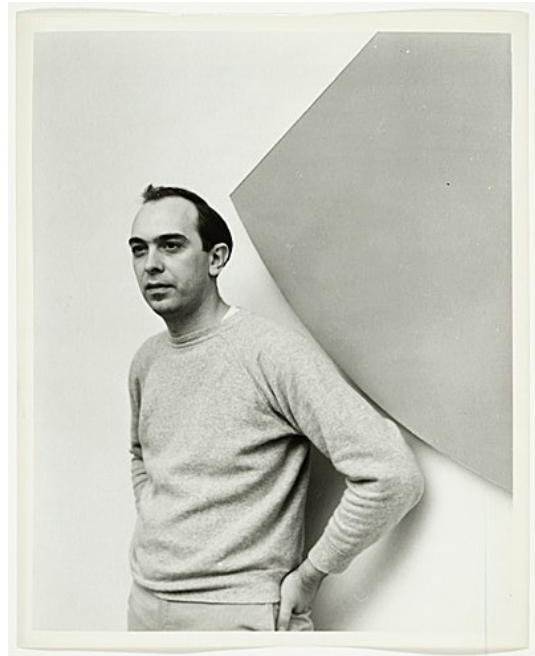


## ROBERT MANGOLD

(North Tonawanda, New York, USA, 1937)

*I've always had the desire to make the work a unity... to make all the elements - the periphery line and the internal line, the surface, colour - equal, totally locked together.*

Robert Mangold spent his childhood in Buffalo, New York. In 1956 he enrolled in the illustration department of the Cleveland Institute of Art, soon moving to the Fine Arts department to begin his training in painting, sculpture and drawing. In 1957 he travels to Pittsburgh and attends the Carnegie International, where he got in touch for the first time with the work of abstract expressionist painters such as Willem de Kooning, Adolph Gottlieb, Franz Kline, Jackson Pollock or Clyfford Still. Together with other European painters such as Alberto Burri and Antoni Tàpies. These artists would have a great influence in his early days and throughout his career.



Robert Mangold

After graduating from the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1959, he got a master's degree at the Yale University School of Art and Architecture, along with Brice Marden, Richard Serra and Nancy Graves. In 1962 he moved to New York and started working at the Museum of Modern Art, first as a hall invigilator and then as a librarian. During these years he developed a friendship with Robert Ryman and Sol LeWitt, as they both were working at the MOMA as guards. In 1964 he left this job and held his first solo exhibition, *Walls and Areas*, at Thibaut Gallery, New York. In this exhibition he presented large minimalist paintings made on masonite and plywood. From 1964 to 1973 Mangold worked with the Thibaut and Fischbach galleries, in New York, and held numerous exhibitions in European galleries. During this period Mangold worked with industrial materials, which led the art critic Lucy Lippard to define his style as "industrial naturalism". Lippard observed that Mangold's work alluded to industrial iconography - colours mixed with white, highly delineated forms that could be fragments of a giant sign - without dropping the tension caused by curvilinear movement and the static declaration of painting as an object. [1]

While some of the *Walls* paintings were bichromatic, Mangold shortly started to make strictly monochromatic works, and continued using subdued colors until the mid-seventies. At the end of the sixties Mangold discovered the use of acrylic paint. He would apply it with a roller in order to detach himself from his personal line. Because of the shape of the canvas gave the name to his well-known *V*, *W* and *X* series. In the following years, as his career got solid, Mangold began to explore new, more complex combinations of geometric shapes. Since the seventies Mangold started working with his own canvas, sometimes returning to the use of the brush.

In line with his minimalist contemporaries, Mangold did not understand his work as something

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autonomous or self-sufficient, but rather as something that is completed in an active relationship with the viewer. However, in contrast to the austerity and rigidity of the minimalist trend, Mangold stood out by his use of unusual, subtle colours and by his light geometric drawings traced by hand. While reducing the basic elements (line and form) to the maximum, Mangold was able to give them a unique, open sensibility, often described as full of tension and balance.

As the artist explained, one of the central investigations of his production is the balance between the complete and the incomplete, an interest that was triggered by his perception of New York City. "What struck me when I first moved to New York was that so much of what we see, we see in fragments. We see part of a truck going by, or part of a building. We never see anything in completeness. And the first wall paintings, 1964-65, were involved in that idea of sections; each work is a totality, but it implies that much more could be there. I started doing the circle parts in '66, '67. A half-circle is a complete shape despite the implication that it's not a complete shape. A quarter-circle can be a complete form in and of itself and yet its name implies that it's a quarter of something more. This is very much a part of the content of the work, something that extended to different series in different ways, this sense of completeness and incompleteness—or perhaps the impossibility of completeness."

In the 1980s Mangold continued to explore one of the central interests of his work; the relationship between figure and surface. The series X, + and Frame Paintings, which were developed during these years, reflect an intense evolution. As their titles indicate, X and + refer to mathematical operations. Made with rectangular or square canvases, they have the linear figures of X or + inscribed in pencil, respectively. These inscribed figures eliminate any illusory optical effect and maintain the action on the surface. In the series *Frame Paintings* Mangold takes one step further; structures composed of many parts - four or three canvases - which are arranged to create a frame. Above them, drawn by hand, runs an irregular, hand-painted ellipse. This ellipse touches the inner corners of the painting, the inner and outer edges of the rectangles, again emphasizing on the surface of the painting. One of the central elements of these works is the link that it creates with the wall. The wall is which is framed by the work and also surrounds it. In 2009 Parasol Unit dedicated the exhibition *Robert Mangold X, Plus and Frame Paintings* to bring together and present these well known series of works, underlining their relevance in the history of contemporary painting.

In 1972 he became affiliated with John Weber Gallery, with Paula Cooper Gallery in 1984, and with Pace Gallery in 1991. Major museum exhibitions of his work have been held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1971, the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, in 1974, and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in 1982. In 1998, coinciding with a solo exhibition at the Wiesbaden Museum, Mangold was awarded with the Jawlensky Recognition from the city. As a consequence of this exhibition it was published the second part of his catalogue raisonné of his prints work, which first part was edited in 1982, coinciding with another solo exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Mangold has participated in different art fairs such as Documenta Kassel (1972, 1977 y 1982), the Biennale of the Whitney Museum (1979, 1983, 1985, 2004) or the Venice Biennale (1993). In 2000 the Phaidon Press editorial published the first monograph about Robert Mangold.

[1] Lippard, R. Lucy. "New York: Robert Mangold, Thibaut Gallery", *Artforum* 11, no.9 March 1964. p. 19.



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[2] Kaneda, S., "Robert Mangold by Shirley Kaneda" *Bomb Magazine*, #76, Jul 1, 2001.

