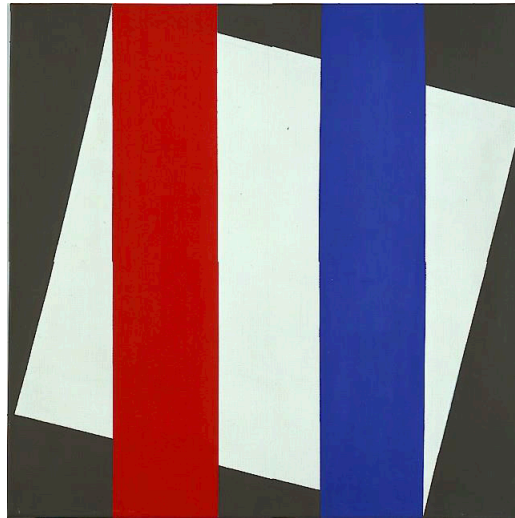


# OSMOS

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Anton Stankowski: *Stufen (Steps)*, 1934



Anton Stankowski: *Bänder und Fläche (Bands and Field)*, 1986

## ***Anton Stankowski: Throughlines***

February 1 to March 30, 2024

OSMOS Address  
50 East 1st Street  
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OSMOS is pleased to present the third solo exhibition of Anton Stankowski (1906 -1998).

Although famous in his native Germany as one of the most distinctive and prolific graphic designers of the post-war period, Stankowski was also a photographer and visual artist, insisting on the interrelationship of the applied and fine arts in every aspect of his oeuvre.

Trained in the mid twenties at the Folkwangschule—a Bauhaus-like progressive art school in Essen—as a photographer and typographer, Stankowski developed a formal vocabulary based in 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 in 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. In 1940, at the age of 34, he was drafted into the German army, sent to the Eastern Front, and became a prisoner of war in Russia, until he was released 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 the 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.

These distinct phases—the pre-war period of constructivist experimentation, photography, and design work; the celebrated graphic designs of the post-war decades of the 1950s to the 1970s; and the fine art practice that accompanied his career and became the primary activity from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s—have rarely been brought together into a unified discussion. After our 2016 exhibition *Anton Stankowski / Klaus Wittkugel*, co-curated with Prem Krishnamurthy, which featured a broad range of design work by Stankowski from the 1930 to the 1970s, the current exhibition *Anton Stankowski: Throughlines* is primarily concerned with the long lines of influence that run from his photographic practice of the 1920s and 1930s to his visual art from the early 1970s onward.

This installation and curation at OSMOS is guided by intuitive juxtapositions of photographs, paintings, and silkscreens 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 Stankowski was building his photographic image bank, he was also developing his artistic method of geometric composition, in which the relationship between elements is based on repetition, projection, segmentation, rotation, and progression. These became the principles for his entire subsequent studio practice. A 1936 photograph of a street corner with straight and curved tire tracks in a light dusting of snow thus finds a visual echo in a 1993 screen print of a blue angle and green circle segment. Similarly, the arrangement of cars and horse-drawn carriages in a 1930 photo of a wedding procession seen from an unusual bird's eye perspective is reimagined into a geometric composition of differently sized squares segmented out of a central square field in the 1989 screen print *Vier Ausschnitte (Four Cutouts)*. And the pairing of a photograph of two people's shadows cast down a flight of stairs with a painting of two parallel lines—one red, one blue—intersecting a white square set askew against a grey background, reinforces how his interest in the dynamic compositional qualities of diagonal lines intersecting the grid was trained on everything.

This distinctive method of applying geometric, abstract compositional principles to visualize narrative elements and observations—most famously expressed in his logo for the Deutsche Bank, where a parallelogram inside a square is meant to represent the rising graph of a stock or savings portfolio—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.

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