

FRANÇOIS MORELLET

Presented by kamel mennour
and Lévy-Gorvy, curated by
Béatrice Gross

Frieze Masters, London
Stand C10

4 – 7 October 2018

On the occasion of Frieze Masters, kamel mennour and Lévy Gorvy are pleased to present an exceptional monographic joint booth exhibition of work by French self-taught artist François Morellet (1926–2016)—a precursor of conceptual art and a major figure of postwar geometrical abstraction.

Curated by Béatrice Gross, the exhibition brings together two dozen historical works dating from 1954 to the late 1970s. These masterworks testify to the extraordinary diversity of Morellet's system-based, and often witty art. Also evident in the works on view is the prolific scope of Morellet's œuvre, comprising a variety of media and artistic concerns.

In 1952 the artist, then 26, resolved to base his practice on achieving neutrality in his art: this resolution is evident in the formal economy of Morellet's work, along with the artist's predilection for seriality, and the all-over, anti-composition aesthetic of his work. Using the grid as his starting point, Morellet developed an apparently infinite series of compositional variations with disorienting visual effects by layering, rotating, and fragmenting the grid. Though his practice began with hand-painted works, paintings screen-printed on wood, and wire mesh mounted on wood, it expanded to include three-dimensional work made with neon lights, and stainless steel. Irreverent heir to concrete art, and briefly associated with the optical and kinetic art movements, Morellet was a founding member of the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV), a collaborative of artists active in France from 1960 to 1968.

Carefully curated to honor and echo Morellet's œuvre, the booth's exhibition design is based on a 80 cm module—the dimension favored by Morellet for most of the paintings he made during the considered period. The neon installation from 1963, the artist's first use of that medium, also reflects these dimensions to determine its construction and placement. Complementing this exhibition, *Êtes-vous heureuse?* (1987), a photograph by American artist Louise Lawler depicts the entrance to the Morellet house in Cholet, France, with a 1956 work by Morellet hanging on the wall, a sculpture by another artist—part of the family's art collection—and their famous pet parrot. This anecdotic portrait completes the homage to the self-declared “freak child of Mondrian and Picabia,” as the artist described himself in an autobiographical text from 1987.

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The scenography combines Morellet's work in accordance with his logic of order and harmony, underpinned by a dynamic of controlled chaos that pays tribute to the artist's Dada spirit.

Born in 1926, in Cholet, François Morellet died in 2016 in Cholet. An internationally recognized artist since the 1970s, he is the creator of many private and public commissions both in France and abroad, such as the permanent installation *L'Esprit d'escalier*, realized in the Lefuel Staircase of the Musée du Louvre in 2010.

His work has been exhibited in many venues, including the Dia Art Foundation in New York City and the Dia: Beacon, the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Musée d'Orsay, the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Center for Fine Arts in Brussels, the S.M.A.K. in Ghent, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Mamco in Geneva, Documenta in Kassel, the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Baden-Baden, the Museum Ritter in Waldenbuch, Modern Art Oxford, the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, the Brooklyn Museum in New York, the Miami Arts Museum, and the MoMA in New York.