

OLIVIER MOSSET

TUTU

30.5. –
8.9.2019

MEDIA ORIENTATION

28.5.2019, 11 am

OPENING

29.5.2019, 6 pm

curated by Sabine Schaschl

Since the mid-1960s, Olivier Mosset (b. 1944 in Bern, lives in Tucson, Arizona) has been one of the most radical representatives of a contemporary manner of painting that undermines the ideal of artistic originality by means of objectivity and seriality. Taking the question of what painting is and how it works as a starting point, he has produced a multifaceted oeuvre of monochromes and abstract geometric works that reject any mystifying attribution of meaning, as exemplified by the pieces now presented at Museum Haus Konstruktiv.

Olivier Mosset's solo show opens with eight giant square color fields in green, yellow, violet, orange, blue and brown. These monochromes from 2014, of which there are ten in total, were produced in series and demonstrate a very surface-oriented manner of painting, in which the traces of the application of paint are reduced to a minimum. Mosset had already adopted this practice in the mid-1960s, when he created paintings with letters, numbers and dots, including the red A and black dot on a white background that can now be seen at Haus Konstruktiv. These two early works date back to Mosset's time in Paris, where he began his career as an artist in 1962, working as an assistant for Jean Tinguely and Daniel Spoerri. There, he also met Daniel Buren, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni. With the aim of fundamentally questioning painting in its predominant form and starting from scratch, these four artists organized four provocative collective acts from January to September 1967, in which they broke away from abstract expressionism and Nouvelle École de Paris. This group, named BMPT after the artists' initials, already disbanded in 1967.

Around 1966, Mosset produced the first of around two hundred identical paintings with a circle motif, which he would work on until 1974: for the purpose of undermining the principle of authorship and of creating a manner of painting that refers to nothing other than itself, this Swiss artist persistently painted black rings on white primed canvases measuring 100 x 100 cm, three examples of which are exhibited on the fourth floor.

However, as these untitled rings became a kind of signature, he turned to two-tone vertical stripe paintings around 1973. The first paintings from this series show a white-and-gray stripe structure. Later, Mosset broadened his color palette, as seen in the striped exhibit in white and light green, until he started to combine two similar color nuances in 1976. This gradual convergence of the stripes' colors led him to monochromy in 1977. At that time, he moved to New York, where he met key representatives of so-called radical painting and exhibited with them collectively. Until the mid-1980s, he addressed monochromy intensively, experimenting with various colors and formats while consistently intent on applying paint without any individual style. In 1985, Mosset returned to geometric abstraction, producing two-tone and three-tone abstract geometric paintings until 1990. He also started to give them titles, which rarely provided clear information about the work, but

instead encouraged contemplation of possible references to other artworks and ideas. In the exhibited piece *TUTU*(2013), for instance, which consists of four shaped canvases with the forms of letters T, U, T and U, there is subtle wordplay referring to Marcel Duchamp and his drawing of a ballerina. The version shown at Museum Haus Konstruktiv comprises two previous works from 2013, *Untitled (TUM')* and *Untitled (TUTU)*, which can also be read as veiled homages to Duchamp.

His strategy of referring back to certain works and concepts not only comes into play in the reshaped piece *TUTU*, but also in the so-called *Cimaises*. These are large-format walls, which Mosset has previously arranged to be made from plaster, wood, metal or concrete. For the exhibition opening at Museum Haus Konstruktiv, they were realized in ice for the first time and were only be seen briefly in the museum's forecourt. The use of ephemeral materials has become increasingly important in recent years. This is also evident in the light piece specially developed for the exhibition space on the second floor by lighting designer Madjid Hakimi (b. 1962 in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, lives in Paris) at the invitation of Olivier Mosset.

Over the past fifty years, Olivier Mosset has developed an oeuvre with unmatched radicality and contemporariness. Always open to artistic collaborations, he is to this day still intent on creating a manner of painting that asserts its neutrality and autonomy without any superimposed anecdotal element.

This exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive catalog (German/English). Published by Snoeck-Verlag in Cologne.

Olivier Mosset has lived in Tucson, Arizona, since 1996. In 2015, he received the Prix Meret Oppenheim; in 1990, he was able to exhibit in the Swiss pavilion at Biennale di Venezia. Since then, his works have been shown in major solo and group exhibitions, e.g. in 1993 at Biennale d'Art Contemporain, Lyon; in 1994 at Musée cantonal des beaux-arts, Sion (solo); in 1995 at Mamco – Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva (solo); in 1996 at CAN – Centre d'Art Neuchâtel (solo); in 1999 at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; in 2003 at Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne / Kunstverein St. Gallen Kunstmuseum (solo); in 2006 at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (solo) and at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson (solo); in 2008 at the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; in 2011 at Kunsthalle Bern (solo); in 2012 at Kunsthalle Zurich (solo); in 2014 at *Manifesta 10*, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; in 2015 at The Power Station, Dallas (solo); in 2017 at the Jean Paul Najjar Foundation, Dubai, (solo); and in 2018 at MAMO, Centre d'art de la Cité Radieuse, Marseille.

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