

First U.S. Museum Exhibition of Work by Günther Förg in Nearly Three Decades Will Debut at the Dallas Museum of Art in October 2018

– *Spanning 40 Years of the Artist’s Practice and Featuring 60 Works,*
Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty is the Most Comprehensive Survey of
the Extraordinary Modernist Master’s Work to Date –



Dallas, TX – April 3, 2018 – The Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) today announced its presentation of the most comprehensive survey to date for renowned German artist Günther Förg (1952-2013), opening on October 21, 2018 and on view through January 27, 2019. The first American museum exhibition dedicated to the artist in nearly three decades, *Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty*, brings together over 40 years of the artist’s multimedia practice – including work on paper, photography, sculpture, and rarely-exhibited late-career paintings – to provide new insight on the practice and enduring influence of this extraordinary and complex artist.

Organized in collaboration with the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and their curator of photography Hripsimé Visser, in close dialogue with the artist’s estate, *Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty* builds on both institutions’ histories with the artist, with each having staged seminal exhibitions of his work in 1992 and 1995 respectively. The exhibition includes major loans from private collections and notable German institutions such as the Städel Museum, Frankfurt and the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich.

“We are excited to collaborate with the Stedelijk Museum to bring renewed attention to the practice of an artist who has undoubtedly influenced the creative processes of many artists working today,” said the Eugene McDermott Director of the DMA, Dr. Agustín Arteaga. “As a place of discovery and learning, the DMA is proud to share Förg’s vivid work with a new generation of local and national audiences for the first time in nearly 30 years, and to re-ignite dialogue about this fascinating artist.”

While Förg's multidisciplinary approach has become predominant today in contemporary artists' practices, it was uncommonly eclectic and provocative in his time. Art historians have grappled with the breadth of his production and have frequently aligned his work with that of modernist masters such as Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko and Edvard Munch, all of whom greatly inspired Förg. There is limited scholarship focused on the artist's singular contributions, such as his skillful manipulations of the language of abstraction and explorations of the relationships between object and viewer.

Reflecting the incredible scope of the artists' practice, *Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty* traces the development of Förg's pioneering cross-disciplinary work from 1973 to 2009 to offer a new perspective and deepen understanding and appreciation of the artist's place in art history. The exhibition pivots around major themes recurrent in Günther Förg's oeuvre, including his interest in surface and substrate, the grid motif, and color theory. Rather than a broadly chronological view, the presentation creates juxtapositions between series and works demonstrating artistic concerns that the artist returned to throughout his life.

The exhibition begins with a recreation of a seminal wall mural from 1986, as well as a number of the artist's monochromatic paintings, including an important gray painting from 1973 featuring undecipherable text and a monumental gray grid painting from 2009 that the artist layered over one of his vibrant Spot Paintings. The paintings feature both exquisitely sensitive surfaces and a gestural, improvised quality found across the artist's work, encouraging further investigation into the artist's explorations of the instability between image and reality. The exhibition also includes many of the artist's multimedia paintings, such as a multi-panel work of painted lead, which is presented alongside a large diptych featuring acrylic and gold leaf. As with many of the artist's paintings, these materials impart distinct textures and compositional elements that create tension between surface and substrate.

A similar tension is prevalent in Förg's sculptural work, where bronze masks flout a fine line between figuration and abstraction. Five plaster and mixed media sculptures from 2000 are featured in the exhibition. Many are composed of found household objects enshrouded in plaster, relinquishing their original forms to the amorphous plaster encasement.

Though he is most often recognized for these formal innovations, Förg also had an interest in architecture and history, as evidenced by his photographic works. Twelve photographs are featured in the exhibition, ranging in subject from portraits to modernist edifices in Italy from the 20's and 30's. His documentation of building elements like stairwells, windows, and portals – often depicting the artist – are framed behind reflective glass. When viewed in an installation setting and paired with framed mirrors of the same scale, these works mimic architectural features and create interruptions within the space. As with all of Förg's work and installations, the individual works are regarded as part of a whole, merging photography with wall paintings and sculpture to activate a space with specificity to site.

Concluding the exhibition is a group of the artist's late works, Förg's Spot Paintings from 2007 to 2008, signaling his return to painting to manifest the expressive freedom he allowed himself towards the end of his life. These distinctive paintings feature large swathes of color on white ground, which lay bare the artist's gesture and emphasize the activity of painting itself.

Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty will be accompanied by a full color, 250-page catalogue designed by Joseph Logan and distributed by Yale University Press. The catalogue will be the first major publication dedicated to the artist since his passing in 2013, and includes contributions by Kirsty Bell, Gavin Delahunty, Lisa Le Feuvre, Liam Gillick, Megan Luke, Lauren Richman, Beatrix Ruf, Jeffrey Saletnik and Matthew Witkovsky. The exhibition catalogue is underwritten by Editions Traverses Sàrl.

About Günther Förg

Günther Förg was born in 1952 in Füssen, Allgäu, Germany, and studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich between 1973 and 1979. During his years at the Academy, he created almost exclusively monochromatic work, contrary to the brightly saturated abstract series for which he is most known. In the 1980s, he began experimenting with photography in addition to his paintings, sculptures, and graphics, focusing on capturing international Bauhaus architecture. He pioneered a cross-disciplinary approach that often engaged several types of media, tackling the latent instability between image and reality through the abstract. In addition to the Dallas Museum of Art and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Förg had his work exhibited at documenta IX; Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany; Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany; Kunstmuseum, Basel, Switzerland; Kunsthalle, Bremen, Germany; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel; Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, Germany; Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, France; and Touko Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan.

Günther Förg: A Fragile Beauty is co-organized by the Dallas Museum of Art and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. The exhibition catalogue is underwritten by Editions Traverses Sàrl. Major support for the Dallas presentation is made possible by Deutsche Bank. Additional generous support is provided by the TWO x TWO for AIDS and Art Fund; the Kadre Family; Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne; Massimo De Carlo, Milan | London | Hong Kong; Galerie Bärbel Grässlin, Frankfurt Main; Greene Naftali, New York; Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin | Paris; Gió Marconi, Milan; and Almine Rech Gallery, Paris | Brussels | London | New York.

“As a collector of Förg’s work for over 30 years, Deutsche Bank is proud to serve as a Major Sponsor and lender to this new exhibition,” said Mark LaRoe, Managing Director. “With over 50,000 works of international contemporary art, the Deutsche Bank Collection serves as an important platform for us to promote cultural diversity, spawn innovation, and provide access to quality arts experiences around the globe.”

Images: Günther Förg, *Untitled*, 2005, acrylic on canvas, Collection of Dr. Ramiro del Amo, © 2018 Estate Günther Förg, Suisse / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018; Günther Förg, *Stairwell, Munich*, 1984/1998, color photograph, Deutsche Bank Collection, © 2018 Estate Günther Förg, Suisse / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018; Günther Förg, *Untitled*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, private collection, courtesy of Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin | Paris, © 2018 Estate Günther Förg, Suisse / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018

About the Dallas Museum of Art

Established in 1903, the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) is among the 10 largest art museums in the country and is distinguished by its commitment to research, innovation and public engagement. At the heart of the Museum and its programs is its global collection, which encompasses more than 24,000 works and spans 5,000 years of history, representing a full range of world cultures. Located in the nation’s largest arts district, the Museum acts as a catalyst for community creativity, engaging people of

all ages and backgrounds with a diverse spectrum of programming, from exhibitions and lectures to concerts, literary events, and dramatic and dance presentations. Since the Museum's return to free general admission in 2013, the DMA has welcomed more than 3.2 million visitors. For more information, visit DMA.org.

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