

galerie frank elbaz.

66 rue de Turenne - 75003 Paris, France
+33 1 48 87 50 04 - info@galeriefrankelbaz.com
www.galeriefrankelbaz.com

Anton Stankowski: Echoes

Curated by Christian Rattemeyer

November 13 – December 27, 2025

galerie frank elbaz, Showroom

Although best known in his native Germany as one of the most distinctive and prolific graphic designers of the post-war period, Anton Stankowski (1906–1998) began his career as a photographer and visual artist. Throughout his career, and in every aspect of his oeuvre, Stankowski insisted on the interrelationship of applied and fine arts.

Stankowski studied photography and typography in the mid-1920s at the Folkwangschule Essen, a Bauhaus-like progressive art school, where he developed a formal vocabulary based on the constructivist style of abstraction and composition. His paintings and drawings from this period reveal the influence of artists such as Russian constructivist El Lissitzky and the collage technique of Kurt Schwitters. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, while working at Max Dalang's design agency in Zurich, Stankowski created a stock image bank from his photographs of people, places, and objects to be used in advertisements and as compositional inspiration. After the revocation of his Swiss residency permit in 1934, Stankowski was forced to return to Germany but continued to work anonymously for the Swiss agency until 1939. In 1940, at the age of 34, he was drafted into the German army and sent to the Basque Country, Italy, and finally to the Eastern Front, where he became a Russian prisoner of war until his release in 1948. In 1951, Stankowski restarted his career in Stuttgart and became a celebrated designer of corporate logos, graphic identities, and posters, with clients ranging from Deutsche Bank to the 1972 Munich Olympics. At the beginning of the 1970s, Stankowski decided to focus exclusively on making art, revisiting and reworking earlier compositions and motifs into paintings, drawings, and silkscreen prints.

Stankowski's early and late works in diverse media have rarely been brought together into a unified discussion. This exhibition at galerie frank elbaz in Paris, his first posthumous solo exhibition in the city, juxtaposes the constructivist photographic experimentation of the pre-war

galerie frank elbaz.

66 rue de Turenne - 75003 Paris, France
+33 1 48 87 50 04 - info@galeriefrankelbaz.com
www.galeriefrankelbaz.com

period and the fine art production that became the primary activity from the 1970s to the mid-1990s.

As the exhibition title suggests, *Anton Stankowski: Echoes* is guided by intuitive pairings of photographs and paintings that suggest compositional throughlines derived from close observation, unusual viewing angles, and radical abstraction. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, at the same time as Stankowski was building his photographic image bank, he was also developing his artistic method of geometric composition, in which the relationship between elements was determined by repetition, projection, segmentation, rotation, and progression. These became the principles for his entire subsequent studio practice.

The 1930 photograph of a bird's-eye view of a fire brigade's tangle of hoses thus finds a visual echo in the angled and overlapping colored lines of a 1984 painting. The triangular silhouette of the artist in an untitled photograph from 1933 is mirrored in the overlapping curved and angular shapes in an early oil painting on particleboard from 1952. The increasingly dense massing of people in a 1930 photograph of May Day in Zurich, in which horizontal rows of marchers increasingly accrue in density and number from the top to the bottom of the photograph, finds an eerie equivalent in the compositional principle of a 1980 painting entitled *Schräge Stäbe – Zahlen in Selbstdarstellung* (*Diagonal Lines – Numbers Present Themselves*), in which horizontal rows of diagonal lines elegantly illustrate the principle of agglomeration and massing. Seen together, these pairings create visually compelling comparisons of works created five decades apart.

This distinctive method of applying geometric, abstract compositional principles to visualize narrative elements and observations—most famously expressed in Stankowski's logo for Deutsche Bank, where a parallelogram inside a square is meant to represent the rising value of a stock or savings portfolio kept safe in a vault—is derived simultaneously from his exposure to the progressive, radical abstraction of the 1920s and his work as a photographer in the 1930s. These principles come through most consistently in Stankowski's artworks, where observation, abstraction, composition, and variation have generated a rich oeuvre full of warmth, play, and beauty.

This exhibition has been created in collaboration with OSMOS, New York.