08.11 -- 24.03

John Armleder Soubresauts

Works on paper, 1963 to 2023

37-39 rue des Bains, 1205 Geneva, Switzerland @varenne.art



INTRODUCTION SOUBRESAUTS

For John M.Armleder's first commercial exhibition in Geneva in a decade, Olivier Varenne and Balthazar Lovay will present the artist's work spread between their two galleries. The show focuses on rarely-seen-before works on paper and sculptures, spanning from the 1960s to today.

All of the works are small-scale and intimate, and important for bearing witness to Armleder's early exploratory research, his inexhaustible desire for experimentation and varied production, and for presaging his recent large-scale paintings and installations.

At Olivier Varenne - Art Moderne & Contemporain, the works will draw focus to key concepts and moments in the artist's career. This show will feature a selection of drawings, gouaches and collages that form a panorama of notes and traces throughout the artist's life, from 1963 to 2023. It will build on two previous museum exhibitions of drawings: 891 and other pieces (Kunstmuseum Basel, 1980) and About Nothing (Kunsthalle Zürich, 2004) and highlight Armleder's experimental approach to art.



WORKS ON PAPER

The show at Olivier Varenne Art Moderne & Contemporain features a selection of drawings, gouaches and collages that form a panorama of notes and traces throughout the artist's life, from 1963 to 2023.

It builds on two previous museum exhibitions of drawings. Notably Armleder's very first solo museum show, initiated by Dieter Koepplin, was an exhibition of his works on paper: 891 and other pieces (Kunstmuseum Basel, 1980). This was followed later by an extensive exhibition of the artist's works on paper: About Nothing (Kunsthalle Zürich, 2004; ICA, Pennsylvania, 2006, and South London Gallery, London 2007).

The selection emphasises Armleder's distinctive interdisciplinary approach which challenges all forms of conventional classification and reflects his voracious appetite for questioning the very nature of art. The works on paper reveal threads that weave through the rest of his oeuvre and which break down boundaries between art forms and materials. They also centre and connect Armleder's paintings, sculptures and installations along with his ongoing creations in the field of printing, publishing and performing.

This exhibition aims to present this thread in the many forms it has taken over the past forty years, during which the artist has constantly reinvented himself and his contribution to art – and provide an insight into his continued confrontation of art with the everyday and with creativity.



INSTALLATION VIEW OF JOHN ARMLEDER'S EXHIBITION ABOUT NOTHING. WORKS ON PAPER 1962 – 2007, SOUTH LONDON GALLERY, LONDON 2007. PHOTO: ANDY STAGG

JOHN ARMLEDER ON DRAWING



"I started drawing, scribbling, as a child. Drawing is the ideal place, once you get over the fascination of technique, where you can practise putting concepts into place. A laboratory surface where I can easily move from one verification to another, in the precise measure that my works, contrary to certain appearances, never repeat the same experience, which does not prevent them from quoting each other. The previous drawing can be used as a found object in the next one, whether it is reproduced literally or taken up again in the process. This practice extends to quotations of works by other artists. The economy of the drawing favours this work par excellence in relation to an object, an environment or a performance, the elaboration of which is often subject to heavier material contingencies of space and time.

Previously, I thought that the nature of a project defined the technique used to produce it, for example a drawing or a performance could only be produced in the form of drawings or performances respectively. I have now come to deny this logic by producing objects for painting projects or drawings for environmental projects. I don't see any serious difference between these productions and, in the extreme, between those of other artists and my own.

At the same time, I'm more interested in the result than previously, where the process was the very object of creation. This process could determine any object that prompted a return to the process. Now it's more a question of manipulating the object produced. Hanging it in an exhibition room is an example of this. If I fix a drawing askew on a wall or towards the ceiling, I use it for purposes that it didn't necessarily imply. It's not entirely innocently that I sometimes install one of my paintings that looks like a Picabia in the manner chosen by El Lissitsky. In this sense, painting or drawing on a chair or table is obviously not the same thing as painting or drawing on a canvas or sheet of paper, and the use I make of these objects may no longer correspond either to drawing and painting or to the chair and table. They are, however, pictorial works, not sculptures, and they are still furniture paintings... Let it be understood, however, that I don't see any agenda here. There is no style, no message, no real subject that makes it worthwhile. If I juxtapose a form inspired by a constructivist work and a Fluxus-style found object, it's because I don't believe in contrast - and I don't know whether it's the painting that's Fluxus or the constructivist object - this has to do with stylistic conventions. We mustn't forget that most constructivism is full of mystical impulses and that in Fluxus we discover a very tight formal and conceptual determination.

