

Spring/Summer
2008

Contemporary Art Museum
SAINT LOUIS

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New Shows

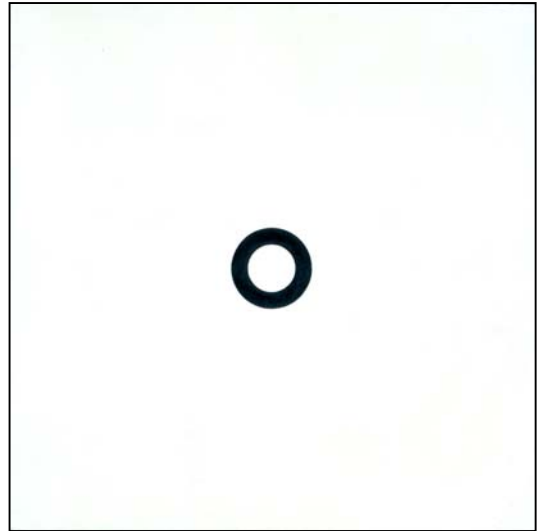
Opening

May 9th 2008

CONTEMPORARYARTMUSEUMSTLOUIS

3750 Washington Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri 63108 314.535.4660 www.contemporarystl.org

John Armleder, *All Night Party (FS)*, 2003



Olivier Mosset, *Untitled*, 1970

Opening Reception: Friday, May 9, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

1—Main Galleries

May 9—August 3, 2008

JOHN ARMLEDER and
OLIVIER MOSSET

2—The Front Room

(May 9-25)

(May 27 - June 8)

(June 10 - 22)

(June 14 - 15)

(June 24 - July 6)

(July 8 - 18)

(July 12)

(July 19 - 25)

(July 26 - August 10)

(August 12 - 31)

(ongoing)

Ei Arakawa

Alex Hubbard and Oscar Tuazon

Gardar Eide Einarsson

Jan Estep

Max Schumann

Vlatka Horvat and Eva Weinmayr

Jia Zhang-Ke

Ed Fella

Brent Green

Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT

Dexter Sinister, co-operators

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1—Main Galleries

JOHN ARMLEDER and OLIVIER MOSSET

ST. LOUIS, MO, FEBRUARY 1, 2008—The Contemporary is proud to present an ambitious exhibition with John Armleder and Olivier Mosset, two of the most influential artists working today, and whose work remains under-recognized in the United States. This widely anticipated exhibition—the inaugural show of the Contemporary’s new curatorial team—introduces the museum’s newest program of exhibitions, publications, and performances. The exhibition will be on view from May 9 to August 3, 2008.

Signaling its commitment to artist-centered exhibitions, the Contemporary will hand over its galleries to Armleder and Mosset. Jointly conceived by the artists—who have been close for more than twenty years—the exhibition represents neither a curated two-person show nor two independent solo exhibitions, but an active juxtaposition of parallel and opposite artistic approaches. Proposing a guiding metaphor of artworks that act as obstacles, and obstacles that act as artworks, the artists will present an installation specifically designed for the museum’s Main Galleries. Armleder will contribute new pour and pattern paintings, a site-specific fifty-five-foot wall-painting, and an installation of Mylar Christmas trees. Mosset, in addition to a series of his infamous “circle paintings” from the 1960s and early ‘70s, will present a large-scale installation of several dozen *Toblerones*, large cardboard sculptures based on anti-tank structures used by the Swiss army.

John Armleder has produced thousands of sculptures, paintings, drawings, books, and staged performances, creating an art of impenetrable surfaces and too much information. Inspired by the Warholian predict that omnipresence is a form of absence, the artist constructs an all-encompassing vocabulary that resists fixed identification. Collapsing categories, he allows pop culture to coexist with abstract formalism; he demands that sculpture align itself with interior design; and he elides the seductive and the trashy. His

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wallpaper works, drawings, furniture, and overwhelming mixed media installation of scaffolding, televisions, trees, plants, and stuffed animals create an intense proximity between art and decorative design, defying hierarchies and disrupting traditional distinctions between the unique and the generic.

Olivier Mosset, on the other hand, chooses to remain firmly committed to blank abstraction. His uncompromising aesthetic presents the viewer with nothing to look at, and therefore, with everything to consider. From his untitled circle paintings of 1966–74 (nine of which are shown here), his untitled series from 1972–77, in which he appropriated Daniel Buren’s striped canvases, to his most recent monochromes, Mosset continues to express the death, if not the inherent failure, of painting as a meaning-making gesture. Stripped of any identifiable “con-tent,” Mosset’s painting insists on its own autonomy and operates outside of consensus, expectations, or external authorities. His decelerated process presents a powerful political stance against our con-ventional notions of progress and insatiable hunger for the new. Indeed, slowing us down to the point of full-stop, his “Toblerone” sculptures—cardboard copies of concrete anti-tank obstacles used by the Swiss army—merge the physical realities of war and abs-tract sculpture, while reminding us of Ad Reinhardt’s famous quip that “sculpture is something you bump into when you back up to look at a painting.”

One of the most urgent and relevant directions taken by conceptual art today is its struggle to remain potent within, and despite, late capitalism’s omnivorous information economy. In a post-punk and post-Fordist landscape, faced with relentless information-circulation and endless image-production, many contemporary artists search for ways to defy pre-determined spaces of production and reflection and instead open up spaces for independence and radicalism. In this information-saturated climate, John Armleder and Olivier Mosset find opposite escape routes. If Armleder’s gregarious pop ultimately offers a slippery surface of emptied, generic icons, and if Mosset’s unyielding economy is in fact an anti-authoritative act of limitless agency, these two practices transform affirmation into

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a form of refusal, and vice-versa. In the end, the work of Armleder and Mosset compromises our ability to distinguish “yes” from “no.”

John Armleder and Olivier Mosset is curated by Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis Chief Curator Anthony Huberman. An artist-made publication will accompany the exhibition and be published the summer of 2008.

John Armleder and Olivier Mosset is supported by Swiss Re; Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council; and Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation. The publication is supported by Zane Bennett Contemporary Art, Santa Fe. Special thanks to Galerie Andrea Caratsch, Zürich.

General support for the Contemporary’s exhibition program is generously provided by the Whitaker Foundation; William E. Weiss Foundation; Regional Arts Commission; Arts and Education Council; Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; Nancy Reynolds and Dwyer Brown; and members of the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

John Armleder (b. 1948, Geneva, Switzerland. Lives and works in Geneva.)

An instrumental figure in the Fluxus movement in the late sixties and seventies and founder of the celebrated Groupe Ecart in Geneva (1969-1980), John Armleder has been a prominent and active artistic voice for more than thirty years. He has shown his work in exhibitions worldwide, including the Venice Biennale, where he represented Switzerland in 1986. In 2004, a retrospective exhibition of his works on paper was shown at the Kunsthalle Zurich, which later traveled to the ICA in Philadelphia. During the winter of 2006, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Geneva, hosted a grand-scale retrospective of his work. The large survey exhibition, *Too Much is not Enough*, is Armleder’s most recent solo-show to tour internationally from the Kunstverein Hannover to the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, Boston.

Olivier Mosset (b. 1944, Bern, Switzerland. Lives and works in Tucson, Arizona.)

Olivier Mosset first gained prominence in Paris in the mid-sixties as a member of BMPT, an influential group of “radical painters” that also included Daniel Buren, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni. Since then, Mosset has had more than 150 solo exhibitions at major museums and galleries worldwide, including a large two-part retrospective, *Olivier Mosset: Travaux 1966-2003* at the Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne and the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland in 2004. Mosset represented Switzerland in the 44th Venice Biennale in 1990, and his work is featured in the 2008 Whitney Biennial. The

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exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis is his first major project with an American museum.

THE CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM ST. LOUIS

With a vision of presenting the most relevant and experimental developments in contemporary art and developing successful community partnerships, education programs and outreach initiatives, the Contemporary makes the arts available to wide and diverse audiences throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area. Founded as the Forum for Contemporary Art in 1980, the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis re-opened with a new 25,000 square foot building in 2003.

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis is also proud to announce the beginning of a new artistic program with the arrival of a new curatorial team. Based on a system of pairs and parallels, the Contemporary's exhibition program unfolds with two artists at a time and in two distinct rhythms. The main galleries feature large-scale, three-month-long exhibitions of work by two artists—conceived as a single show, as two separate monographs, or as a collaborative project. Running alongside the main galleries is The Front Room, where short projects offer a more reactive, nimble, and provisional series of parallel exhibitions. Juxtaposed and encountered side by side, the pairs of artworks, artists, and exhibitions offer a richer and more dynamic relationship to contemporary art.

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