

MAMCO GENEVA

11.10.17–04.02.18

PRESS KIT

William Leavitt, *Retrospective*

General Idea, *Photographs (1969-1982)*–extended

*Narrative Art*

*Fictional Artists*

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Food*

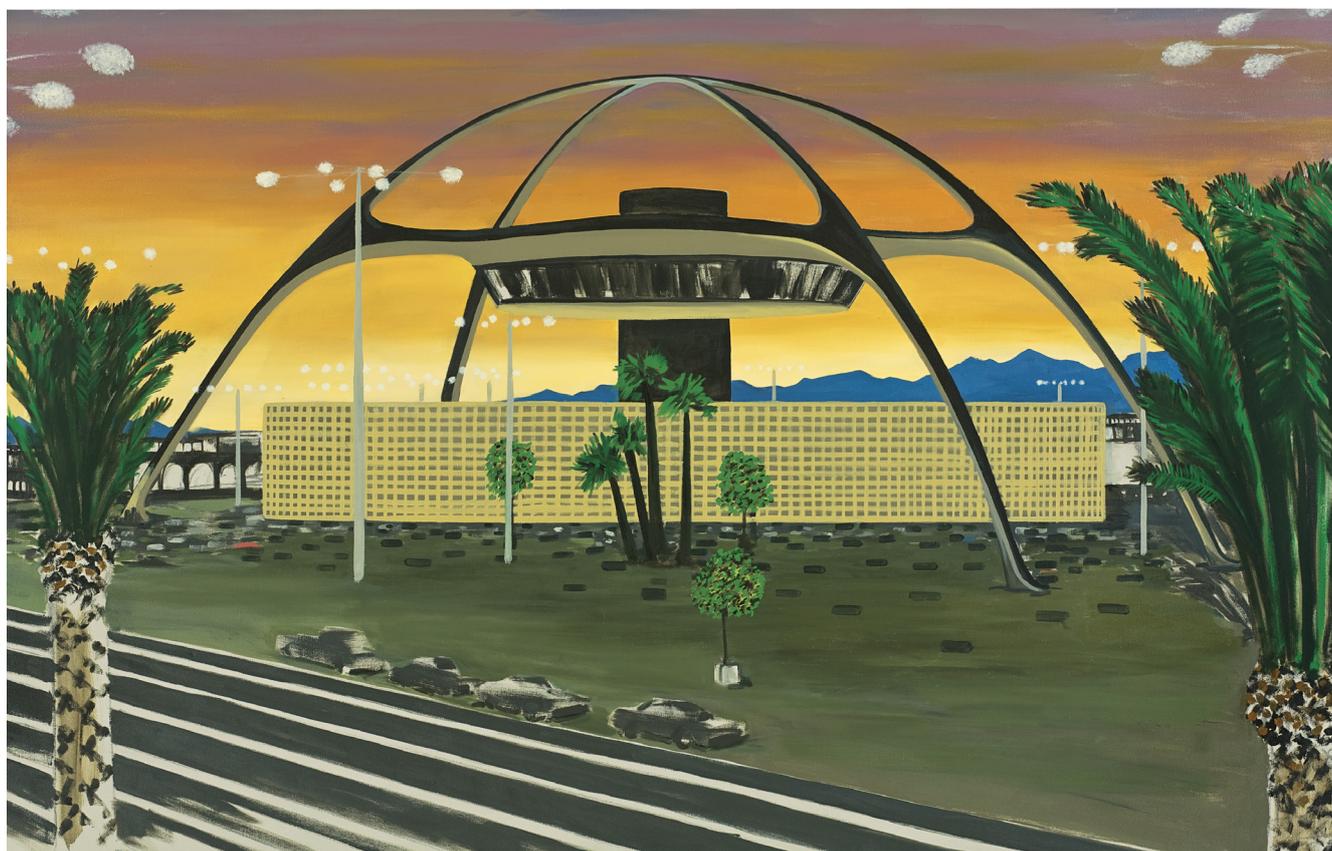
Adrian Piper, *The Mythic Being*

Martha Rosler, *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*

Allen Ruppersberg, *The Never Ending Book*

**Opening: Tuesday October 10, 2017 – 6pm**

**10, rue des Vieux-Grenadiers, 1205 Geneva**



William Leavitt, *Theme Restaurant*, 1986.

