

DEVALS

Biography

Asked in 1987 to reduce thirty-five years of work to a single sentence, Morellet replied: “Morellet, monstrous son of Mondrian and Picabia, has developed since 1952 a whole programme of systems as rigorous as they are absurd, using the simplest figures of geometry (straight lines, angles, planes...) with the most varied materials (canvas, wire mesh, neon, steel, adhesives, branches...) on all kinds of supports (canvases, walls, statues, architecture, “landscapes” ...).”¹

François Morellet (1926-2016), a prolific self-taught artist, developed through his paintings, sculptures and installations a radical approach to geometric abstraction over a career spanning more than six decades. Working chiefly with basic geometric forms, Morellet adopted a method of rigorous objectivity and personal detachment, drawing on a wide range of materials: steel, neon tubing, adhesive tape, wire mesh, wood and more. He sought to control the process of creation and to demystify the Romantic mythology of art and the inspired artist, justifying each of his choices by a principle fixed in advance, one that could even bring chance into certain components of a work. Morellet’s playfulness and humour also surface in his titles, which often contain puns, parodies or portmanteau words.



Fig. 1 François Morellet in front of *Sens Dessus Dessous*, a mural that was commissioned by the French Government and Public Art Fund in honor of the Centennial of the Statue of Liberty. The mural was on view at Reade Street in New York City, June 1, 1986 – June 30, 1991.

Photo courtesy the Estate of François Morellet.

¹ Published in *François Morellet* (exh. Cat.), Geneva, École Supérieure d’Art Visuel, 27 april – 26 may 1988, 47.

Born in Cholet, France, where he lived and worked all his life, Morellet studied Russian at the École des langues orientales in Paris before returning to run the family toy factory until 1975. The role gave him financial independence while familiarising him with the tools and production techniques that would shape his practice.

After a brief figurative period in the 1940s, Morellet turned to abstraction following a formative trip to Brazil in 1950, where he discovered Concrete art and the work of Max Bill. Alongside Bill, Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg became decisive influences, as did the geometric patterns, anonymous aesthetic and precision of Islamic decorative art, which he encountered on a visit to the Alhambra in Spain in 1952.

In the late 1950s, he discovered the “Duo-collages” of Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp through his friend Ellsworth Kelly, which led him to make chance a central principle, creating works based on random numbers drawn from his local telephone directory or on the infinite sequence of the decimals of pi.

