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MARTIN ARNULF BARRÉI RAINERI

Opening October 8, 2019 (6 pm)

October 9, 2019-February 2, 2020





## SUMMARY

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### PRESS RELEASE

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 preexisting 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.

### ROSEMARIE CASTORO

Time = space between appointment and meeting

The exhibition is organized by Julien Fronsacq and received a donation by the Soros Fund Charitable Foundation.

Time = space between appointment and meeting: these few words, written (or rather, drawn) by Castoro on November 3, 1968, may be seen to summarize both the artist's wilfully complex practice, with its combined emphasis on the analytical and inter-personal, and its deeply divided reception.

At her SoHo loft in New York City, where artists like Lawrence Weiner, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, and Yvonne Rainer met, Rosemarie Castoro (1939–2015) developed a distinctive, unclassifiable artistic approach. She took part in Distillation, for example, an exhibition organized in 1966 by Eugene Goossen, the high priest of an American school of painting freed from external influence. Together with Christine Kozlov and Adrian Piper, Castoro was one of the three women artists featured in Ursula Mever's anthology of Conceptual art in the late 1960s. She also took part in Lucy Lipard's famous *Numbers* exhibition of the same period. Lippard included Castoro in her own anthology of Conceptual art, with a work in situ of which MAMCO holds a photograph: the space of the Paula Cooper gallery marked by a fault-line traced in half-inch wide adhesive aluminum tape.

Traversing the most recent modernist narratives—namely Minimal and Conceptual art—Rosemarie Castoro's work tirelessly explores the things that elude the latters' grasp: the context of enunciation, of course, but also the psychological and social implications of the body as a physical instrument. She explores the potential of abstract and monochrome painting, then expands their sphere and modes of operation, in formal terms, to incorporate the body, and even the exhibition space—a conceptual extension,

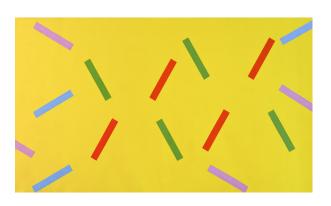
both diagrammatic and linguistic. In so doing, Castoro applies a hitherto structuralist, reductionist language to poetry, and distorts elementary forms by her haptic, integrated, sexualized treatment. As an erstwhile participant in the reflections of the Art Workers' Coalition, she approached the modernist heritage from a social and political perspective.

From 1965 to 2015, Rosemarie Castoro developed a body of work in which "contingency" may be seen as a connecting thread, signifying a determination to free herself from the rhetoric of the masculine values of permanence and the absolute. Organized into chapters, the exhibition offers a retrospective journey through the practice of an artist who favored transgression and metamorphosis over orthodoxy and linear progression.

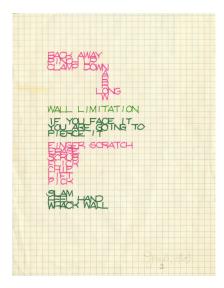
## ROSEMARIE CASTORO



Rosemarie Castoro, *Paula Cooper "Gallery Cracking" Through Arc*, 1969 Photo of the installation, aluminium adhesive, exhibition view, "Number 7" by Lucy Lippard coll. MAMCO



Rosemarie Castoro, *Red Blue Purple Green* Gold, 1965 Acrylic on canvas, 182.25 × 361 cm court. The Estate of Rosemarie Castoro, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London, Paris, Salzburg



Rosemarie Castoro, *Untitled* (Concrete Poetry), 1969 Drawing on paper, 27.94 × 21.59 cm Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London, Paris, Salzburg



Rosemarie Castoro, self-portrait, ca 1967 Polaroïd Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London, Paris, Salzburg

# MARTIN BARRÉ

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 it 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 lead him to experiment ceaselessly with the sensory, cerebral, chromatic, and physical properties and possibilities of pictorial form.