John Armleder, Nov. 1981, in Le Dessin Suisse 1970-1980, exhib. cat., Musée Rath, Geneva, 1981, p.64

John Armleder's works on paper also encompass a variety of recurring themes, many of which reflect his broader artistic concerns.

With an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of twentiethcentury culture, from the nascent historical avant-gardes to those of the 1960s, it is no wonder that elements of these movements can be observed in the drawings on view.

During the 1960s, Armleder drew daily, making between 2 and 5 drawings a day, usually in the morning. He would experiment extensively and make very different types of drawings using a wide variety of media exploring figuration to abstraction. A number of drawings from this period are included in this exhibition (Sans titre, October 1967) and they reflect this exploratory variety. Some show how the artist was inspired by historical abstraction in their reference to artists such as Paul Klee and Kandinsky (Sans titre, A20, 1968).

Closely linked to the Fluxus movement, Armleder's works on paper also reflect the influence of Dadaism and Fluxus ideas about art. These movements emphasised that anything could be art and that the boundaries between art, life, and material were fluid. His drawings and paper works often carry this ethos—using everyday materials or seemingly random elements to create something that questions traditional notions of art.

Chance and Spontaneity

Influenced by movements such as Dada and Fluxus, he often embraces off-kilter moments and unpredictability in his creative process. His works on paper frequently reflect this emphasis on allowing accidents or random elements to guide the outcome.

Interdisciplinary Exploration

In the present group his use of gouache, collage, watercolour, and a variety of materials, emphasises his multidisciplinary approach. Particularly notable in the early ink *Batteur*, from 1963 which presages the *Furniture Sculptures*, with their observations on functionality and aesthetics and which took form later that decade. The ink drawing can clearly be seen to have particular resonance with those installations which consisted of drum kits.



UNTITLED, FS 189, 1988 (ACRYLIC SUR TOILE, MUTED DRUM KIT)

Minimalism and the Void

Many of Armleder's works on paper display minimalist tendencies, with clean lines, geometric shapes, and a reduction in form. He plays with balance and symmetry, often using basic geometric forms to create visually striking compositions that are at once simple and complex.

"I was in front of Kazimir Malevich's Suprematist Composition: White on White (1918), mesmerized at only eight".

In the way that Minimalism often embraces the use of negative space, Armleder's minimalist drawings frequently incorporate large areas of blank or nearly blank paper see Sans titre, 1978. This focus on absence can be perceived again over forty years later in Hesperia Comma, 2023, a work created for an exhibition on the theme of stains. Armleder created the work with Spray-paint on paper using found stencils and shapes salvaged here and there. The title is a butterfly's name, a purely random choice.

Sans tire, (no. 366) Sans titre, (no.367) and Sans titre, (no. 368) and Sans titre (no 369), all 2004 explore empty space, the minimalist idea that absence can be as important as presence.

Given the resonance of Malevich it is no wonder that the American composer, artist, and philosopher, John Cage, has been a significant influence on Armleder. Armleder's installation Batterie, anticipated in the early drawing Batteur, 1963, incorporated a complete drum kit displayed as if in a shop, and referenced Cage's silent piece.



FURNITURE SCULPTURE 189, 1988, MUSÉE CANTONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS DE LAUSANNE

Functional Aesthetics

Even in his works on paper, Armleder merges the decorative with the functional, much like in his Furniture Sculptures. By referencing patterns, ornaments, and decorative motifs, his pieces can blur the line between art meant for aesthetic contemplation and that which has a functional, design-oriented appeal see Sans titre, 1980. This exploration challenges the traditional hierarchy of fine art over design and also plays to his development of printing techniques, represented here by two lithographs, both Sans titre, 1997-2001.

