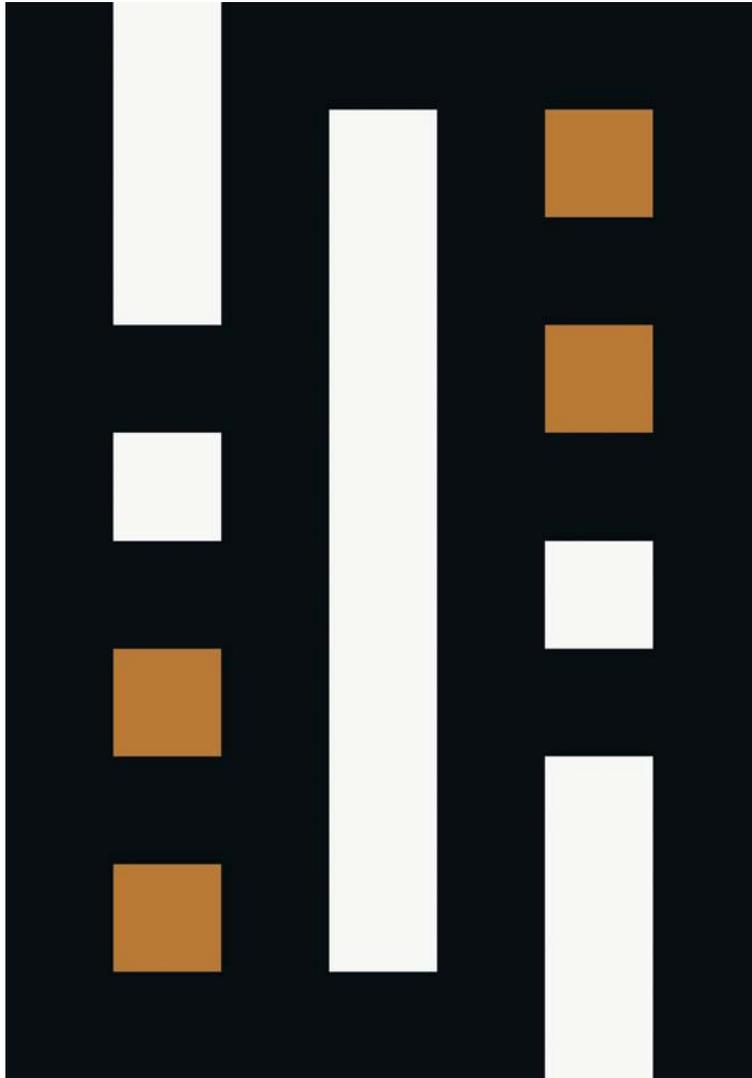
**Hommage à Josef Hoffmann II.**  
*acryl on canvas (2003) 200×140 cm*



**Hommage à Gerrit Rietveld**  
*acryl on canvas (2003) 200×140 cm*



**Hommage à Marcel Breuer**  
*acryl on canvas (2003) 200×140 cm*



**Hommage à Walter Gropius**  
*acryl on canvas (2003) 200×140 cm*