# MARTIN BARRÉ



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 © 2019, ADAGP, Paris

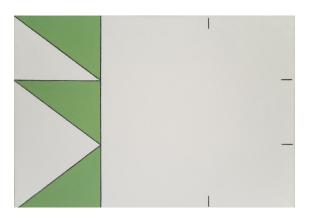


Martin Barré, 67-Z-3, 1967 Spray on canvas, 81 x 54 cm court. Archives Martin Barré, Paris © 2019, ADAGP, Paris The Syz Collection, Genève

# MARTIN BARRÉ



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 © 2019, ADAGP, Paris Fondation Gandur pour l'art, Genève



Martin Barré, 92B-128x124-G, 1992 Acrylic on canvas, 128 x 124 cm court. Archives Martin Barré, Paris © 2019, ADAGP, Paris

### IRMA BLANK

The exhibition, curated by Johana Carrier and Joana P. R. Neves, is organized in collaboration with Culturgest, Lisbon; CAPC, Bordeaux; CCA, Tel Aviv; ICA, Milan; Museo Villa Dei Cedri, Bellinzona, ICA Milan, and BombasGens Centre d'Art, Valencia. The exhibition benefits from the support of Q-International, a grant by Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma.

A passionate reader and a lover of language, Irma Blank (b. 1934), met her Italian husband in her home country of Germany, and moved with him to Sicily. The experience of deracination (both geographical and linguistic) became the foundation of her work. Her discovery that "there is no such thing as the right word" influenced her first abstract series, Eigenschriften ("self-writings") at the end of the 1960s. Rooted in the process of writing itself, the series captures the experience of self-reflection through intense concentration.

This intimate work, sprawling across numerous pages, led to the *Trascrizioni*, in which she copied the appearance of text rather than its letters, words, and sentences. She transposed the typology of different text blocks, in newspapers or poetry books, in pursuit of her work's central aim to strip words of their meaning and establish a choreography of presence.

Irma Blank considers all her work autobiographical, a form of "universal writing" in which drawing sets language free from meaning. The line empties the word, and creates a form of universal transmission. Color is also intrinsic to her work: "there is always color," she explains, "but there is never coloring." Blue is the quintessential color for her, connected with the sky and hand-writing, expressing both the individual response to the skyscape and self-absorption in the act of writing.

The exhibition connects Blank's first and last series: Global Writings and Gehen. For the latter, the right-handed artist Irma Blank was forced by health problems to learn how to draw with her left hand. The experience led to a rediscovery of line and its dance with the body, through slowed-down choreography. Book Crossings and Global Crossing (from the Global Writings series) delve into letters

and texts, specifically "hdjt ljr," the seminal ensemble of letters forming Irma Blank's own invented language.

Like many women of her generation, Irma Blank's work has been overlooked for too long, and is now garnering the attention it deserves.

## IRMA BLANK



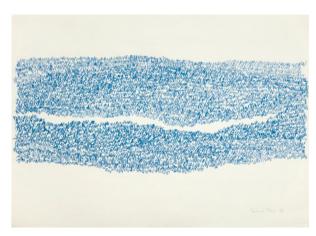
Irma Blank, *Eigenschriften, Senza titolo*, 1970 court. the artist and P420, Bologna photo: Carlo Favero



Irma Blank, *Trascrizioni, Vom Unmöglichen* (*Dell'impossibile*), 1975 court. the artist and P420, Bologna photo: Carlo Favero



Irma Blank in her studio, 1972



Irma Blank, *Eigenschriften, Senza titolo*, 1968 court. the artist and P420, Bologna photo: Carlo Favero

### ARNULF RAINER

Territoites latents – Fonds Michel Foëx (donation 2019)

The exhibition is organized by Rainer Michael Mason, who also signs the present text and directs the publication to be released soon on this important donation.

For some 60 years, Arnulf Rainer (b. 1929) has practised "painting in order to quit painting." With roots in Surrealism, Art Informel, even Art Brut, he has developed an oeuvre based on the covering-over of existing works.

On tragic and comical photographic self-portraits, on reproductions of death masks, residues of the human expressiveness of great minds (such as Goethe), on images belonging to the history of drawing and painting (Goya, Leonardo, Van Gogh) and prints (Henri Michaux), but also on canvases by well-known names (Miró, Sam Francis, Vasarely), on crosses and and cruciform structures (in the West, primitive moulds for figurative work), the Austrian artist operates in oils, wax pastel, and graphite pencil, but also with a drypoint stylus, sweeping it across the copper printing plate, gouging the surface and loading it with marks.

