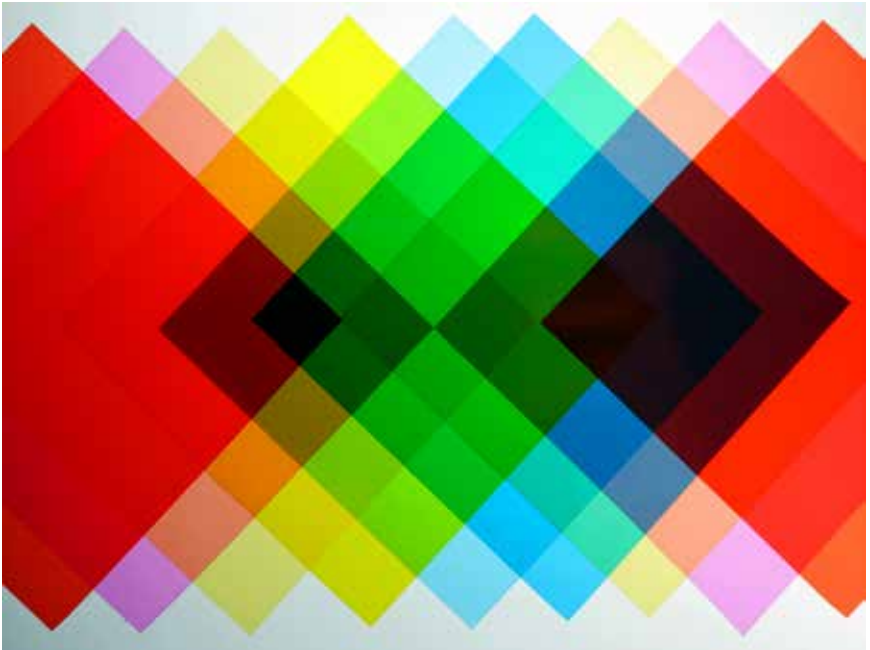




# Luftwerk: Parallel Perspectives

May 11 - August 25, 2019



ELMHURST **ART** MUSEUM

## Luftwerk: Parallel Perspectives

Luftwerk in conversation with John McKinnon

As the only contemporary art center in the U.S. that oversees a house designed by Mies van der Rohe, the museum has a unique responsibility and programming opportunity. Because of this combination, the McCormick House (1952) can be a historic home and site-specific exhibition space. Each of our rotating exhibitions, talks, and other programs build on the legacy of the house in a new way, forming a complex narrative over time. During each visit, our guests see a different art or design installation, and view the house through another lens. We are so glad to have you participate in the ongoing conversation about the home.

### Can you quickly introduce yourselves and explain how you came to focus on color and light?

We are a Chicago-based artist duo that uses light and color as primary materials. Light and color have been a focus for us since the founding of our practice.

Our work is inspired by many things ranging from the architecture of the city to how perceptions alter our view and experience of the world. Through our collaborative practice, we have engaged with an array of sites and content from significant architecture to data and climate change. Color and light are materials we have chosen to work with, regardless of the content, because of the great power they hold and the limitless space for exploration.

Through the years, our interest in color and light has become more studied. Our encounters with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Theory of Color* and Johannes Itten's work on color theory has evolved our passion and deepened our explorations of how light and color interact, shift our perceptions, and develop engaging experiences.

Cover image: Luftwerk, *Parallel Perspectives*, 2019, color and light studies



Color Wheel by Johannes Itten (1961)

### How did you get to the point of making site-specific works for architecturally significant buildings?

Architecture first found us in a fortuitous moment in 2010 and have since had a kinship with the discipline. We were commissioned to do a project with Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House in Chicago. For this, we created *Projecting Modern*, an immersive, site-specific installation. This naturally aligned with our interest in space and light and laid the groundwork for a path that led us to work with an array of significant buildings. While we continue to collaborate with buildings, we have also brought what we learned from buildings—spatial qualities, light interactions, shifting perceptions—into explorations that are free from the physical constraints of architecture, seen in this exhibition for the McCormick House at the Elmhurst Art Museum.

This installation is not the first you have had in a Mies-designed building, and not the only one this year. Could you relay your specific interest in his work?

Mies plays a large role in our life. Being in Chicago, his work is also pervasive in our city. In recent years, we have had the opportunity to work with the Farnsworth House (2014), the Arts Club of Chicago (2016), and the Barcelona Pavilion (2019)\*. These projects have given us an intimate and personal understanding of Mies.