Oil on canvas. 116,84 × 182,88 cm, Collection Richard S. Massey, Miami (FL)

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**Exhibitions from October 11, 2017 until February 4, 2018**

**Press conference Tuesday October 10, 2017, 11 am**

This fall, MAMCO is organizing the first European retrospective of William Leavitt (born in 1941, Washington, USA), an historic figure of the Los Angeles art scene. Deployed on the entirety of the first floor, this exhibition brings together pieces ranging between 1970 until now. Through his installations, drawings and paintings, play and sound performances, Leavitt re-examines the production of the Western imaginary, as imposed, since the end of WWII, by the "Hollywood factory." Through a selection of parts of stage sets, the isolation and recombination of fragments coming from everyday culture, which often conceals a conservative social order and politics, the artist turns these representations inside out: he makes us see them as conceptual frameworks in which stories (fictional ones or from our own lives) can be set.

This show, organized by Lionel Bovier and Julien Fronsacq, is thus an opportunity to go back over several issues in art history, whether it be the 1970s movement of

"Narrative Art" or the fictional dimension present in the practice of General Idea, whose exhibition is extended until the beginning of February. Narration is also at the heart of a project devoted to fictional artists by David Lemaire, and the ensemble of works by Adrian Piper and Martha Rosler, respectively brought together by Elise Lammer and Sophie Costes.

This sequence is the third phase of a method of investigation into the art of the past decades, inaugurated by *Zeitgeist* in spring, and then continued with the series of exhibitions organized around the retrospective of Kelley Walker in the summer. In this way, MAMCO has been offering, via a system of nested presentations, a prismatic reading of the artistic movements and debates that have traversed our era. This singular museographical proposition, the result of the collective work of the curators of the MAMCO and its associated curators, is itself set in the heritage of the "global exhibition" concept, which has been prevalent in the museum ever since its opening in the 1990s.

# *Fictional Artists*

Vern Blosum, Henry Codax, John Dogg,  
Collection Yoon Ja & Paul Devautour, John Saint-Bernard,  
Reena Spaulings, Ernest T, Donelle Woolford

An exhibition organized by David Lemaire

**The exhibition *Fictional Artists* brings together works by artists who remain—more or less hermetically—hidden behind pseudonyms or heteronyms.**

Vern Blosum, the oldest of these personalities, was active on the New York Pop art scene as early as 1961. When his fictional identity was revealed, and even though two of his pieces had already been acquired by MoMA, his work was seen as being an imposture and was thus forgotten for a half a century. And yet, the artist concealed behind Vern Blosum had invented an authorial figure crystallizing the artistic sensitivity of the period and providing, along with a formal irony, an observation of the workings of the art system and the importance of its various agents.

These questions were also examined, two decades later, by the gallerist Colin de Land. In the basement of his space, American Fine Arts, he secretly gave life to two heteronyms: the first, John St. Bernard, explored the figure of the saint in the cinema or popular culture; the other, John Dogg, invented with the complicity of Richard Prince, appropriated the use of ready-mades applied to the world of cars. Meanwhile, Prince, as a central figure of appropriation in the 1980s, was pastiched by Donelle Woolford who overturned the

connotation of *Joke Paintings* by attributing them to a female Afro-American artist and having them produced by her collaborators.

This mix of roles between the gallerist and artist with borrowed names can also be found with Reena Spaulings. This heroine of a novel written collectively in 2004 gave her name to a New York gallery before displaying—in other galleries—works dealing with the relationship between art and the market, such as opening-night tablecloths raised as standards. As for Henry Codax, he was a minor character in the novel *Reena Spaulings* with real artists setting about producing his works.

This exhibition also provides an opportunity to see again the Yoon Ja and Paul Devautour Collection, those “art agents” who invented, produced, promoted, and collected the works of sixteen “artificial artists,” each embodying a possible artistic movement of the 1980-1990s.



## Fictional Artists



John St. Bernard, *Saint-Jack*, 1990. Dyptych, aluminium-laminated cybachrome  
223 × 90 cm each. Private collection, long-term loan at MAMCO

# MAMCO GENEVE

## Press Office

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The Museum is open Tuesday through Friday from noon to 6pm, the first Wednesday of the month until 9pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 6pm. Closed on Mondays.

Regular admission: CHF 8.–  
Reduced admission: CHF 6.–  
Group admission: CHF 4.–

## Partners

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The exhibition of William Leavitt benefits from the support of the Fondation du Jubilé de la Mobilière Suisse Société Coopérative and of the Greene Naftali Gallery, New York.

The General Idea's exhibition received the generous support of Le Laboratoire and ReproSolution, Geneva.

MAMCO's fourth floor "A collection of spaces" exhibition would not have been possible without the essential support of Fondation Leenaards.

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