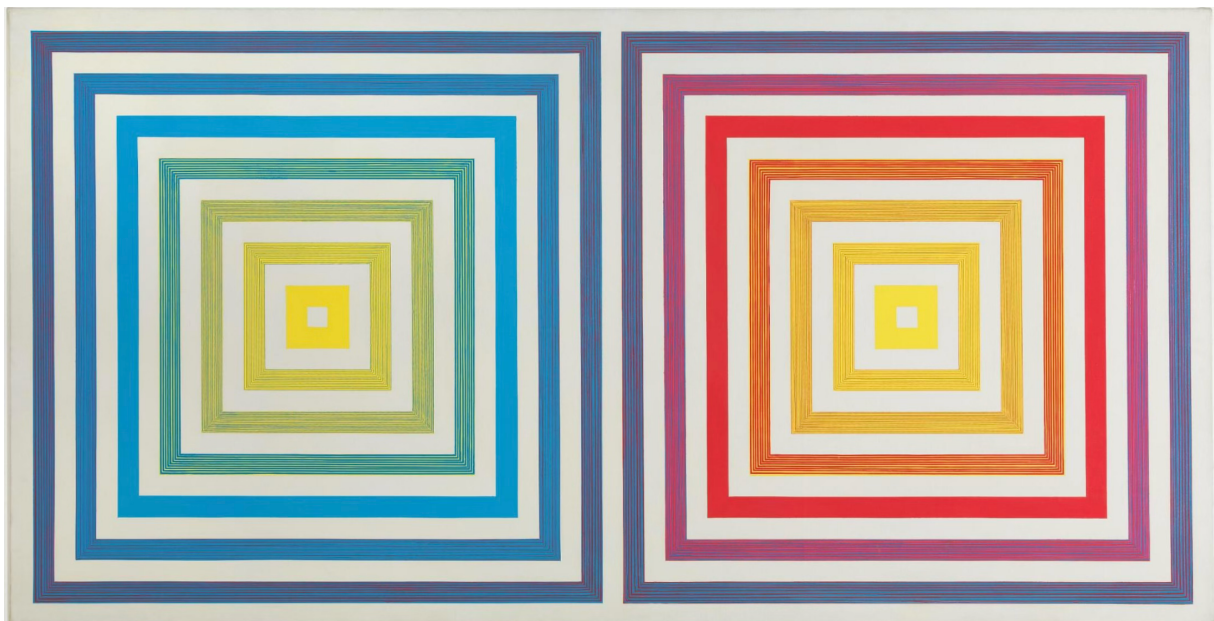


Fig. 2 François Morellet, *Du jaune au violet*, 1956 © Adagp, Paris
Courtesy Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/Georges Meguerditchian/Dist. Grand Palais Rmn
Collection du Centre Pompidou

Until 1960, Morellet established the various systems of arrangement for the forms he used (superimposition, fragmentation, juxtaposition, interference), notably creating his first trame, a network of parallel black lines superimposed in a predetermined order.

Morellet was a founding member of the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV), with five other artists, Francisco Sobrino, Horacio Garcia Rossi, Julio Le Parc, Yvaral and Joël Stein: an experimental collective that emerged in France in the early 1960s.

He also took part in the international New Tendencies movement. In this context, he sought to create an experimental art grounded in scientific knowledge of visual perception and developed collectively.

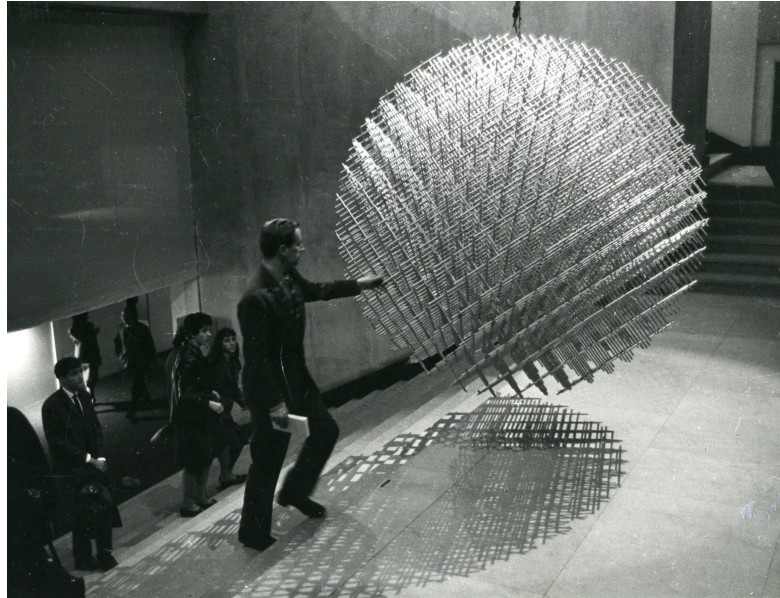


Fig. 3 François Morellet, *Sphère-trames*, 1962, exhibition view, *IIIe Biennale de Paris*, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1963 © François Morellet / ADAGP, Paris.

After 1970, a new period began, marked by increasingly pared-down works that play with their support and the space around them. He also carried out a great many architectural integrations, beginning with his first monumental intervention on the plateau de la Reynie in Paris, on the site of today's Centre Pompidou, in 1971.

Morellet's work has featured in a number of major international group exhibitions, notably Documenta in Kassel, Germany (1964 [with GRAV], 1968 and 1977), and the Venice Biennale (1970 and 1990). In 1971, his first solo museum exhibition was organised by the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, and subsequently travelled across Europe. Other major retrospectives of his work were held at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin (1977), the Centre Pompidou (1986 and 2011) and the Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris (2000). He was also the subject of a North American retrospective in 1984-85, which travelled to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, the Brooklyn Museum and the Center for the Fine Arts in Miami. In 2010, Morellet became the second artist to have a work installed in his lifetime at the Louvre, with the unveiling of a permanent site-specific installation entitled *L'esprit d'escalier*.

