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# XANTI SCHAWINSKY

*Here Is a New Field for your Imagination*
*WORKS 1924 – 1969*
OCTOBER 2–DECEMBER 12, 2026

Galerie Gregor Staiger is pleased to present our third exhibition of works by Swiss artist Alexander "Xanti" Schawinsky, whose life and work were deeply intertwined with several avant-garde cultural movements of the 20th century.

Schawinsky was part of the first generation of artists at the Bauhaus, where he enrolled in 1924 to study with such important figures as Walter Gropius, Wassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee. His main contributions were in the theater department; he wrote plays, created sets and costumes and performed. His radical concepts for a totally encompassing experimental theater were cut short when the Bauhaus was closed, and he was eventually forced to flee Europe in 1936 after spending a few impactful years in Milan.

On invitation from Josef and Anni Albers, Schawinsky was able to move to the United States and taught at Black Mountain College before settling in New York. Schawinsky's legacy lies in his pioneering contributions to modern art and design, as well as his impact as an educator who inspired generations of artists and designers. His work continues to be celebrated and studied for its innovative spirit and enduring influence on contemporary art and design practice.

This exhibition features two works from the Bauhaus, where Schawinsky was mainly involved in theatre and attended a workshop led by Oskar Schlemmer. Schawinsky would develop important ideas around theatre and performance – an all encompassing theater combining space, shape, color, light, movement, sound, language, and music. He would continue to work on this idea during his time in Milan from 1933 and 1936, after which he taught on the subject at Black Mountain college, where he also staged *Play, Life, Illusion* in 1936, considered by some to be the world's first multimedia play. This also paved the way for performance art and happenings that would become avant-garde two decades later.

In the 1940s, Schawinsky has arrived in New York, from where his works begins addressing the war. In his graphic series *Faces of War* we find striking hybrid portraits that blend human or human-like faces with mechanical or organic structures. Other works combine the geometric style of the Bauhaus with the harsh realities of wartime, showing shapes layered over soldiers like camouflage or hovering above cities to suggest the threat of aerial warfare. At the same time, Schawinsky was working with the U.S. military to develop camouflage patterns, putting his artistic and technical skills to practical use. Yet the series is also a deeply personal record of his uncertainty and sense of displacement during this turbulent time. A final work from this period finally marks the end of the war and the tanks, planes and soldiers have disappeared and the colors are brighter and one might interpret the tone and the two architectural bodies featured in the piece as reconciliatory.

In our second space, we turn to a later period in Schawinsky's career. His Eclipses combine ideas from process art, which he started exploring in the late 50s with dance and track paintings, where he "painted" by driving over large canvases, with early experiments using airbrush. With this technique, Schawinsky produces dramatic scenes that can look like rocky terrain, bodily forms, or atmospheric landscapes.

Xanti Schawinsky (b.1904, Basel, Switzerland – 1979 Locarno). Recent exhibitions include solo shows: 'Xanti Schawinsky: Play, Life, Illusion', Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld (2025); 'Xanti Schawinsky: Play, Life, Illusion', MUDAM – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg (2024); 'Eclipses', Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich (2024); 'Xanti Schawinsky: Pittura Processuale', Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno (2023); 'Xanti Schawinsky: Paintings from 1950s to the 1970s', Galerie Berinson, Berlin (2022); 'Xanti Schawinsky: Head Drawings and Faces of War', Bergen Kunsthall (2016); 'Xanti Schawinsky: From the Bauhaus Into the World', Kunstmuseum Magdeburg (2016); 'Vom Bauhaus zum Aufbruch - Eugen Batz + Xanti Schawinsky', Döbele Kunst, Mannheim (2016), Karma International, Zurich / Los Angeles (2016). Schawinsky has participated in numerous group exhibitions including: 'Die Sammlung Gerhard Saner', Kunstmuseum Solothurn (2022); 'Moved by Schlemmer', Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (2022); 'The Paradox of Stillness: Art, Object, and Performance', The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2021); 'Schall und Rauch – Die wilden 20er', Kunsthaus Zurich, Zurich (2020).

Schawinsky's work is part of public collections such as the Drawing Center, New York; The Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; MoMA – Museum of Modern Art, New York; MASI – Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano; Collection of the city of Locarno; Smithsonian American Art Museum: Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence; Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona; Philadelphia Museum of Art.