In our practice, new ideas have been inspired by experiencing how light travels through his architecture. From the reflective nature of the glass walls to the clarity of his form, the distilled characteristics of his work have both taught us a lot about our work and given us new perspectives and tools. We naturally align with his philosophies “Less is More” and “God is in the Details.” Most of all, it is very complex to achieve an effective state of simplicity. Engaging with the architecture of Mies has given us a platform to understand spatial concepts and develop new ways of working.

\*This installation was created by Luftwerk in collaboration Iker Gil.



Luftwerk, *Dimension of Color*, 2019  
Photo by John Faier

This exhibition is the result of about a year in planning. What stood out to you about the McCormick House?

Flexibility and modularity first stood out to us in this work. As the house was designed to be replicated and placed into various locations, the site became less important than in projects such as the Farnsworth house. This allowed us to evolve ideas inspired by the architecture of Mies without directly responding to the house, per se.

*Parallel Perspectives* is a step in our own direction using his basic philosophies. This exhibition combines ideas of Johannes Itten's color theory and the basic concepts of the Bauhaus: with the geometry of a square as a prevalent form and playing with one-point perspective and 90-degree angles. It has given us an opportunity to elaborate on the ideas of Mies and develop them into our own shape and format. This approach—to make it our own within the shell of Mies—is one we felt was in line with the idea of a modular house.

**How did the potential color tinting proposed by developers McCormick and Greenwald influence the show?**

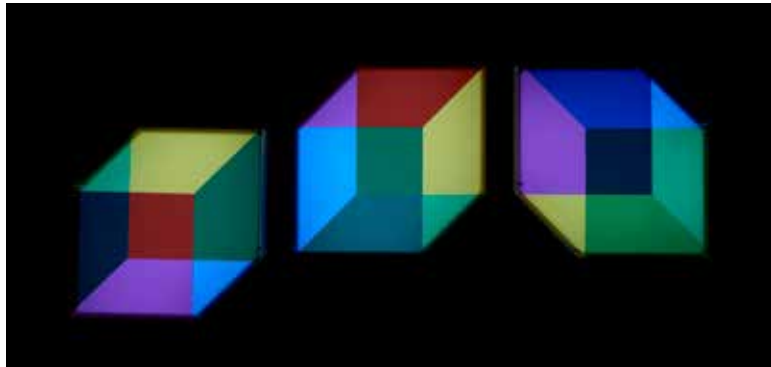
The potential to color tint your windows in any shade became the starting point of developing *Parallel Perspectives*. We chose to leave the windows of the structure untinted and to play with color inside. This reflects our approach for this exhibition—to take the ideas of Mies into our work vs. directly engaging with the architecture of Mies.



Chicago American  
May 20, 1955

**Did anything specifically inspire you while thinking about their potential prefab neighborhood designed by Mies?**

Basic principles of prefab housing of modularity and flexibility are perhaps the ones that most align with this work in the exhibition. While this house was originally conceived as one of many, the resulting uniqueness of it parallels many of these ideas in our work. The work in this exhibition could take on a new site or location and are free from a specific location or building. The underlying ideas in this exhibition could multiply: there is the possibility for more.



Luftwerk, *Spatial Animation No 1*, 2019  
Photo by John Faier

**What became the most challenging part of the project or architecture?**

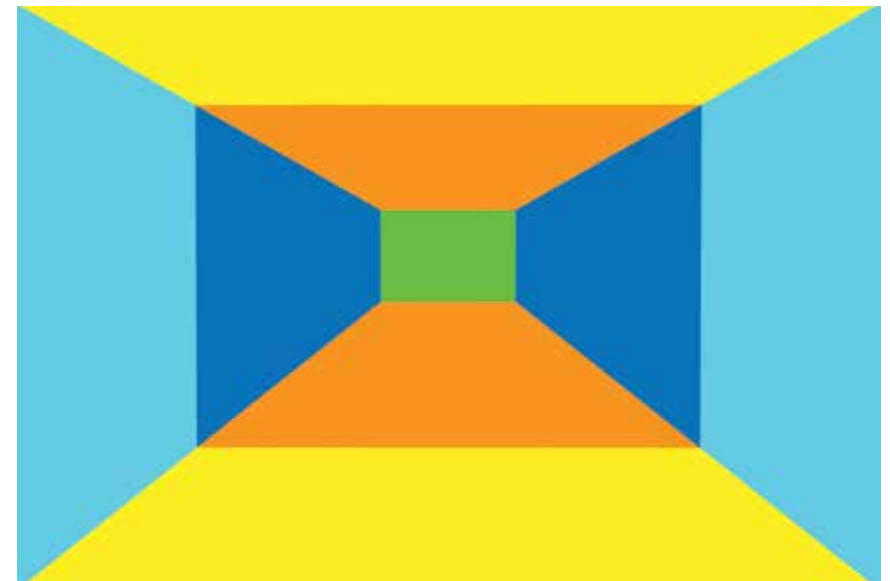
As it often is, the challenge was also the opportunity. The context of the site was more challenging as we first worked to evolve our concepts. In the end, it was this relationship that gave us the most freedom to push beyond the architecture of Mies and to focus on the concepts. We are excited about how this work has evolved.

**The *One point perspective study #1* is mesmerizing and I can imagine viewers watching the color changes for quite a while. Can you explain how it is created?**

This piece plays on the simplicity and complexity of colors. It uses primary and secondary yellow, orange, blue, and green hues. It is the color-changing light that changes your perception of the actual colors to reveal the complex relationship we have with color. The one-point perspective is a nod to Mies and his use of one-point perspective as a classical foundation for architecture. It represents our overall interest and focus on the power of light and color to shift space and alter perceptions.



Luftwerk, *One point Perspective Study No 1*, 2019  
Photo by John Faier



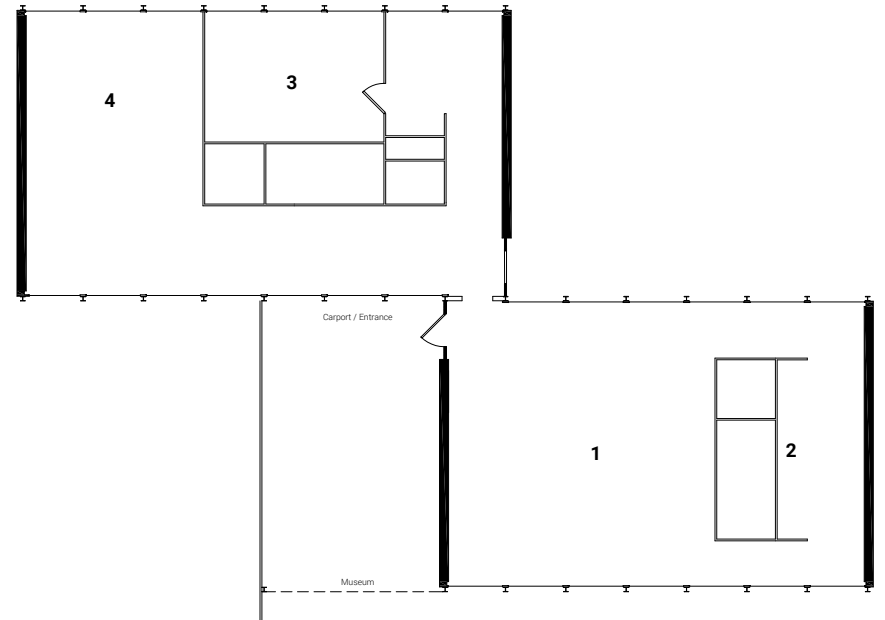
Graphic of painting *One point Perspective Study No 1*

Your neon installation has a very different visual effect, giving the sense of a larger space through reflections. Can you expand (ha) on this a bit?

The 90-degree angle and reflection were central to the architecture of Mies. *Angle of Reflection* uses the reflection of a 45-degree angle to complete the piece. Just as the glass walls in a building by Mies gives a larger sense of space, we wanted to use this same concept for this piece. This piece favors volume over mass. It is also an homage to his use of line, geometry, and symmetry with the clear neon lines.



Luftwerk, *Angle of Reflection*, 2019  
Photos by John Faier



## CHECKLIST

### Luftwerk: Parallel Perspectives

- 1 Dimension of Color**, 2019  
60 acrylic squares (15" x 15"), 10 colors  
6' x 6' x 5'
- 2 Spatial Animation No 1**, 2019  
MDF, RGB LED, acrylic diffuser, color film on clear acrylic  
2'6" x 2'6" x 7"(each), triptych
- 3 One point Perspective Study No 1**, 2019  
Paint on drywall, RGB LED  
12' x 8'
- 4 Angle of Reflection**, 2019  
10 acrylic sheets (30" x 30"), 5 x 3' neon  
10'7" x 6'6" x 30"

## Summer Public Programs

All public programs are free with museum admission or current membership unless otherwise indicated.

**Saturday, May 11 | 1:30 PM**

### Panel Discussion

Artists Leslie Baum, Magalie Guerin, Jose Lerma, Nancy Mladenoff, and Suellen Rocca will give a presentation and discussion on the exhibition *With a Capital P: Selections by Six Painters*. This dialogue will explore contemporary practices in painting and curation as a means of art production.

**Saturday, May 18 | 1:30 PM**

### Director's Tour

Join Executive Director John McKinnon for an exclusive tour of *With a Capital P: Selections by Six Painters* and *Parallel Perspectives*.

**Sunday, May 19 | 1-5 PM**

### Museum Day

#### FREE admission at all 3 Elmhurst Museums.

Join in the fun for the 23rd Annual Museum Day in Elmhurst, a special event commemorating the important cultural value of museums to communities. Jump on board the Explore Elmhurst trolley to visit all three Elmhurst museums for free admission, family-friendly activities, exhibit tours, refreshments, and more. Limited complimentary parking available at each location and at City of Elmhurst parking decks.

**Sunday, June 2 | 1:30 PM**

**Saturday, June 15, July 13, July 27 | 1:30 PM**

### McCormick House Tour

Learn about the history and unique design of the McCormick House (1952) by Mies van der Rohe on this docent-led tour. Last summer, new restorations revealed the facade and carport entrance for the first time in over 25 years.

**Saturday, June 8 | 1-4 PM**

### Family Day Workshop

We invite you and your family to participate in hands-on art activities inspired by our current exhibitions.

**Saturday, June 29 | 1:30 PM**

### Architecture Walking Tour

Join us for a walking tour that explores modern architecture in Elmhurst including the Henderson House by Frank Lloyd Wright and McCormick House by Mies van der Rohe.

Fee: \$20 (Nonmembers)/ \$15 (Members)

Tickets can either be purchased at the museum or online.

**Saturday, July 20 | 1:30 PM**

### Artists Talk: Luftwerk

Join us for an in-depth conversation about the exhibition *Parallel Perspectives* and the perceptions of color by the collaborative duo Luftwerk and color specialist Michael Rossi.

**Tuesday, August 13 | 6:30 - 8:00 PM**

### EAM/EPL Book Discussion

Join us for a fun, light summer read of "The Five Red Herrings," by Dorothy L. Sayers. This 1931 murder mystery novel is set in Galloway, where Sandy Campbell, a talented painter, is found dead in a stream. It's then up to Lord Peter Wimsey and his manservant Bunter to discover who forged Campbell's painting and solve the murderous crime.

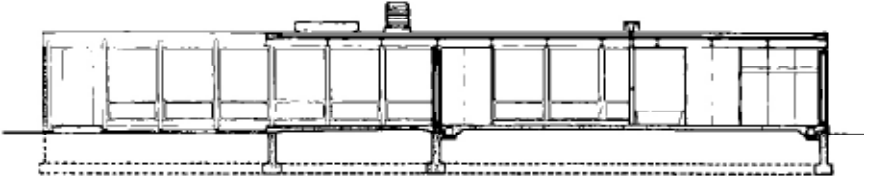
Co-organized with the Elmhurst Public Library.

Please register in advance by calling (630) 834-0202.

**Saturday, August 24 | 1:30 PM**

### Exhibition Tour

Join us for an in-depth look at the current exhibitions *With a Capital P: Selections by Six Painters* and *Parallel Perspectives*.



The Elmhurst Art Museum is an organization dedicated to the development of contemporary art exhibitions, the celebration and preservation of a rare home designed by Mies van der Rohe, and educational programs available at no cost to groups, schools and individuals.



Sponsored by contributors to EAM's Sustaining Fellows Soiree 2018.

**Parallel Perspectives** is part of Bauhaus100, the global anniversary celebrations of the legendary German art school. It continues the artists' year-long exploration of architecture by Mies, which began with the Barcelona Pavilion and will end with the Farnsworth House.

## **ELMHURST ART MUSEUM**

150 S Cottage Hill Ave, Elmhurst, IL 60126  
630.834.0202 | [elmhurstartmuseum.org](http://elmhurstartmuseum.org)

### **Museum Hours**

Mondays: CLOSED

Tuesdays-Sundays: 11am - 5pm

