MAMAC
Musée d’art moderne et d’art contemporain

GUIDE
COLLECTIONS
New Realism / Pop Art
The revolution of the 1960s

THE CONSTITUTIVE DECLAREMENT OF NEW REALISM, written by the art critic Pierre Restany is dated Yves Klein’s, in Paris on October 27th 1960. However, it is during the previous decade that the artists have prepared the ground: Hains and Seita, 1970

1. Archanced in this reality, their process achieves the brilliant analysis of the consumer society and its data proposed in 1956 by Roland Barthes in his book Mythologies. The group engages the object in a new adventure, using the poetic dimension of the object detached, detached from posters, assemblages, compressions or accumulations of elements coming from an industrial technology.

In 1961 the exhibition titled The Art of Assemble, at the Museum of Modern Art of New York, consecrates the closeness of the New Realists with the Pop Art artists.

American Pop Art was built on the heritage of British Pop Art which came out of the Independent Group of which Lawrence Alloway was a leading member, and in 1958 he organised the This is tomorrow emblematic exhibition in London. On the American side, the movement broadly emerged through Neo-Dada artists Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. His core is in New York where such artist as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Tom Wesselmann exhibited their art. Pop artists directly refer to consumer society and the damaging effects related to modern consumerist society. They advocated a return to reality, turning to the world of merchandise and new forms of popular culture: stars of the silver screen, superheroes and comics, giving them iconic and detached dimension, with American society’s values as a backdrop.

NEW REALISM / POP ART

2. "I will create the biggest sculptures of the revolution.

Niki de Saint Phalle: about to shoot

Hand-tinted black and white photograph, from the film Daddy, 1968 © The Estate of Yves Klein, Adagp, Paris / MAMAC, Nice, 2019

The monochrome advent

Explore a gallery, unique in itself, dedicated to the master of the immaterial.

Yves Klein was born in Nice in April 1928; his parents were both painters (Marie Raymond and Fred Klein). In 1946, he met his friend Robert Godet, on the Ile Saint-Louis, where he began to create sculptures of nudes in color, and he was trying to set them free. By 1964, he was achieved his first of his "living brushes" experiences, where nude female models were covered in blue paint and imprinted blank paper surfaces folded to the floor. The first Anthropomorphes were shown in public at the Galerie internationale d’Art contemporain in Paris in March 1961, with a performance in which three female nude models covered in blue paint and crawled and moved over the floor which was covered in paper for the occasion; the models also imprinted their bodies on the walls, under the direction of "conductor" Klein, to the sound of the Monotone Silence Symphony. Klein died in June 1962 in Paris, leaving behind works of great lyrical depth, after having demonstrated the power of emptiness, scul-}

3. PLAY ON WORDS, PLAY ON SIGNS

An iconic work of the MAMAC, La Cambre or "Bauhaus Museum" gives an account of the process of writing in the work of the essential artist. His smooth, untrammelled, almost childish caligraphy takes us back to the winds of change and the art of attitude initiated in the late 1950s in Nice. At the time of the monument work, other games with words, writings and languages are on display. On walls, paintings and body language are in play, invented, anagrams, dance-words, tags and crossword puzzles are drawn. The exhibition combines works from the collection as well as loans and presentations by artists of different generations illustrating a poetic and aesthetic world. The relationship between the word and writing is highlighted. The works engages the body of the viewer, reader, estimator, or even actor. Some works have a very low profile and require visitors to pay attention, others shout out at them, take no task, call on their imagination.

The central question of deciphering them is that of understanding the work and the keys to interpreting it. While words call on the worlds of poetry and childhood, they engage an eminently active role, with an interest in the world, on the place of the artist in our society.

Clart Gallery in Paris, where Klein presented a completely empty gallery, the walls were painted in white by the artist and the gallery window was painted blue. Hosted by his friend Robert Godet, on the Ile Saint-Louis, he orchestrated the first of his "living brushes" experiences, where nude female models were covered in blue paint and imprinted blank paper surfaces folded to the floor. The first Anthropomorphes were shown in public at the Galerie internationale d’Art contemporain in Paris in March 1961, with a performance in which three female nude models covered in blue paint and crawled and moved over the floor which was covered in paper for the occasion; the models also imprinted their bodies on the walls, under the direction of "conductor" Klein, to the sound of the Monotone Silence Symphony. Klein died in June 1962 in Paris, leaving behind works of great lyrical depth, after having demonstrated the power of emptiness, sculpted water and fire, invented the architecture of air, etc. The evidence of this is in the "Cosmogonies" series, "moment-states of nature"; recording the signs of atmospheric behavior of canvases travelling on the roof of his car between Paris and Nice, an extension of his Anthropomorph work.

3. FLOOR

Minimal art emerged in the United States in the mid-1960s.

Minimalism, art was considered from a totally fresh perspective undergoing a radical transition that nourished traditional conventions. The most remarkable transformation was the new relationship between the space of the room, which renounces the traditional aesthetic perception of an object right down to its substance. Artworks monopolised the space, thus creating a new area of space for the artist in which the consciousness of their own body in its relationship with the surrounding space predominates resulting in extra large canvases and the obliteration of the plinth. Minimalists explored geometric figures deductively one from the others (squares, rectangles,
triangles and so forth) and on the matters of volume, surface and flatness. Striving for maximum effect through the minimum of resources, these artists removed any trace of subjectivity in their work and often incorporated industrial materials and techniques.

Proponents of the movement include: Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Morris, Kenneth Noland, Franck Stella and Richard Serra.

Conceptual art emerged in the 1960s. It asserted the primacy of the idea over the object, to the extent that producing the work was no longer even strictly necessary. It pushed the bounds of the traditional artistic field by questioning the meaning and purpose of artistic practice. In 1969, Sol LeWitt declared: ‘Ideas can be works of art. They are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical.’

The following conceptual artists are featured in this room: Sol LeWitt, Joseph Kosuth, Robert Morris, James Lee Byars and Ed Ruscha.

Albert Chubac was born in Geneva in 1925. Following his studies in Decorative Arts and Fine Art in Geneva, his work was influenced by some formative periods: his interest in Klee, Kandinsky, Miró, Matisse and Picasso; meeting Nicolas de Staël in 1950; and his travels in Italy, Spain, Greece, Egypt and Algeria.

From his very first paintings, which were almost abstract, he used a palette of primary colors, applied in blocks. He then applied this technique to “transformable” wooden sculptures. The idea behind these sculptures was to enable the viewer to switch the elements around. In a later period, he explored the luminescent properties of colored Plexiglas.

In 2004, Albert Chubac donated around a hundred works to the City of Nice for the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. The MAMAC showcased this donation in 2004, thus becoming the point of reference for the artist’s work in France.