Driven by a heightened sense of corporeality (his own and other people's), "exposed to the torrent of faces, like Louis Soutter," fascinated by grimaces and odd facial expressions, Rainer's artistic action is performed amidst an unimaginable torrent of words and imprecations and accompanies or translates his welling rage and fury at the world and at his own self.

In German, these disparate interventions are conveniently grouped under the common term Übermalungen, and confront us both with artist's splendid or tortured colors and fevered, graphic quality and with the forces at play beneath the visible surface, in the layers beneath—the repository of the meanings slowly generated by art and its beholders. In this process, creation and destruction, commentary and distortion, and concealment and revelation endlessly interact with and engender their opposites.

The 70 pieces of the donation made in memory of the Genevan dealer Michel Foëx (1957–2015) set up their harmonics around *Schreck (Sterne*), the large photograph reworked in oils that was one of the first acquisitions of the AMAM, the association from which MAMCO gestated.

## ARNULF RAINER



Arnulf Rainer, *Unbekannt IV* (*Totenmaskenserie*), 1978 photography on plastic paper (silver print), correction with walnut stain, with celadon blue pigment ink, washed and rubbed, with pastel and black wax 60.6 x 48.6 cm (without frame)

coll. MAMCO, donation Fonds Michel Foëx



Arnulf Rainer, *Landschaft*, 1973-1987 dry tip on zinc, red garnet, on Zerkall Velin 46.2 x 55.6 cm (without frame) ed. 7/30 coll. MAMCO, donation Fonds Michel Foëx



Arnulf Rainer, *Tannenkreuz*, 1989 dry tip on aluminium, printed in black green on Zerkall Velin 77.9 x 68 cm (without frame) ed. 27/50 coll. MAMCO, donation Fonds Michel Foëx



Arnulf Rainer, Sans titre (Gesichter mit Goya), 1983 photographie sur papier (tirage argentique), photograph on paper (silver print), correction with indian ink and blue pigment ink, washing of these inks, and sgraffito 23.8 x 16.9 cm (without frame) coll. MAMCO, donation Fonds Michel Foëx

### GUY DE COINTET

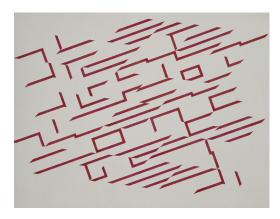
French-born artist Guy de Cointet (1934–1983) emigrated to the USA in 1965, where he worked as an assistant to Larry Bell in New York. He eventually followed him to Los Angeles, where he lived for the rest of his life.

His work weaves together strands from Conceptual art, visual poetry, and various narrative forms. For de Cointet, code, hieroglyphics, and typography were tools for transforming words into images, and giving form to color. He employed these to create large drawings composed of encrypted writings and his books of "typoetry."

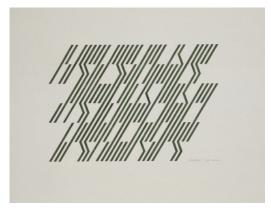
Like Warhol, he drew inspiration from the everyday world, from advertising and soap operas, processing his finds using the "cut-up" techniques of Burroughs and Gysin. Toward the end of his life, de Cointet became increasingly interested in the crossovers between theater, cinema, and dance. His scenery items for his production of *ETHIOPIA*, (part of the MAMCO collection) function by turns as props, scenery, and actual characters.

This room contains works on paper and "post-Pop" paintings, acquired by MAMCO on occasion of the first de Cointet retrospective the museum organized in 2004.

