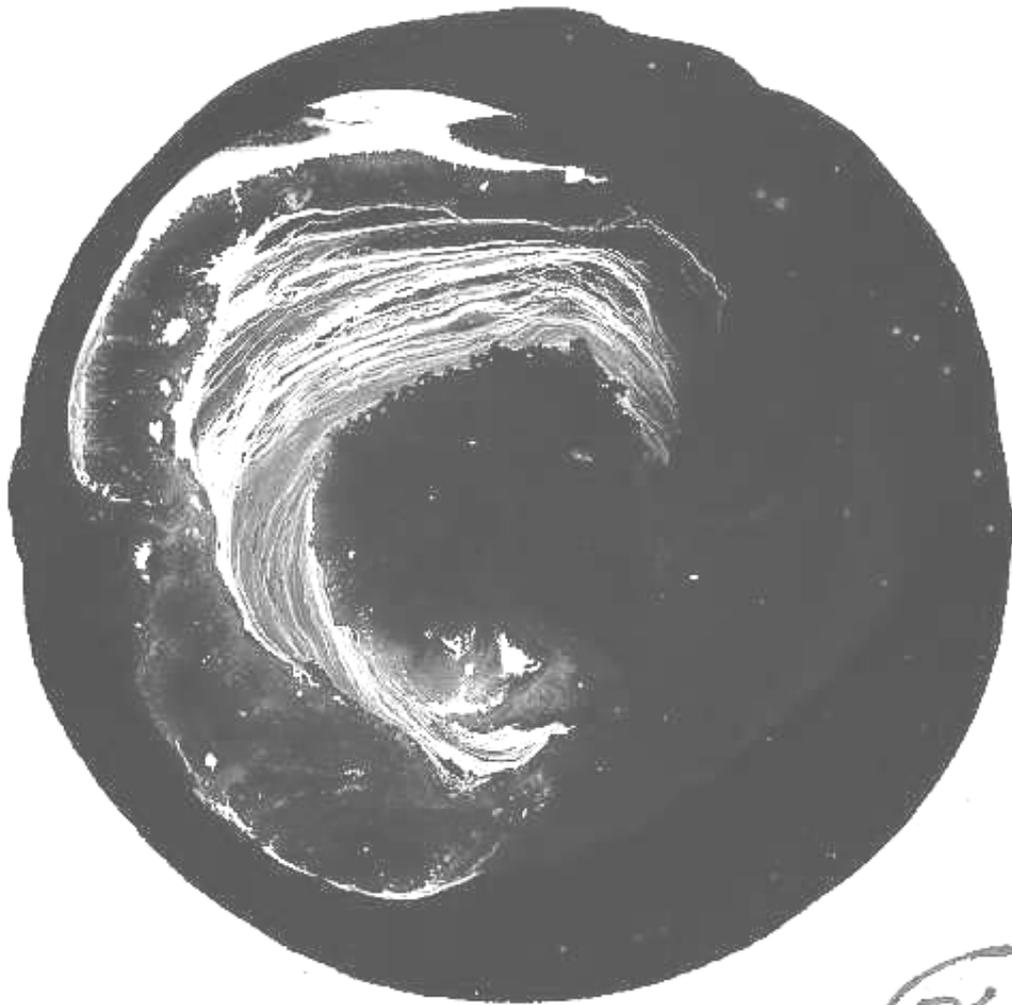


Obituary

In remembrance of Otto Piene

born 28. April 1928

died 17. Juli 2014



Piense

¡El planeta azul debe mantenerse verde!

Keep the Blue Planet green!

Der Blaue Planet soll grün bleiben!

ethecon mourns

Otto Piene has died

Since 2006, the ethecon Foundation for Ethics & Economy has been annually granting two international awards, the International ethecon Blue Planet Award and the International ethecon Black Planet Award. These awards are the result of collaboration between the world-renowned ZERO artist Otto Piene and the ethecon Foundation.

Piene's artistic works and ethecon's social engagement were magnetically attracted to one another in 2004/2005. The long-term goals world-citizen Piene hoped to achieve with his art coincided perfectly with ethecon's "Supporting Change" intentions. Both international awards reflect Otto Piene's personal motto, "Yes, I dream of a better world. Should I rather dream of a worse one?" The Blue Planet Award honors outstanding achievements in saving and preserving our Earth. The Black Planet Award vilifies horrific action that contributes to the annihilation of our singular home.

One of Otto Piene's well-known cyclic creations is entitled "Blue Planet." With this work, Piene urges us to preserve our Earth and demands we "Keep our Blue Planet green!" Until 2009, upholding this motto, Otto Piene had created a unique trophy each year to accompany the Blue Planet Award. Uri Avnery, Israeli diplomat and peace activist, was honored with this award in 2009.

Otto Piene was born in 1928 in Laasphe, Westphalia. He studied art in Munich and in Dusseldorf. In 1957, he founded the world-renowned group ZERO together with Heinz Mack. They brought out their first Grid Pictures and light objects, strongly influenced and inspired by the elements, by the zodiac, by the sun as a source of light and by fire.

In 1961, Günther Uecker joined ZERO. According to Piene, the idea behind ZERO and behind the name is, "ZERO expresses the human yearning to create a new world in spite of apparent chaos and the seeming fruitlessness of the endeavor; to build with what Nature provides us and with human ingenuity, with universal energy and with technology." This early quote, borrowed from the Gospel according to John, which speaks of a "new heaven and a new Earth" where life is just and peaceful, anticipates Piene's later environmental activism.

The universe had always fascinated Otto Piene. He did not perceive it, however, as something remote, but as a space to be understood by human beings, and to be shaped by artists. He created his first Light Spaces in which the observer perceives him or herself as a part of the



universe; a new universe created by Piene. In honor of a large ZERO Retrospect in 2006, Piene reconstructed one of these Light Spaces. Particularly the young visitors, having missed out on the artistic Avant-garde in the fifties, were deeply impressed.

Piene also invented Sky art. Together with his team, he created incredibly spectacular events all over the world. In 1971, Piene was commissioned with the artistic direction for the opening and closing ceremonies of the XX Olympics. On September 9, 1972, a 700-meter rainbow arced over the lake on the Munich Olympics areal. After the barbaric murder of the Israeli Olympic team, this was a memorable symbol of peace and reconciliation. Piene created Sky art works of Icarus, Daedalus and the Minotaur. Then there was the red horse that Piene literally shot into the sky over Sienna in 2005 at the annual Palio di Siena. The Museum Kunstpalast in Dusseldorf presented a comprehensive retrospective of all Piene's works in 1966. The retrospective evolved into a festival of the most famous Sky art objects created by the 'superstar', as he was dubbed by the tabloid 'Express.'

Over the years, Otto Piene reaped international recognition for his outstanding artistic works. He was a Visiting Professor at the University Pennsylvania beginning in 1964. From 1968 to 1971, he was the first Fellow of the MIT Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS), founded by Gyorgy Kepes. In 1972, he became a Professor of Environmental Art at MIT. In 1974, he succeeded Kepes as director of the CAVS, in which position he served until September 1, 1993. Since 1994, Piene has been a Director emeritus at MIT.

Parallel to his MIT duties, Piene was co-director with Mel Alexanderberg of LightsOROT: Spiritual Dimensions of the Electronic Age, at the Yeshiva University Museum in New York. Between 1989 and 1990, to support the planning and preparation for the Academy of Media Arts Cologne, he became chairperson of the advisory committee for the North-Rhine Westphalia Ministry of Science and Research. He was also a curatorial member of the Center for Art and Media Technology in Karlsruhe.

Today, Otto Piene is one of our greatest international artists. His Smoke Pictures are world-renowned and bring top prices on the international art market. Piene can be found in every leading museum in the world. His work has been showered with honors and awards. The University of Maryland in Baltimore awarded Piene an honorary Doctor of fine Arts in 1994. In 1996, he received the Sculpture Prize of the [American Academy of Arts and Letters](#), New York. In 2003, he became the recipient of the [Leonardo da Vinci World Award of Arts](#) in recognition



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of his artistic and innovative accomplishments, as well as the Jean Miró Medaille of the UNESCO. After his death, he was praised by Germany's minister of culture, Monika Grütters, who said, "many of his highly aesthetic works in public spaces were also a signal against the inhospitality of our cities." In 2014, he received the first German Light Art Award.

The ethecon Foundation considers itself lucky to have found such a prominent ally to propagate their ideas as the great, contemporary artist Otto Piene.

Now, Otto Piene is dead. He died on Thursday, July 17, 2014 at the age of 86. He died in Berlin shortly after opening a large exhibition at the New National Gallery. We are told he died peacefully in his sleep.

The world has lost a great artist. ethecon has lost an irreplaceable friend, ally and supporter. We are grieving for our companion Otto Piene. The Foundation extends their gratitude and deep appreciation for his remarkable creative energy. Otto Piene and his achievements will hold a place of highest honor in Foundation memory.

We give our condolences to Otto Piene's family, friends and all those who were close to him.

Dusseldorf, July 18, 2014, Axel Köhler-Schnura (founder)



ethecon Stiftung Ethik & Ökonomie
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