"I can't define my work,"
Armleder explains, "it
operates differently every
time and for each viewer,
and that's how the
different spheres of
perception interconnect. I
still like the idea of a work
as an event."

BIOGRAPHY JOHN ARMLEDER (b.1948)



John Armleder (b. 1948, Geneva) is a singular figure in postwar art and one of the most representative Swiss artists of his generation. His career spans five decades and synthesizes many of the competing aesthetic developments associated with that period. A productive friction—along with an abiding sense of humor and conceptual provocation—animates his earliest work with the Groupe Ecart in Switzerland, his many projects informed by his association with the Fluxus movement, and his interest in John Cage's work in particular. Since that time, he has made important contributions to the development of painting, sculpture, installation, design, and performance. Accordingly, Armleder operates on many fronts at once, drawing from legacies of seemingly divergent movements like Dada and abstract expressionism, and approaching each exhibition as an uncompromising and often unpredictable work in and of itself.

John Armleder has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions around the world. Over the last decade alone, he has presented solo exhibitions at the Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2021); KANAL - Centre Pompidou, Brussels (2021); Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2019); Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany (2019); MUSEION. Bolzano, Italy (2018); Museo Madre, Naples, Italy (2018); Istituto Svizzero, Rome (2017); Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2014); Fernand Léger National Museum, Biot, France (2014): Dairy Art Centre, London (2013): Swiss Institute, New York (2012); and Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy (2011). Notable group exhibitions include Ice and Fire: A Benefit in Three Parts, The Kitchen, New York (2020); THE ARTIST IS PRESENT, curated by Maurizio Cattelan, Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2018); and The Trick Brain, Aishti Foundation, Beirut (2017–2018). His work is in the permanent collections of many museums. including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark. Armleder lives and works in Geneva.

EXHIBITIONS

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 Soubresauts, simultaneously at Olivier Varenne and Lovay Fine Art, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2024 Quasi Nocturne, Almine Rech Gallery, Monaco 2024 - Wavelength, Galerie Elisabeth and Klaus Thomas,
- Innsbruck, Austria 2024 - Transparents et le Musée Barbier-Mueller, solo show in discussion with works from the collection, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2024 On ne fait pas ça, Massimo de Carlo Milan, Italy 2024 - Encore Trop, Centre d'Edition Contemporaine,
- Geneva, Switzerland
- 2023 Experiences, Solo show at the Kunsthalle Marcel Duchamp, Cully, Switzerland
- 2023 Pour la planète, Solo show at Palais Galerie, Neuchâtel, Switzerland
- 2023 John Armleder Furniture Sculptures, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, St. Moritz, Switzerland
- 2023 Yakety Yak, Musée Régional d'Art Contemporain Occitanie/Pyrénées- Méditerranée, Sérignan, France
- 2023 Room Service, Duo show with Elmgreen & Dragset, Massimo de Carlo Gallery, Milan, Italy
- 2022 Solid Coated, Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin, Germany
- 2021 Pièce unique, Massimo De Carlo, Paris, France 2021 - Sequitur, Almine Rech Gallery, Shanghai, China
- 2021 Again, Just Again, Rockbound Art Museum, Shanghai,
- 2021 God is in the Details, Vera Munro Gallery, Hamburg,
- 2021 Enter at your own Risk III, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, St.Moritz, CH
- 2020 It never ends, Kanal Centre Pompidou, Brussels,
- 2020 Clown's Way, Massimo De Carlo, Central, Hong Kong 2020 - The John Armleder and Rob Pruitt Show, Massimo De Carlo, VSpace
- 2020 White Plate, White Cup, Galerie Jean Brolly, Paris,
- 2019 CA.CA., Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, G
- 2019 Sh/Ash/Lash/Splash, David Kordansky Gallery, Los
- 2019 Spoons, moons and masks, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen,
- 2019 Ouicksand II, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain (MAMCO), Geneva, CH
- 2018 360°, curated by Andrea Viliani, Silvia Salvati, MADRE - Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Napoli, Italy 2018 – Plus ca change, plus c'est la même chose, Museion, Bolzano, Italy
- 2018 John M Armleder, Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, France 2018 - Sans Titre, Gare Cornavin - passage Montbrillant, Genève, CH 2018 - Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose,
- MUSEION Museum of Contemporary Art, Bolzano, Italy 2018 - Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, France
- 2018 Déjà, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, St. Moritz, CH 2017 - John M Armleder, curated by Nicolas Trembley, Almine Rech Gallery, New York, USA
- 2017 John Armleder, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, **USA**

- 2017 Stockage, Istituto Svizzero di Roma, Roma, I
- 2017 Better Quasi, Massimo De Carlo, Milano, I
- 2017 Split! (2017), curated by Andrea Viliani, Museo e Real Bosco Di Capodimonte, Napoli, IT
- 2017 À Rebours, La Salle de Bains, Lyon, France
- 2016 John M Armleder, Athens School of Fine Arts, Mykonos, GR 2016 - Endless, Museion, Bolzano, I
- 2016 Fish, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, Wien, A
- 2015 Charivari, Massimo De Carlo, Milano, I
- 2015 John M Armleder, Académie Conti, Vosne Romanée, F
- 2015 It's that Time of the Year, Too, Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin, D
- 2015 John Armleder OUT!, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, Zürich, CH
- 2015 Let it Shine, Let it Shine, Let it Shine. It's Xmas again!, curated by Cloe Piccoli, La Rinascente, Milano, I
- 2014 John Armleder, Musée National Fernand Léger, Biot, F
- 2014 Scramble, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, Wien, A
- 2014 Ring Bell Twice, Galerie l'Elac, Renens, CH
- 2014 Où sont les sauces?, Le Consortium, Dijion, F
- 2014 Draws A Crowd, Leaves No One Neutral, Burning Bridges, New York, USA
- 2014 John M Armleder, Galerie Richard, New York, USA
- 2014 La Bruche du Haricot, Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels, B
- 2014 Installation Mit Frühen Arbeiten, Vera Munro Galerie,
- 2014 X'mas Show I, Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin, D
- 2014 Omega Zone, Galerie Graff Mourgue D'Algue, Genève,
- 2014 Pantan, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, St. Moritz, CH
- 2013 John Armleder, Nahmad Contemporary, New York, USA
- 2013 John M Armleder, Dairy Art Centre, London, UK
- 2013 Overload, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, Zürich, CH
- 2013 John Armleder 1987-2012, Massimo De Carlo, London.
- 2013 John Armleder 2013, Massimo De Carlo, London, UK
- 2013 Pantan, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, St. Moritz, CH
- 2013 John M Armleder, XXV, Galerie Anselm Dreher, Berlin, D 2013 - Ailleurs, Galerie Graff Mourgue D'Algue, Genève, CH
- 2012 Fungus Emulsion, Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin, D
- 2012 Selected Furniture Sculptures 1979-2012, curated by
- Gianni Jetzer, Swiss Institute, New York, USA
- 2012 Away, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, St. Moritz, CH 2012 - 24 Years Ahead, Galerie van Gelder, Amsterdam, NL
- 2012 John M Armleder, Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, UK
- 2012 Late, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, Wien, A
- 2012 Décor, Fondation Tuck, Château de Verz-Mon, Rueil-Malmaison, Paris, F
- 2011 Three Statement in Painting Francis Alÿs, John Armleder, Valérie Favre, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich, CH
- 2011 Away, curated by Sandro Rumney, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venezia, I. Catalogue
- 2011 John M Armleder Load, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, St. Moritz, CH
- 2011 I'm Late, I'm Late, I'm Running for a Date, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, Zürich, CH
- 2011 Volta, Turnhalle altes Schulhaus, St. Moritz, CH
- 2011 late, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, Wien, A
- 2011 John M Armleder, Newlyn Art Gallery, Newlyn, UK
- 2011 Aztlan, Galerie Collet Park, Paris, F.
- 2011 All of the Above. Carte blanche à John M Armleder, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, F
- 2011 Boule de Feu Volcanique, 18 Sculptures, Galerie Pierre-Alain Challier, Paris, F
- 2011 About Nothing and Early Drawings, Art View, Paris, F

SOUBRESAUTS SELECTED WORKS

sans titre, 1973

colour pencils on paper 70×50 cm

Provenance Studio of the Artist

Exhibited Geneva, Palais de l'Athénée, Rainbows in Heaven et autres dessins, 1973





sans titre, 1973

colour pencils on paper 70,5 x 49,8 cm

Provenance Studio of the Artist

Exhibited

Geneva, Palais de l'Athénée, Rainbows in Heaven et autres dessins, 1973



Color Study (dièse 12), 1972

colour pencils on paper 29,8 x 40 cm

Provenance Studio of the Artist

Exhibited
Geneva, Palais de l'Athénée, Rainbows in Heaven et autres dessins. 1973



sans titre, 1980

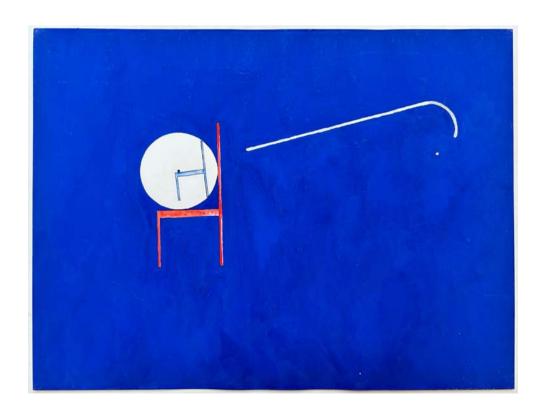
gouache, gold and silver inks on paper 24×32 cm.

Provenance

Galerie Marika Malacorda, Geneva Rafaël Sanchez-Ventura

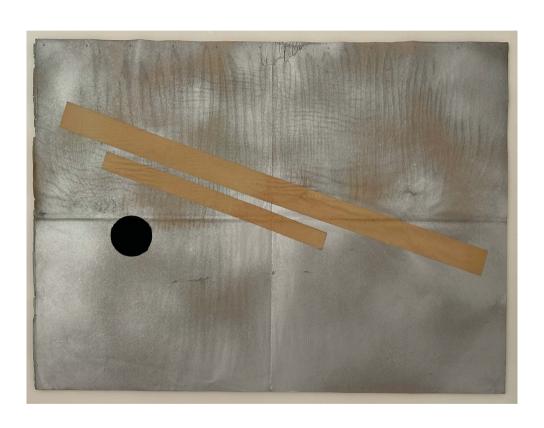
Exhibited

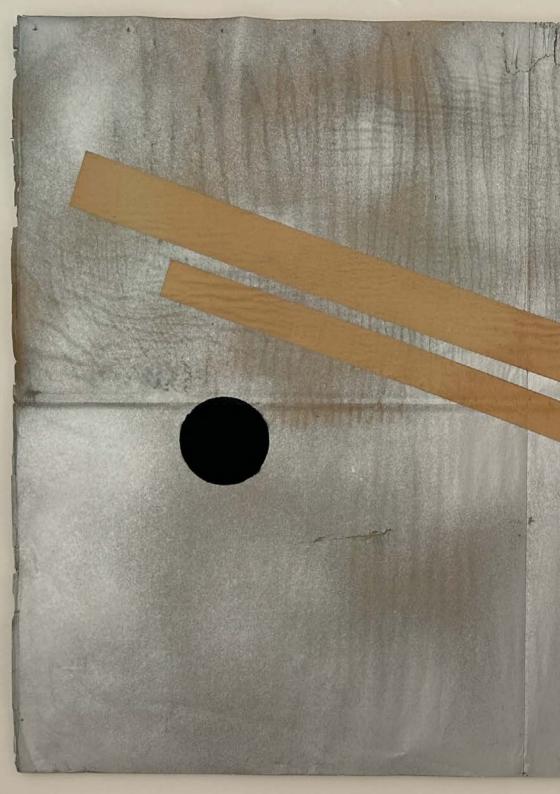
Geneva, Switzerland, Galerie Marika Malacorda, John Armleder. 891, 1980 Geneva, Musée Rath, Le dessin suisse 1970-1980, 1981-1982, p. 66, no. 111, ill. in black and white. Winterthur, Kunst Museum Winterthur, John Armleder, 1987, p. 26, ill. in black and white.



