

JOHN ARMLEDER

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Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

22/09/2018 - 06/01/2019

Opening 21/09/2018

Museion kicks off its new season with a solo show by John Armleder entitled *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* (The more things change, the more they stay the same). After the video *Endless* for the media façade in 2016 and his participation in various shows between 2005 and 2007, for the Bolzano museum it is a return to a collaboration with this generation's most influential Swiss artist.

In a career spanning more than 50 years, John Armleder (1948, Geneva, Switzerland) has developed an oeuvre that reaches beyond the customary schema of art criticism and the art establishment, blurring the dividing lines between art and architecture, art and design, art and everyday items. His multifaceted practice mingles painting, sculpture, environmental installations, performance, video, critical texts and editorial and curatorial projects. Throughout his career Armleder has brought together chance and design, high brow culture and entertainment, unsettling irony and conceptual analysis, always challenging the notion of authorship and the idea of the originality and uniqueness of the work of art. And although his body of work is extremely varied, all of his pieces are like fragments, different parts of a single, overarching project: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!*

The exhibition in Museion reflects this, forming one massive, unpredictable artwork that incorporates a variety of different pieces and reinvents itself each time an audience interacts with it. The central area of the venue is dominated by three giant scaffolding towers: two of them can be interacted with and therefore contain an element of performance, while the third is a display structure. Scaffolding is a recurrent feature in Armleder's work, and he uses it not only to explore the way in which art is displayed, but also to create naturally relatable, inclusive spaces. The tower which holds real and fake plants and stuffed animals also references a show the artist staged at MAMCO in Geneva in 2005, and reflects the way in which real and



fake are juxtaposed throughout his oeuvre. One of his interactive towers, entitled Mondo Tiki 1 (Scaffolding), dates to 1999 and was first shown at the ACE Gallery in New York. Lighting elements such as fluorescent tubes are an integral part of the piece, along with a selection of 50s and 60s B-movies shown on a screen, and a soundtrack, which in this case features Hawaiian music.

Surrounding the towers are large-format wall paintings that draw on an endless formal repertoire, from pop to street culture, from New Age mysticism to art history to Hollywood B-movies: an ongoing migration of symbols which forge complex, ever-changing interactions with the cultural traditions of different settings.

The artist also intervenes on the actual wall itself, applying extensive areas of gold and silver mirrored surfaces. These reflect and refract the installations and paintings, as well as the Alpine landscape that can be seen through Museion's windows. The result is a dizzying, kaleidoscopic vista that disturbs and deconstructs the museum's rigorous architecture. The use of scenographic elements and glossy surfaces introduces the decorative aesthetic that is another constant in Armleder's work, which repeatedly explores the clichéd view of art as adornment. There is also decorative intent behind the accumulations of real and fake plants, stuffed animals and found objects that complete the show. These accumulations point up the role that chance plays in Armleder's compositional strategy, and his light, irreverent approach to the "aesthetic tragedies" he creates.

The exhibition extends to the media façade, with a repeat screening of the video Endless. First shown in December 2016, the work reflects the artist's obsession with Christmas, both in terms of imagery and as a cultural construct: an explosive profusion of lights, colours and fireworks illuminates the surface of Museion in a seemingly relentless, never-ending show, literally Endless.

"Museion has long presented exhibitions that explore sculpture in its broadest sense, drawing attention to the cultural milieu of each work and examining the deep-seated reciprocal relationship that forms between the contemporary art work, the artist and the audience. In the year we celebrate our tenth anniversary, the multiple strands of contemporary sculpture come together in this project by John Armleder, who has always devoted special attention to the context his works are presented in", commented Letizia Ragaglia, Director of Museion.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a monographic catalogue in collaboration with the Naples museum MADRE - Museo d'Arte contemporanea Donnaregina.

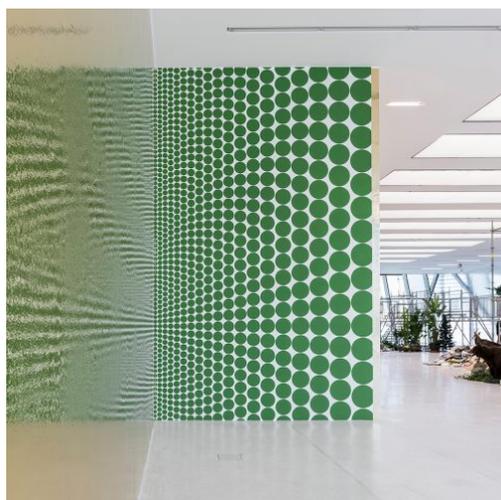
John Armleder (1948, Geneva, Switzerland). After his first solo shows in various European institutions - Kunstmuseum Basel (1980); Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Freiburg (1982); Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (1984); Ecole Nationale d'Art Decoratif, Limoges and Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva (1986) - in 1986 John Armleder took part in the Venice Biennale (Swiss Pavilion). Subsequent solo shows include: Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture de Grenoble, Nationalgalerie Berlin, Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Kunstverein, Düsseldorf (1987); Le Consortium, Dijon (1989, 1996, 2014); Centraal Museum, Utrecht (1992); Villa Arson, Nice (1993, 2007); Wiener Secession, Vienna (1993); Fondazione Ratti, Como (1996, where he is also visiting professor of Visual Arts); Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden Baden, Casino Luxembourg (1998); MoMa, New York (2000); Kunstraum Innsbruck, Magasin Grenoble (2001); Kunstraum Braunschweig, Kunstverein Ruhr, Essen, and GAMeC Bergamo (2004). In 2004 Kunsthalle Zürich and Philadelphia's ICA hosted a retrospective of his works on paper, and in 2005 MAMCO in Geneva staged a wide-ranging retrospective. These were followed by other solo shows: Tate



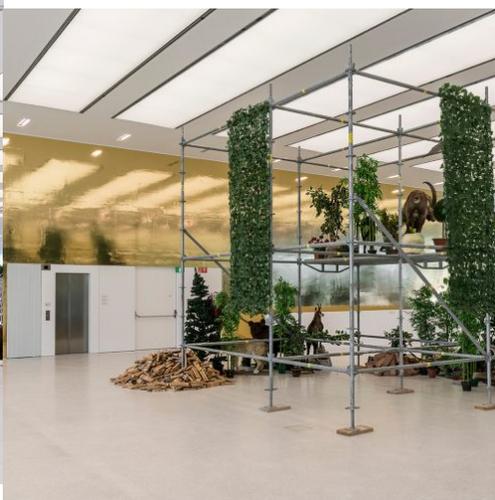
Liverpool (2007), Contemporary Art Museum, Saint Louis (with Oliver Mosset), Institute of Modern Art/Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Carte Blanche al Palais de Tokyo in Paris and Away at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice (2011); the Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry and the Swiss Institute, New York (2012); Musée National Fernand Leger, Biot (2014); Istituto Svizzero in Rome (2017). His most recent solo show in a public gallery was held by MADRE in Naples (2018).

With the support of Pro Helvetia

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. Photo: ©John Armleder.
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