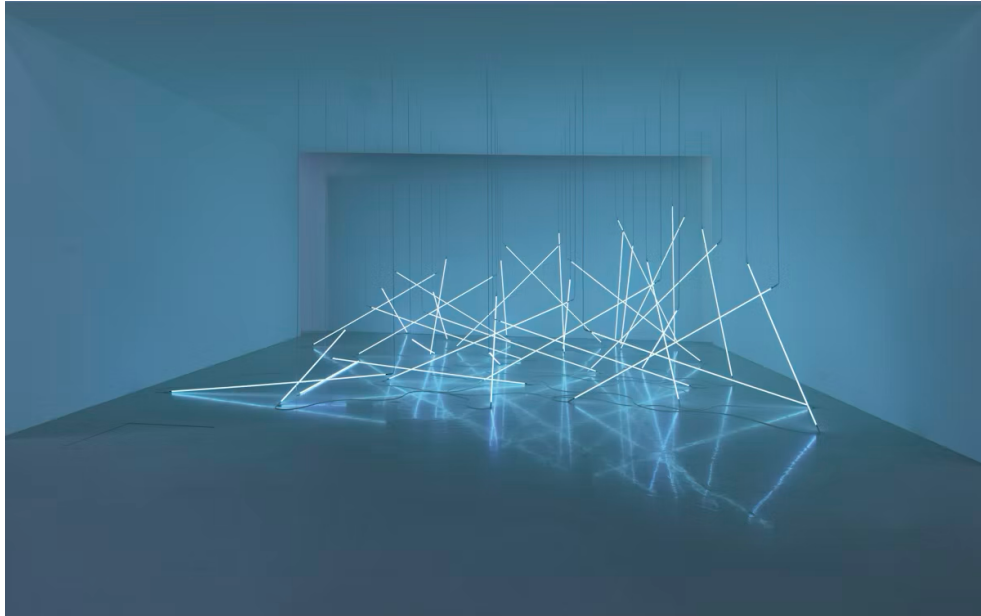


Fig. 4 François Morellet, *L'Avalanche*, 2006, exhibition view, *Au diapason du monde. Œuvres de la collection*, 12 april – 27 august 2018. Courtesy Fondation Louis Vuitton et MNAM – Centre Pompidou / Georges Meguerditchian ; © ADAGP, Paris, 2018.

His work is held in major public collections, among them the Centre Pompidou, the Dia Art Foundation (New York), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Seoul Museum of Art, Tate Britain, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the Kunsthaus Zürich and the Nationalgalerie in Berlin.

