

MAMCO GENEVE
09.10.2019 – 02.02.2020
PRESS KIT

ROSEMARIE
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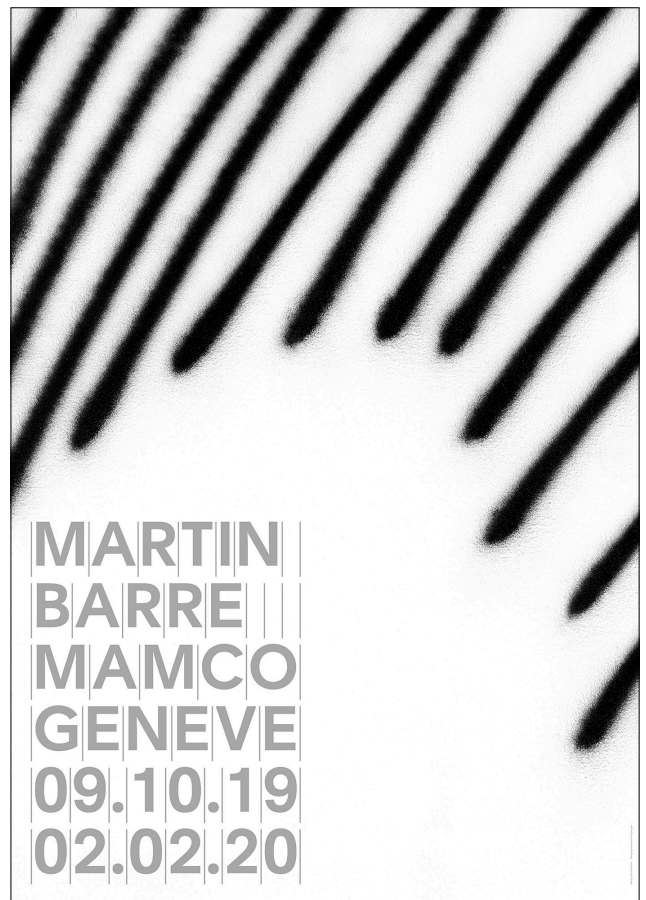
IRMA
BLANK

MARTIN
BARRÉ

ARNULF
RAINER

Opening October 8, 2019 (6 pm)

October 9, 2019–February 2, 2020



What is an image? And what do the images that engulf us daily want? These questions, posed over the past twenty years in the field of “visual studies,” invite us to consider images not only in terms of their existence as objects, and their meaning, but also in terms of their relationship to the society in which they are produced. We have long characterized the work of a particular artist by her/his technique, but must now accept that the *medium* is more than a work’s materials or its message: it is the ensemble of practices that have brought the work into existence, i.e. not only the canvas, stretcher and paint, but also the studio, gallery, and/or museum, the art market, and the critics.

From challenges to conventional “fine art” categorizations, to ontological shifts in the realm of the “visual,” exhibitions at MAMCO in 2019 explore this evolving concept of the image.

This fall, the museum constructs a typology of pictorial gestures and signs through four experimental practices. Thus MAMCO traces a unique path through the history of post-war painting, with retrospectives of the work of Martin Barré and Rosemarie Castoro, a major exhibition of work by Irma Blank and an ensemble of pieces by Arnulf Rainer (the Foëx donation). The replacement of brushwork by the use of spray, the extension of painting to the body and the space, the liberation of language from meaning, or the covering-over of pre-existing images are just some of the tropes on show—“gestures” that remind us that artists think above all in forms, that cannot be properly looked at and apprehended until they are understood as such.

Mirabaud’s gift: in 2019, MAMCO is free for all

Admission to the museum will be free of charge throughout 2019, thanks to a generous gift from Mirabaud, in celebration of the company’s 200th anniversary.

The gift furthers Mirabaud’s commitment to MAMCO as part of the company’s growing involvement in contemporary art. As a partner company to MAMCO since 2017, Mirabaud supports the museum’s development activities, in particular the project ‘In Course of Acquisition’.

Free admission to MAMCO in 2019 reflects the museum’s determination to make contemporary art accessible to the widest possible public. We thank Mirabaud for their support in implementing this policy of outreach and sharing.

The exhibition is curated by Clément Dirié and received the support of the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art.

"I don't paint Venuses or apples, or my last dream, or a dream I might have. I paint paintings. Propositions in paint, questions expressed in, or addressed to the medium of painting." (French artist Martin Barré in 1976, interviewed by critic Anne Tronche). In stressing his resolutely rational artistic approach, its immanent quality, and its engagement with questions of aesthetics, Martin Barré restates what is most apparent in his work: painting and nothing but painting, conceived as a (cerebral) space apart, a conceptual and visual playground, a place to think, and a place where thoughts can assume material form.

Martin Barré was born in Nantes in 1924. He studied architecture and painting at the city's Ecole des Beaux-Arts and settled in Paris at the beginning of the 1950s. He made his début on the Paris art scene with solo and group exhibitions in 1954 and 1955. Abandoning the vocabulary of his student years, he applied himself to the development of a distinctive, abstract oeuvre—an undertaking he pursued with exceptional rigor and originality over the following four decades, until his death in 1993.