sans titre, 1983

unprinted newspaper, spray paint image: 48.5×66 cm





A49, 1967

collage on paper pasted on a grey background, signed on the background paper I I, $7 \times 10,3\,$ cm $29,7 \times 20,3\,$ cm





MET A41

Jan Auleder

A50, 1967

collage on paper pasted on a white background, signed on the background paper $12.5 \times 9 \text{ cm}$ $29.7 \times 20.3 \text{ cm}$





MG- A50

protuleder

batteur, 1963

ink on paper 23,1 x 29 cm



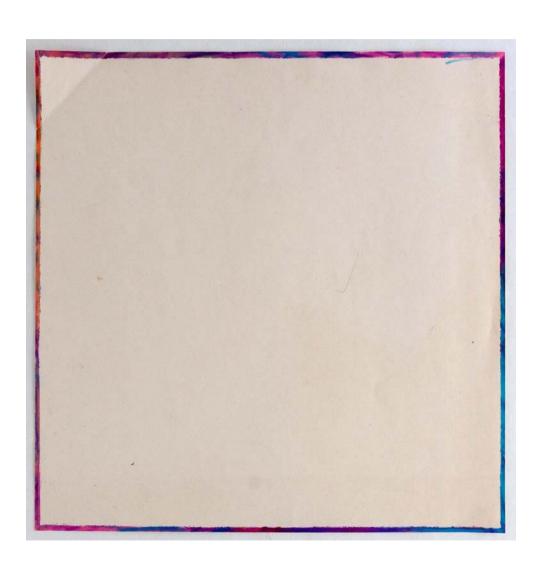
sans titre E47, 1966

collage, ink and wash on paper $19,75 \times 27,65$ cm



sans titre, 1978

crayon on paper 26,9 x 26,3 cm



sans titre, 1967 octobre

watercolour and ink on paper $16 \times 24,1$ cm



sans titre octobre 1967, 1967

Ink and watercolour on paper 23.9×31.9 cm





sans titre décembre 1967, 1967

ink and water colour on paper 24,1 \times 32 cm



sans titre octobre 1967, 1967

ink and watercolour on paper 32×23.9 cm





Q 12 (série Q) sans titre , 1967

watercolour on paper 17,9 x 28 cm



sans titre, A 20, 1968

ink and watercolour on paper 47.8×35.8 cm



The White Flights, 2023

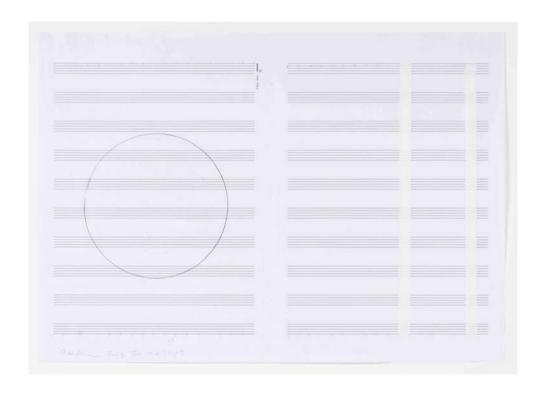
music sheet, gouache and graphite image: 29.6×41.7 cm

Provenance

Studio of the Artist

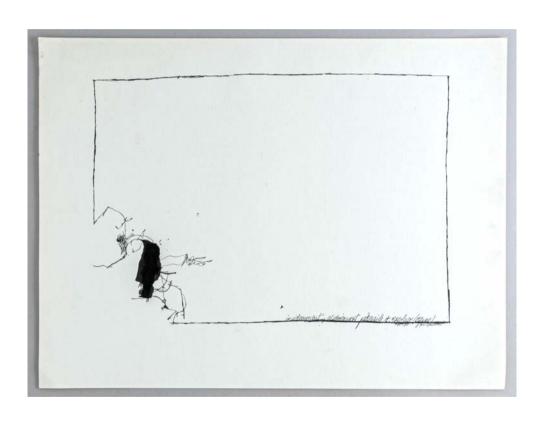
Exhibited

New York, Annual Gala Evening for the Drawing Center New York, 2023



A46 (série A) incidemment accessoirement préhensile et racoleur (organe), 1968

ink on paper 29,9 x 39,7 cm



A48 (série A) "orange" ma signature révélée (au myopes ou atteint de quelque amblyopie), au grand public, ou a l'intéret qu'il y portent, 1968

