

Painting or How to Get Rid of It



Martin Barré, 63-O, © Martin Barré/ADAGP 2014

11 June – 14 September 2014

**French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici
Grandes Galeries**

Tuesday 10 June 2014

press preview 11.30 a.m.

vernissage 6.30 p.m.- 8.30 p.m.

curated by **Éric de Chassey**

From 11 June to 14 September 2014, the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici presents the group exhibition *Painting or How to Get Rid of It*, curated by Éric de Chassey. The exhibition brings together the works of four artists of different nationalities: Italian **Fabio Mauri** and American **Marcia Hafif** – who lived and worked in Rome – French **Martin Barré** and Swiss **Olivier Mosset** – who both lived in Paris for a long time.

The exhibition, whose title was inspired by Eugène Ionesco's play *Amedeus or How to Get Rid of It*, poses the question of the **end of painting** that has obsessed artists since the birth of abstraction at the beginning of the Twentieth century. In the 1960s, the logic of reducing painting to its primary components, which characterize Minimalism, asserts itself and leads to a form of art consisting of almost nothing, whose logical and inevitable consequence would be the death of painting. *Painting or How to get rid of it* reveals how much more complex these evolutions actually were.

Between 1959 and 1969, Fabio Mauri, Marcia Hafif, Martin Barré and Olivier Mosset took the logic of a progressive reduction and final disappearance of abstract painting to extremes in Rome and Paris. In the following years, they switched from painting to

conceptual art or performance, but, unlike many of their contemporaries, they ended up going back to painting without disowning their beginnings or their extra-pictorial experiences. The works on display cover three fundamental periods of their artistic careers and of the history of abstraction: abstract painting geared toward the disappearance of forms and colors, conceptual or performative works involving films or photography, and finally, abstract paintings, that show the possibilities of painting after the end of painting.

Fabio Mauri (Roma, 1926 - 2009)

Fabio Mauri is one of the masters of the Italian post World War II avant-garde. He lived between Bologna and Milan until 1957. He then moved to Rome, his birth city. In 1942 he founded the magazine *Il Setaccio (The Sieve)*, with Pier Paolo Pasolini. He taught Aesthetics of Experimentation at the Academy of Fine Arts in Aquila for twenty years. In 1968, together with Balestrini, Sanguineti, Eco, Porta, Barilli, Filippini, Arbasino and others, he was one of the founders of *Quindici (Fifteen)*, a review for the diffusion of culture. From the beginning of the 1970s and after his participation in the Venice Biennale in 1974, Fabio Mauri stopped painting: his work on the relationship between image and ideology, realized through installations, performances and photographs, integrated painting only in an allusive manner, which reminds us of his 1960s *Schermi (Screens)*, in *What is Fascism? [Chè Cosa è il fascismo ?]* or his installation *Entartete Kunst* (1985).

Marcia Hafif (Pomona, California, 1929)

Following her studies in California, Marcia Hafif moved to Rome from 1961 to 1969, where she developed an abstract style of painting consisting of simple forms inscribed on brilliantly colored backgrounds, which evolved into the dissolution of form in her spray paintings. Once back in the United States, in the 1970s, the artist becomes known for her monochrome paintings that are realized in series, each exploring a mode of color. Her influential essay "Beginning Again", published in 1978, emphasized "the death of painting" and the predominance of abstraction in some of the greatest works of art of the Twentieth century. Numerous exhibitions have been dedicated to Marcia Hafif in Europe and the United States. The *catalogue raisonné* of her Italian work has been published by Mamco, Geneva, in 2010.

Martin Barré (Nantes, 1924 - Paris, 1993)

Martin Barré was trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Nantes, where he studied architecture and painting. He moved to Paris in 1948. During the 1960s, he became known on the Parisian scene (then dominated by Gestural Abstraction or Action Painting) for his minimalist canvases painted directly from the tube of color or a spray can (*Zèbres*). After abandoning painting from 1969 to 1972 in favor of conceptual work (his conceptual photography exhibitions at Galerie Daniel Templon were the first of this type in France), Barré returned to painting in series, playing on the concurrence of the codes of abstraction throughout the 1970s, to proceed to a purer abstraction where color once again plays the leading role, in his last years of activity. His works are on permanent display at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and are often shown in Europe and the United States.

Olivier Mosset (Berne, 1944)

Born in Switzerland, Olivier Mosset, moved to Paris, where from 1966-67, he teamed up with Daniel Buren, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni, in a group called the "BMPT" by critics, whose aim was to deconstruct the pictorial system in order to redefine painting on the basis of new premises. At the end of the 1970's, Mosset moved to New York where he confronted himself with other artists, among others Marcia Hafif, rapidly forming a faction dubbed by the critics "The New York Radical Painting Group". In the 1980s his monochrome and large bi-chromatic paintings rendered him one of the main protagonists of the Neo-Geo trend. In 2012 he created the scenography for the ballet *Sous Apparence* for the Opéra de Paris. He currently lives and works between Tucson, Arizona and Neuchâtel in Switzerland.

The catalogue of the exhibition is published by Drago (in English, Italian and French).

Opening hours of the exhibition: from Tuesday to Sunday (closed Mondays) 11.00 a.m. - 7 p.m. (last admission 6.30 p.m.)

The ticket includes a guided tour of the gardens of Villa Medici and entrance to the exhibition: 12 euros (full price) | 6 euros (reduced price*)

** Reduced rates: under 25s, students (upon presentation of an ID), adults over 60, unemployed (upon presentation of a document), art history teachers, fellows and members of foreign Academies and Institutes of Rome, holders of Bibliocard, Carta Più Feltrinelli, Metrebus card, Opera Card, Roma Pass, Romaeuropa Card, FAI members.*

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