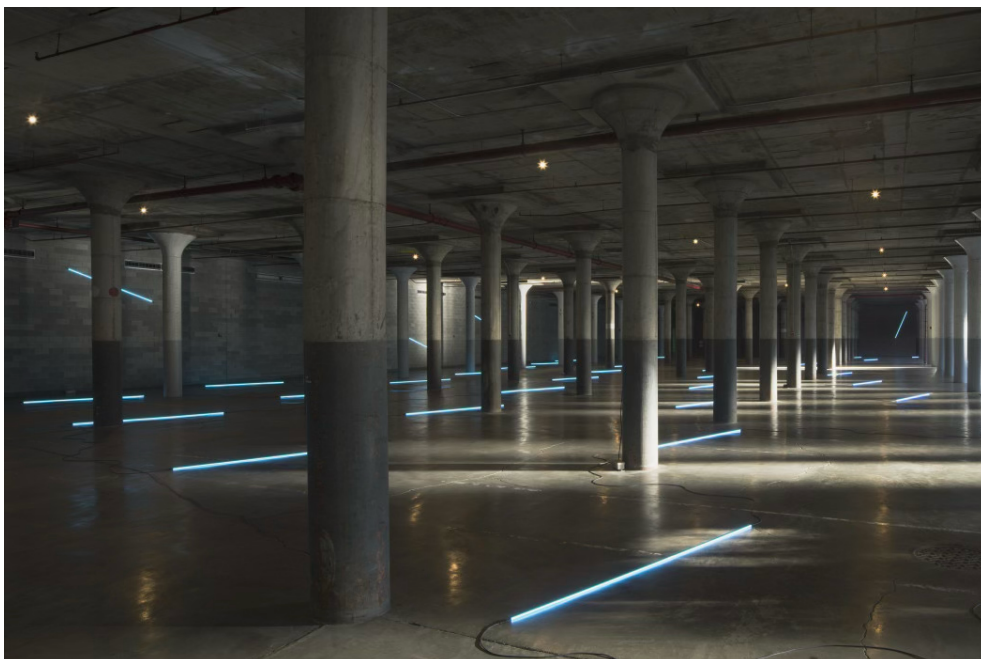


Fig. 4 François Morellet, *No End Neon*, 1990/2017. Dia:Beacon, Beacon, New York. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photo: Bill Jacobson Studio, New York

PUBLIC & INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIONS

Austria

Buchberg, Schloss Buchberg
Wien, Albertina Museum

Belgium

Gent, SMAK – Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst
La Louvière, Centre de la Gravure et de l'Image Imprimée

Canada

Hamilton, Art Gallery of Hamilton
Montréal, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Chile

Santiago de Chile, Musée de la solidarité Salvador Allende

Croatia

Zagreb, Gradska Galerija Zagreb
Zagreb, Muzej za umjetnost i obrt

Denmark

Humlebæk, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art

Finland

Helsinki, Helsingin Kaupungin Taidemuseo

France

Amiens, Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Picardie
Amiens, Musée de Picardie
Angers, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Arles, Musée Réattu
Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie
Bordeaux, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Caen, Artothèque de Caen
Caen, Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Basse-Normandie
Calais, Musée des Beaux-Arts et de la Dentelle
Carquefou (Nantes), Fonds régional d'art contemporain des Pays de la Loire
Chamalières, Fonds régional d'art contemporain d'Auvergne
Cholet, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire
Clamecy, Musée municipal
Dijon, Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Bourgogne
Dunkerque, Fonds régional d'art contemporain du Nord-Pas-de-Calais
Dunkerque, Musée d'Art contemporain
Épinal, Musée départemental d'Art ancien et contemporain
Genève, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire – Cabinet des Estampes

Genève, Musée d'Art moderne et contemporain
Gravelines, Musée du dessin et de l'estampe originale
Grenoble, Artothèque
Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble
La Roche-sur-Yon, Artothèque
Le Havre, Musée d'Art moderne André Malraux
Locminé, Domaine de Kerguéhennec
Lyon, Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Rhône-Alpes
Lyon, Musée d'Art contemporain
Mâcon, Musée des Ursulines
Marines, Le Silo
Marseille, Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur
Marseille, Musée Cantini
Marseille, Musée d'Art contemporain
Mouans-Sartoux, Espace de l'Art concret, collection Sybil Albers-Barrier
Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Nantes, Artothèque
Nantes, Musée d'Arts
Nice, Villa Arson
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale
Paris, Fondation Louis Vuitton
Paris, Fonds national d'art contemporain
Paris, Fonds régional d'art contemporain d'Île-de-France
Paris, Mobilier national, Manufacture des Gobelins
Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris
Paris, Musée national d'Art moderne – Centre Georges Pompidou
Poitiers, Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Poitou-Charentes
Rennes, Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Bretagne
Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Saint-Étienne, Musée d'Art moderne
Saintes, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Strasbourg, Musée d'Art moderne et contemporain
Toulon, Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie
Toulouse, Les Abattoirs
Vannes, Musée de Vannes « La Cohue »

Germany

Bayreuth, Kunstmuseum
Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett
Berlin, Nationalgalerie
Bochum, Museum Bochum
Bochum, Ruhr Universität
Bonn, Städtisches Museum
Bottrop, Josef Albers Museum
Bremen, Neues Museum Weserburg