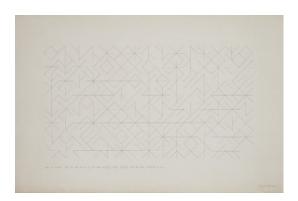
## GUY DE COINTET



Guy de Cointet, *Sans titre*, ca 1980 watercolor on paper 58 x 79.4 cm coll. MAMCO, gift Succession Guy de Cointet



Guy de Cointet, *Nevertheless I did Venture* 1978 ink on paper 65.2 x 101.7 cm coll. MAMCO



Guy de Cointet And no wonder...What he saw was one of the most amazing sights..., 1978 ink on paper 65 x 102 cm coll. MAMCO



Guy de Cointet, *Sans titr*e, ca. 1965 collage, painting on isorel plate 107 x 79 cm coll. MAMCO, gift Succession Guy de Cointet

### JOHN M ARMLEDER

#### Quicksand 2, 2019

Conceived for MAMCO, the installation has been gifted to the museum by the artist

At first sight, the installation devised by John M Armleder (b. 1948) for London's Dairy Art Centre in 2013, now re-created in a new version for MAMCO, resembles an industrial storage facility partly filled with an eclectic assortment of items (sheets of Plexiglass, artificial flowers, books etc.), and animated by audio and televisual elements. John M Armleder delights, it seems, in mixing styles and registers through his use of furnishings, artistic and decorative objects, natural and artificial materials to form an ensemble reminiscent of a shop interior, an artist's studio, or the reserve collection of a museum—the assembled objects hark back to their commercial and industrial origins, or to the works of art represented by their fragmented remains.

Like John M Armleder's earlier installations—featuring piled-up bottle racks, mussel shells, and sledges, with a nod to the figures of Marcel Duchamp, Marcel Broodthaers, and Joseph Beuys—the objects in *Quicksand* 2 remind us of what Arthur Danto has described as art's power to "transfigure the commonplace." The origins of this practice—the transformation of ordinary objects into artworks—lie of course

of ordinary objects into artworks—lie of course in the "ready-mades" of the early 20th century, but also in American Pop art of the 1960s and in the "commodity sculpture" trend of the 1980s (including Jeff Koons, Haim Steinbach, and John M Armleder himself).

We might equally be reminded of the Wunderkammer or cabinets of curiosities assembled by collectors from the Late Renaissance onwards, featuring natural, scientific, and artistic treasures alike: ultimately, it is precisely these systems of classification that Armleder is calling into question. His work demonstrates how the power of display, the very act of organization and presentation (however chaotic) will always prevail over the individual items presented. Artistry resides in the arrangement of the objects, their interrelationships, and the desire (however illusory) to harness them to make meaning. Nothing is ever wholly an original piece, or a reproduction, or a product of artistic or contrastingly commercial intent: things are always shaped in some way, and this is also the "art of context."

These are the "quicksands" of the title, into which the artist invites the viewer to venture. John M Armleder's installation crystallizes the preoccupations of an artistic career extending from the late 1960s to the present: the metaphor of the museum as a repository for the fragmentary leavings of artistic practice, the concept of a reservoir of available forms for the shaping of a new work of art, or an assortment of items offered up by an improbable vendor.

In the 1970s, Armleder's work with the Ecart group highlighted this non-distinction between every-day and artistic activity, in the wake of the Fluxus movement. In the 1980s, his Furniture Sculptures (as per Erik Satie's "furniture music") stressed this aspect of avant-garde practice and its ultimate fate. In the 1990s his Pour Paintings and murals stressed the ancillary role of the composition in relation to the vagaries of the artistic program. Since the early 2000s, his installations have showcased artistic (or curatorial) endeavours that hark back to the era of the "B movie," when a set created for one screenplay would become the springboard for another. Today, as we discern the overall purpose and direction of this unique oeuvre, we can look into the heart of the maelstrom of forms, media, new creations and re-workings, gestures, and references and see—as in Edgar Allen Poe's short story—how its swirling power draws everything in. As if the unblinking "eye" of the vortex was gazing out at us in its turn.

# JOHN M ARMLEDER



Exhibition view «Quicksand 2» Photo Annik Wetter – MAMCO Geneva



Exhibition view «Quicksand 2» Photo Annik Wetter – MAMCO Geneva



MAMCO is overseen by FONDAMCO, which is made up of FONDATION MAMCO, the Canton, and City of Geneva.

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.

The exhibitions are supported by Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Soros Fund Charitable Foundation, Ambassade de France, Q-International and Lenz & Staehelin.

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