

Dia:

For Immediate Release

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Dia Art Foundation to Present *François Morellet* at Dia:Chelsea and Dia:Beacon Opening October 28, 2017

New York, NY – From October 28, 2017, to June 2, 2018, Dia Art Foundation will present a major exhibition of the work of French artist François Morellet (1926–2016) at Dia:Chelsea in New York City and Dia:Beacon in Beacon, New York. This will be the first in-depth examination of the artist's oeuvre to be presented in the United States in more than thirty years.

“From the beginning of his career in 1950 until the time of his death in 2016, Morellet was continuously engaged in expanding the definition of abstract and Conceptual art,” said Jessica Morgan, Director, Dia Art Foundation. “Dia’s survey exhibition will present his pioneering approach to creating object-based paintings, neon works, and architectural and site-related installations. Presenting Morellet in two of Dia’s sites, the exhibition will provide audiences the opportunity to experience the full range of his achievements—such as how he harnessed the properties of light and incorporated chance, mathematical formulas, and humor into his practice.”

Working with lines and primary forms such as circles, squares, and triangles, Morellet adopted a large variety of mediums early on in his practice, including adhesive tape, iron, neon tubes, paint, steel, and wire mesh. While aiming for artistic objectivity, Morellet steadily infused his systematic explorations with playfulness and levity. Béatrice Gross, adjunct curator, explained, “In the late 1950s, the artist started to disturb his grids by adopting chance as organizing factor, following the random sequences of the number pi or the digits listed in his local phone directory. Randomness was also included in Morellet’s work through the participation of the viewer in interactive installations.

“As one of the founding members of the Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel, an experimental artist’s collaborative that emerged in France in the early 1960s, Morellet also investigated the creative potential of kinetic and optical effects. Morellet increasingly inflected his rigorous abstract combinations with a witty sense of humor, as the tongue-in-cheek puns and other play of words in many of his titles testify, such as the palindrome *No End Neon* or the portmanteau *Géométree*.”

Exhibition Highlights

Dia’s presentation will span the artist’s career, featuring nearly fifty works ranging from the early 1950s to the 2010s. The first three galleries at Dia:Chelsea will give a comprehensive overview of Morellet’s early conceptual categories as defined by the artist himself: “juxtaposition; superimposition; fragmentation; interference; randomization; and destabilization.” These galleries will include works dating from 1952, when the artist fully adopted abstract geometric systems, through the early 1970s.

To reflect Morellet’s vibrant and diverse production throughout his career, key examples from more recent bodies of works will also be featured. This selection will include his studies into “the outside of painting,” which he defined as the medium’s materiality and apparatus in relation to the exhibition space and its perception by the visitor, and his late Baroque pieces that often facetiously deconstruct geometric shapes.

The exhibition will extend outside of Dia:Chelsea's galleries to include *Trames 3°, 87°, 93°, 183°* (1971/2017), a monumental wall painting covering the entire six-story surface of the west facade of 535 West 22nd Street. Initially conceived and installed in 1971 as homage to the construction of the Beaubourg building, home of the future Centre Georges Pompidou, the red-and-blue superimposed grids were also Morellet's first *intégration architecturale*. From then on, the artist multiplied sculptures and installations at architectural scale, commissioned both in private and public spaces.

To supplement the presentation at Dia:Chelsea, Dia will present the site-specific neon installation *No End Neon* (1990/2017) at Dia:Beacon. Reconfigured for the museum by the Morellet studio according to the artist's previously determined system, this re-siting will form the most expansive iteration of the work, with over sixty neon tubes spread throughout Dia:Beacon's lower-level gallery. This installation will allow visitors to encounter Morellet's artwork alongside his peers represented in Dia's permanent collection, including Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, and Fred Sandback.

François Morellet is curated by adjunct curator Béatrice Gross with assistant curator Megan Holly Witko.

Publication

A forthcoming volume of new essays on Morellet's prolific oeuvre will be generated, in part, by a symposium at Dia:Beacon in spring 2018. The publication will also include a selection of the artist's numerous writings and reproductions of works in the exhibition.

Funding

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Generous support for *Trames 3°, 87°, 93°, 183°* (1971/2017) is provided by Kamel Mennour.

Dia Art Foundation

Founded in 1974, Dia Art Foundation is committed to initiating, supporting, presenting, and preserving extraordinary art projects. Dia:Beacon opened in May 2003 in Beacon, New York. Dia also maintains several long-term sites, including Walter De Maria's *The New York Earth Room* (1977) and *The Broken Kilometer* (1979), Max Neuhaus's *Times Square* (1977), and Joseph Beuys's *7000 Eichen* (*7000 Oaks*, which was inaugurated at Documenta 7 in 1982), all of which are located in New York City; the Dan Flavin Art Institute (established in 1983) in Bridgehampton, New York; De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1977) in western New Mexico; Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) in Great Salt Lake, Utah; and De Maria's *The Vertical Earth Kilometer* (1977) in Kassel, Germany.

Dia currently presents temporary exhibitions and installations, performances, lectures, and readings on West 22nd Street in New York City.

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