Chemnitz, Städtische Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz
Duisburg, Lehmbruck-Wilhelm Museum
Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf
Essen, Folkwangmuseum
Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum
Gelsenkirchen, Städtische Kunstsammlung
Güstrow, Schloss Güstrow
Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe
Herford, Marta Herford
Ingolstadt, Museum für Konkrete Kunst Ingolstadt
Kaiserslautern, Museum Pfalzgalerie
Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe
Kiel, Kunsthalle zu Kiel
Künzelsau, Museum Würth
Leverkusen, Städtisches Museum, Schloss Morsbroich
Ludwigshafen/Rhein, Wilhelm-Hack Museum
Mönchengladbach, Städtisches Museum Abteiberg
Moers, Etzold Collection
München, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus
Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte
Nürnberg, Neues Museum Nürnberg
Otterndorf, Museum Moderner Kunst Landkreis Cuxhaven
Recklinghausen, Städtische Kunsthalle
Reutlingen, Stiftung für Konkrete Kunst
Saarbrücken, Saarland Museum
Schwäbisch Hall, Kunsthalle Würth
Schwerin, Staatliches Museum Schwerin
Sindelfingen, Schauwerk Sindelfingen
Stuttgart, Daimler-Benz AG
Stuttgart, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart
Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie
Tübingen, Kunsthalle Tübingen
Ulm, Kunsthalle Weishaupt
Unna, Zentrum für Internationale Lichtkunst
Waldenbuch, Museum Ritter
Wiesbaden, Landesmuseum Wiesbaden
Wuppertal, Von der Heydt-Museum

Great Britain

Birmingham, City Museum and Art Gallery
Coventry, University of Warwick
London, Arts Council Collection of Great Britain
London, Southern Arts Association
London, Tate Gallery
London, Victoria and Albert Museum
Norwich-Norfolk, University of East Anglia

Portsmouth, City Art Gallery
Sheffield, Graves Art Gallery
Southampton, City of Southampton Art Gallery
Warwick, University
Winchester, Southern Arts Association

Hungary

Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts
Pécs, Janus Pannonius Múzeum
Pécs, Musée Vasarely

Israel

Tel Aviv, The Tel Aviv Museum

Italy

Bolzano, Museo d'Arte Moderna
Macerata, Pinacoteca comunale
Parma, Istituto di Storia dell'Arte
Ravenna, Museo Nazionale – Accademia di Belle Arti
Vaccinago di Ameno, Lago d'Orta, Fondazione Calderara

Japan

Hakone-Machi, The Hakone Open-Air Museum

Liechtenstein

Vaduz, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein

The Netherlands

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
Apeldoorn, Gemeentelijk Van Reekum Museum
Den Haag, Haags Gemeentemuseum
Eindhoven, Centrum Kunstlicht in de Kunst
Eindhoven, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum
Groningen, Groninger Museum voor Stad en Lande
Nijmegen, Nijmeegs Museum Commanderie van St Jan
Otterlo, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller
Rotterdam, Boymans van Beuningen Museum
Schiedam, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam
Wassenaar, Voorlinden Museum

New Zealand

Auckland, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Poland

Kraków, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie
Łódź, Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi

Warszawa, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie
Wrocław, Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu

South Korea

Seoul, Ho-Am Art Museum
Seoul, Seoul Museum of Art

Sweden

Stockholm, Moderna Museet

Switzerland

Aarau, Aargauer Kunsthaus
Bern, Kunstmuseum
Genève, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire – Cabinet des Estampes
Genève, Musée d'Art moderne et contemporain
La Chaux-de-Fonds, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Le Locle, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Winterthur, Kunstmuseum
Zürich, Kunsthaus

United States

Beacon, Dia Art Foundation
Buffalo, Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Dartmouth, Dartmouth College Museum and Galleries
Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)
Miami, Miami Art Museum
New York, Brooklyn Museum
New York, JPMorganChase Art Collection
New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)
New York, The McCrory Foundation
Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art
Washington, D.C., Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Venezuela

Ciudad Bolívar, Museo de Arte Moderno Fundación Soto