

John Armleder

On ne fait pas ça

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MASSIMODECARLO is delighted to present *On ne fait pas ça*, a solo exhibition by Swiss artist John Armleder. The exhibition brings together works from various strands of Armleder's lifelong practice. His relentless fascination and savvy juxtaposition of "high" and "low" art, decoration and kitsch, as well as geometry and abstraction, place Armleder's work on the cusp of humour and reverence.

Armleder challenges conventions of art, its formulation, and presentation. Influenced by the Fluxus movement of the 1960s and associated with the Geneva-based Groupe Ecart, Armleder draws inspiration from the ethos of American composer and artist John Cage. *On ne fait pas ça* presents a retrospective of his work spanning 1994 to 2023, encompassing Armleder's iconic *furniture sculptures* to his latest *pour* and *puddle paintings*.

The title of the exhibition, *On ne fait pas ça* – "we do not do this" in French, was serendipitously chosen, in accordance with Armleder's profound embrace of chance and spontaneity in his process. Bits of conversations, snippets from books, films, songs, or any captivating encounter may spark Armleder's inspiration. Chance, risk-taking, and the willingness to challenge established conventions form integral aspects of the Swiss artist's practice. In a 2011 interview with ARTFORUM, Armleder elucidated his approach, stating, "I decided that it was ok to make works that looked like things that had been made before: If they were things that I liked, that was enough reason to make them. After all, this is an age-old way of making art. You look at something you like, and you try to do the same thing in your own, possibly better way."

In a nod to Marcel Duchamp, Armleder often incorporates found objects and creates works akin to readymades. Notable among these is *Ciliata (FS)*, 1994, where a tractor tire is repurposed as a vessel for a potted plant, echoing influences from urban gardening. This "living" readymade encapsulates Armleder's talent for infusing commonplace objects with fresh intent.

Similarly, Armleder breathes new life into his own creations, as seen in *OLD POTRERO*, 2023 (1985) originally conceived as a *target painting* in 1985, now transformed into a vibrant *pour painting*. This act of reinvention highlights the artist's fluidity of expression and his ongoing dialogue with his earlier works.

While some of Armleder's works serve to furnish Casa Corbellini-Wassermann, including notable pieces like the sculptural work *Sans Titre*, 1996, the pet beds with pedestal, part of the installation *Woofly*, 2023 (in collaboration with 43Mousse) and one of his famous furniture sculptures *Blue John (Fluorine)*, *FS*, 2003, etc., it is his pours and splashes that take centre stage in the exhibition. Reflecting the dynamism of 1950's and 1960's American action painting, Armleder's recent series experiments with diverse materials, resulting in visually compelling compositions. Through his *pour* and *puddle paintings*, Armleder invites viewers to engage with the interplay of various mediums and textures, relinquishing control to the unpredictable reactions of the materials themselves.

In a statement from 2014, Armleder articulated his belief that "the artist is a collateral damage to the art." He emphasises the viewer's role as the ultimate interpreter and co-creator of meaning, positioning the artist merely as a conduit for artistic expression. This sentiment continues to inform Armleder's practice, underscoring his commitment to letting his work speak for itself.

In *On ne fait pas ça*, Armleder invites us into a world where art transcends mere narratives, embodying the essence of an artist who deftly navigates the interplay between chance, intention, and interpretation.

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John Armleder was born in Geneva in 1948, where he currently lives and works.

As a student of Fluxus in Geneva during the 1960s and the founder of the Ecart group, Armleder's artistic journey later in the 1980s became associated with Neo-Geometric Conceptualism. Renowned for the breadth of his artistic output, Armleder seamlessly blends the spirit of Fluxus with abstract painting, readymade sculptures, performances, and expansive room-size installations. Spanning five decades, John Armleder's career serves as a synthesis of the diverse and at times conflicting aesthetic movements characterising that period.

As a painter, sculptor, and performance artist, Armleder engages in a perpetual inquiry into the nature of art, exploring its possibilities, limitations, and boundaries. His artistic exploration spans a wide spectrum, ranging from expansive room-size installations to contemplative abstract paintings, and from geometric constructivist compositions to furniture sculptures adorned with pattern-strewn wallpapers. In his diverse body of work, Armleder's art reflects influences from a myriad of movements, including Suprematist painting, Minimalist sculpture, Concrete Art, and the playful irreverence of Dada readymades, among others.

His work is in the permanent collections of many museums, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland; Museion Foundation - Modern and Contemporary Art Museum, Bolzano, Italy; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden.