

KAZIMIR MALÉVITCH & FRANÇOIS MORELLET CARRÉMENT

17 March - 30 April 2011

Galerie kamel mennour is pleased to present the exhibition *Kazimir Malévitch & François Morellet 'Carrément'*.

François Morellet's relationship with the work of Kazimir Malévitch, while thoroughly ambiguous, is nevertheless *squarely* explicit at the same time. One immediately thinks of FM's two large 'intégrations' [site-specific installations] in public spaces, *Le Fantôme de Malévitch*, on the façade of the Musée des Beaux-arts in Chambéry, from 1982, and *Le Naufrage de Malévitch*, by the edge of the lake at the Domaine de Kerguéhenec, from 1987. More than anything else, what these two artists essentially have in common is the square. FM cites this "(forced) love match that has forever joined the conformist quadrilateral with transcendental leanings to a non-believing artist with frivolous leanings". For if FM has, since 1952, opted for square-shaped canvasses, it is more in the context of his "inexorable and systematic search that can be summed up as: "How to do as little as possible with it", than through love for this "emblem of the Absolute", which KM's famous *Black Square* of 1915 constitutes.

Carrément attempts to put this paradox into perspective, through a selection of works by the two artists that in a single stroke relativises the difference in their points of view. In 1915, Malévitch's 'alogical' (also called his *transrational/zaum*) period ended and his 'Suprematist' period began. The humorous nature of his alogical works is obvious. They express a caustic humour in the spirit of Gogol. One such example is the hand-drawn square in which he writes, "Boulevard brawl", which has echoes of the famous "Negro fight in a tunnel, at night", by Alphonse Allais, one of François Morellet's major influences.

FM likes to underline that Strzemiński considered KM's squares to be 'portraits'. "Let us first of all remind ourselves that his satirical portraits of the quadrilateral occupy only a brief period, itself preceded and followed by normal paintings. What humour, what ferocity in these mutilated squares!" FM has, of course, observed (and even verified) that KM's squares are not square. The *Extended Quadrilateral* of 1915, shown in this exhibition, confirms this fact. It is with this same sweet irony that Morellet highlights Mondrian's 'malice', "utterly denaturing square paintings by transforming them into grotesque lozenges". It is thus entirely logical that Morellet belongs "to this prestigious lineage of enemies of the square". For if Morellet's squares, unlike those of Malévitch, are absolutely square, it nonetheless remains the case that they are never presented in a sacral position, but always subject to the vagaries of the (more often than not lopsided) context of the exhibition (*3 squares: the 1st inclined at 90°, the 2nd at 75°, and the 3rd at 60°, their upper edges aligned*).

François Morellet's *Sous-prématismes* series makes explicit reference to the Russian artist's three emblematic works of 1915 by the (the cross, the circle, and the square). Simply by adjusting their contours, white neon tubes reinforce the spectral character of the geometric figures, these 'icons' of modernity.

Morellet's approach allows us, perhaps, to consider Malévitch's works in a less absolutist, even a less religious way than is generally accepted. (Did KM. not write *Laziness - the real truth of mankind?*) By the same token, do Morellet's works not seem to us less 'frivolous' than he himself would have us believe?

The exhibition *Kazimir Malévitch & François Morellet 'Carrément'* is on show at galerie kamel mennour from Tuesday to Saturday, 11am to 7pm.

A catalogue of the exhibition will be published by éditions kamel mennour.

In parallel:

François Morellet, Réinstallations - a retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, 2 March to 4 July 2011.

For further information, please contact Jessy Mansuy-Leydier, Marie-Sophie Eichè or Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin

Bernard Marcadé, February 2011
Translation: James Curwen

Kazimir Malévitch – born in Kiev (Ukraine, under the Russian Empire) 23 February 1879 of Polish parents, died 15 May 1935 in Leningrad – was one of the first abstract artists of the twentieth century. Painter, draughtsman, sculptor and theorist, he created an artistic movement which he named 'Suprematism'. His works are represented in the collections of the major museums.

Born in Cholet, France in 1926, François Morellet lives and works in Cholet and Paris. Internationally recognised since the 1970s, he has received numerous private and public commissions abroad as well as in France, such as *L'esprit d'escalier* in the *Escalier Lefuel* at the Musée du Louvre in 2010. Institutions that have exhibited his work include, in Paris, the Centre Pompidou, the Musée d'Orsay, the Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, and the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, as well as the Palais des Beaux-arts in Brussels, Geneva's Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, the Kassel Documenta, Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie, the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Baden-Baden, Museum Ritter in Waldenbuch, the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, the Brooklyn Museum in New York, as well as MoMA in New York.

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