The Front Room
Running parallel to the Main Galleries, the Front Room operates at a different rhythm, featuring focused exhibitions of work by emerging and well-known artists.

Gallery Guide
Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

September 6–
December 29, 2013

CAM X
2003
2013

Thomas Bayrle: Chrysler Tapete

Thomas Bayrle has been a key figure in the development of pop art in Europe since the mid-1960s. This presentation of his 1970 work *Chrysler Tapete* demonstrates his ongoing interest in the contradictory nature of mass production and contemporary society. In much of his work Bayrle suggests how the proliferation of goods—a Chrysler automobile, for example—makes those products accessible to a wider cross-section of the population, while simultaneously making the world seem more homogenous. His wallpaper works in particular combine with the surrounding architecture to create a spectacular immersive environment for the visitor, encouraging an experience that is both visually engaging and overwhelming.

Bayrle's focus on the all-encompassing nature of mass-produced goods developed alongside that of American counterparts such as Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol in the 1960s, yet has always possessed a more consciously social and political sensibility. In addition to commercial products, he addresses advertising and urbanization, becoming profoundly influential for subsequent generations of artists. Perhaps the most distinctive element of his work is the production of images that he describes as "super-forms," a single graphic element framed within a cell that is then repeated multiple times to create a tension between the individual element and the larger visualization produced by the repetition. This dialogue echoes the way that mass production and culture create a broad sense of collectivity among people while also isolating or subsuming the individual within society. The gravity of the work's subject matter is tempered by Bayrle's use of bright colors; simple forms; and unconventional yet familiar formats such as dresses, carpets, and wallpaper.

Chrysler Tapete features an American automobile from the late 1960s/early 1970s that is composed of (and set against a background of) bright blue logos of the company that designed and manufactured it. The work transforms what is typically understood to be one of the most unremarkable aspects of a car—the manufacturer's symbol—into a dynamic and alluring image, suggesting how presentation, especially in advertising, can elevate the everyday. *Tapete* translates to "tapestry," suggesting something visual that has a tactile, physical presence. Bayrle's use of wallpaper to surround and immerse the viewer in the visual pattern of the repeating "super-forms" encourages a sensation that is felt as much as it is seen, prompting us to become more aware of the commercial imagery presented to us.

Thomas Bayrle (b. 1937, Berlin) lives and works in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. His work has been presented in solo exhibitions at the WIELS Centre d'Art Contemporain, Brussels, Belgium (2013); the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain (2009); and the Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2008). Bayrle has participated in such significant group exhibitions as Documenta (13), Kassel, Germany (2012); *Making Worlds*, 53rd Venice Biennale (2009); and the 4th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art: *Von Mäusen und Menschen / Of Mice and Men*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany (2006).

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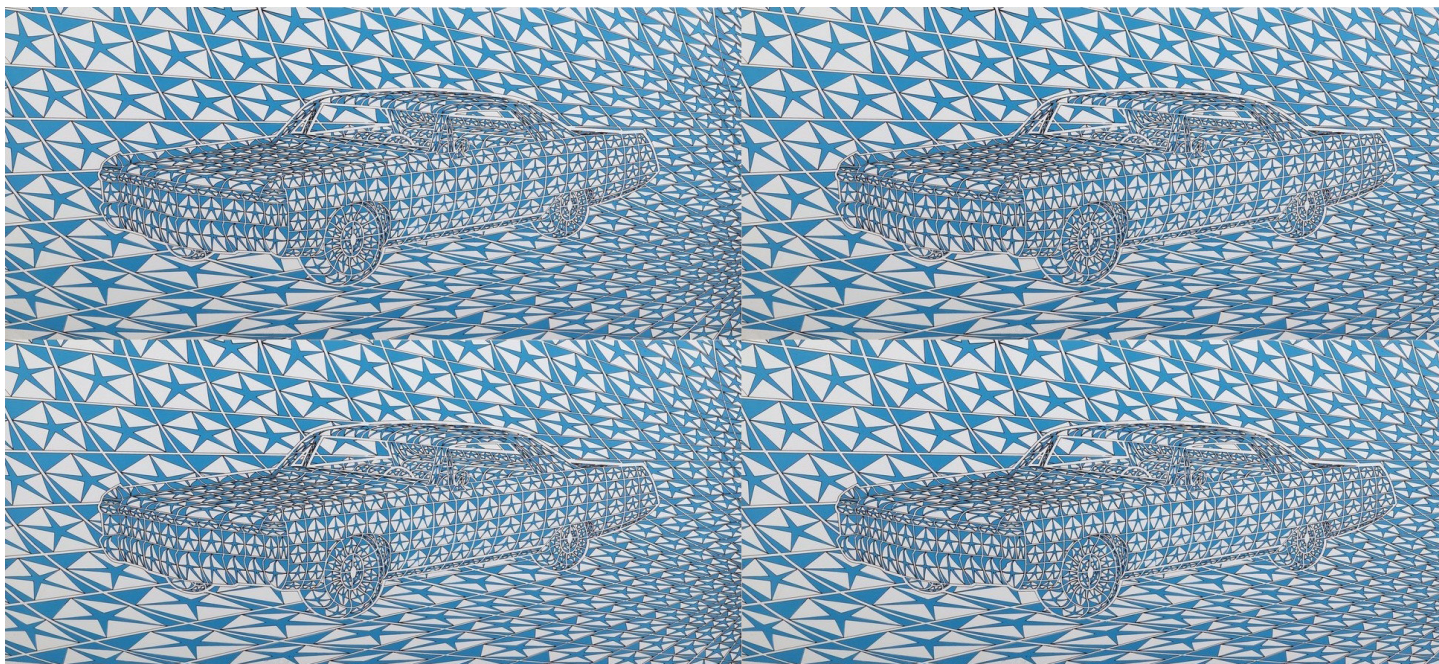
Thomas Bayrle, *Chrysler Tapete*, 1970.
Silkscreen print on paper.
Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise.
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