His work as a whole displays remarkable coherence but is nonetheless generally divided into five periods. From 1954 to 1962, an initial phase gives form to an unprecedented synthesis of the artistic lessons of the first half of the 20th century and post-war abstraction. From 1963 to 1967, Barré developed a pioneering corpus in the history of contemporary painting, using aerosol sprays to create performative works that capture gesture and time on canvas. His so-called "conceptual episode," from 1969 to 1971, was a period of experimentation with the conceptual possibilities of photography and the

exhibition-as-artwork—new avenues for his exploration of the medium of painting and the conditions that shape its making and display. Barré's return to painting in 1972 heralded two decades of creativity, exploring the structure of paintings, and overpainting or obliteration from 1972 to 1977, followed by the investigation of color and color combinations from 1979 to 1992.

Working sequentially, in series, Martin Barré mobilizes the full range of pictorial parameters to liberate the dynamic, spatial, and cerebral potential of painting as a medium. By conceiving each picture of and in itself, and in relation to the other pictures in the series of which it is a part, Barré conducts his work with precision, applying an almost linguistic approach to painting. The formation of the picture is supremely important: it is here that his selective interplay evolves, between colors and areas left in reserve, between the foreground and background, the picture space and the space out-of-frame, effects of transparency and the border.

MAMCO's exhibition is Switzerland's first large-scale presentation of work by this pivotal figure in mid-to-late 20th-century art. Featuring representative works from each period, the show retraces Martin Barré's engagement with the medium of painting: the enterprise that led him to experiment ceaselessly with the sensory, cerebral, chromatic, and physical properties and possibilities of pictorial form.



Martin Barré, *57-50-B*, 1957
Oil on canvas, 89 x 116 cm
court. Archives Martin Barré, Paris
© 2019, ADAGP, Paris
Fondation Gandur pour l'art, Genève



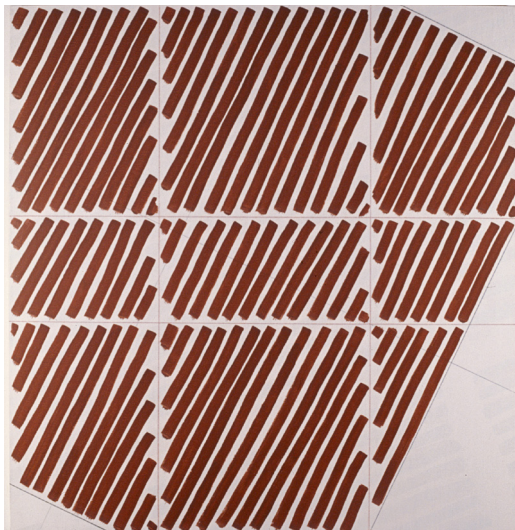
Martin Barré, *60-T-31*, 1960
Oil on canvas, 130 x 89 cm
court. Archives Martin Barré, Paris
© 2019, ADAGP, Paris



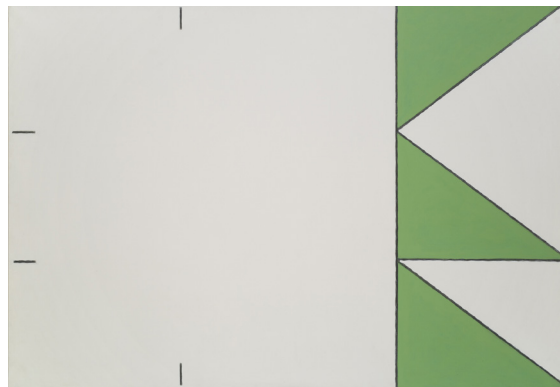
Martin Barré, *63-0*, 1963
Spray on canvas, 85 x 79 cm
court. Archives Martin Barré, Paris
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Martin Barré, *67-Z-3*, 1967
Spray on canvas, 81 x 54 cm
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The Syz Collection, Genève



Martin Barré, 75-76-D-145x140, 1975-1976
Acrylic on canvas, 145 x 140 cm
court. Archives Martin Barré, Paris
© 2019, ADAGP, Paris



Martin Barré, 84-85-108x154-B, 1984-1985
Acrylic on canvas, 108 x 154 cm
court. Archives Martin Barré, Paris
© 2019, ADAGP, Paris



Martin Barré, 92B-128x124-D, 1992
Acrylic on canvas, 128 x 124 cm
court. Archives Martin Barré, Paris
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Fondation Gandur pour l'art, Genève



Martin Barré, 92B-128x124-G, 1992
Acrylic on canvas, 128 x 124 cm
court. Archives Martin Barré, Paris
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MAMCO would like to thank all its partners, both public and private, and in particular: JTI and Fondation de Famille Sandoz, Fondation de bienfaisance du Groupe Pictet, as well as Fondation Coromandel, Fondation Lombard Odier, Fondation Valeria Rossi di Montelera, Mirabaud & Cie SA, Fondation Leenaards, Richemont, Sotheby's.

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Monday: closed
Tuesday–Friday: 12–6pm
Saturday–Sunday: 11–6pm

Free entry in 2019