ink and wash on paper 31,9 x 23,9 cm



sans titre (no 368), 2004

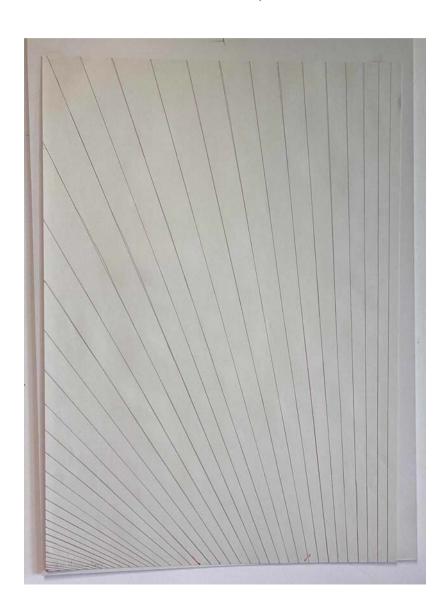
Ink and graphite on paper 100×70 cm

Provenance

Studio of the Artist

Exhibited

Zürich, Kunsthalle Zürich, About Nothing, Works On Paper 1964-2004, 2004-2005, no. 1227



sans titre (no 369), 2004

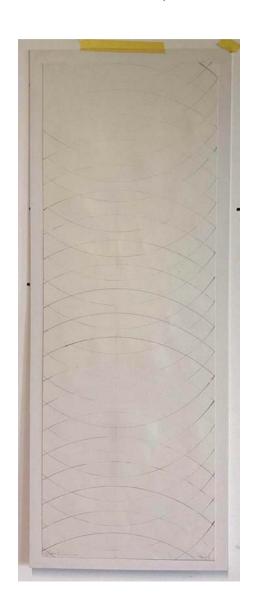
graphite and metallic ink on paper 100×35 cm

Provenance

Studio of the Artist

Exhibited

Zürich, Kunsthalle Zürich, About Nothing. Works On Paper 1964-2004, 2004-2005, no. 1227



sans titre (no 366), 2004

acrylic, glitter, graphite, ink and coffee on paper $100 \times 35 \text{ cm}$

Provenance

Studio of the Artist

Exhibited

Zürich, Kunsthalle Zürich, About Nothing. Works On Paper 1964-2004, 2004-2005, no. 1227



sans titre (no 367), 2004

graphite and gouache on paper 100×70 cm

Provenance

Studio of the Artist

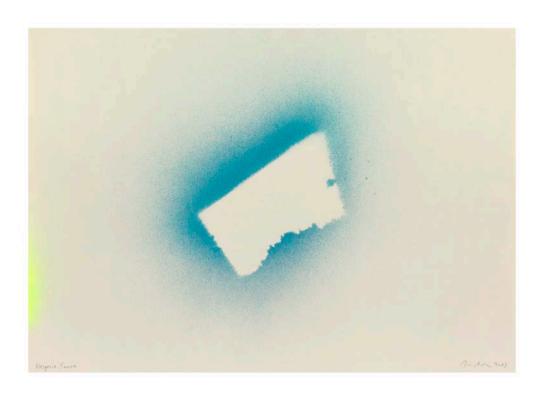
Exhibited

Zürich, Kunsthalle Zürich, About Nothing. Works On Paper 1964-2004, 2004-2005, no. 1227



Hesperia Comma, 2023

spray paint on canvas 42 x 59,4 cm



sans titre, 1997-2001

lithograph 66,5 x 53 cm ed. 6/33, Galerie Editions Média, Neuchâtel

Provenance Studio of the Artist

Exhibited Neuchâtel, Galerie Editions Média, 2001





sans titre, 1997-2001

lithograph 66,5 x 53 cm ed. 6/40, Galerie Editions Média, Neuchâtel

Provenance Studio of the Artist

Exhibited Neuchâtel, Galerie Editions Média, 2001



