

## FRANCOIS MORELLET DEEP DARK LIGHT BLUE AND NEONS BY ACCIDENT

11 March - 25 April 2009

Kamel Mennour is pleased to present François Morellet's first solo show at the gallery.

A major figure in art for the last five - almost six - decades, François Morellet has been one of the leading exponents of the renewal of geometric abstraction in the second half of the twentieth century. As part of the continuation of concrete art - he discovered the work of Max Bill during a trip to South America in 1950-51 - his research was consequently able to absorb ornamental details from the Alhambra in Grenada, which he visited in 1952. This dual inheritance favoured the establishment of a so-called "systematic" syntax, which the artist has gone on to demonstrate tirelessly, relying on a multitude of materials and procedures. These have borne witness to innumerable revivifications, but also to the questioning of the theoretical principles devised by the artist in the 1950s, notably as part of the GRA.V. (*Groupe de recherche d'art visuel*). Indeed, throughout his career, the artist has never ceased to distance himself from the restrictions of this framework in order to commit himself to the renewal of its foundations, with intuition and an acute sense of (auto-)derision. Light is one of the materials for which he has a predilection, first using it in 1963 in the form of electric light bulbs and later on, neon lights. The malleability of the latter has allowed them to take on a wide range of geometric constellations, thereby firmly establishing them as a continuation of his pictorial productions. His use of horizontals and verticals, diagonals and curves has, over several decades, fed a repertoire of familiar shapes that the artist has expanded and reinterpreted, with often unpredictable results. For the last twenty-five years, the work of François Morellet has freed itself up remarkably, ending the often deceptive asceticism of his youthful periods. From the 1980s onwards, the puritanical past has been succeeded by a series of "outbursts", as if, after a period of self-containment, albeit one softened by the occasional digression, he has felt the need to liberate the "body" of his work. The works presented at galerie Kamel Mennour are emblematic of this liberation. *Dark Light light blue*, presented at the rue Saint André des Arts site, brings together neon lights and paintings in a juxtaposition of two materials regularly confronted by the artist. As for *Neons by accident* (2003) installed at no. 60, rue de Mazarine, these seek to establish a dialogue with their architectural environment. Such a wealth of possibilities reflects the inexhaustible character of his "luminous" research, undertaken since the beginning of the 1960s.

Born in 1926 at Cholet, François Morellet lives and works in Cholet and Paris. Recognised internationally since the 1970s, and responsible for several private and public commissions in France as well as abroad, his work has featured in exhibitions at the Pompidou Centre, the Musée d'Orsay, the Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Strasbourg's Musée d'art contemporain, the Consortium in Dijon, the Palais des Beaux-arts in Brussels, the SMAK in Ghent, Geneva's Musée d'art contemporain, the Kassel Documenta, Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie, the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Baden-Baden, the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, New York's Brooklyn Museum, the Miami Center for the Fine Arts, as well as at MoMA in New York. In 2007, he was the subject of a retrospective at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

François Morellet's "Deep dark light blue and neons by Accident" is on show at galerie kamel mennour Tuesdays to Saturdays, 11am to 7pm.

For additional information, please contact Marie-Sophie Eiché, Jessy Mansuy-Leydier and Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin.