



*Escort, Estate, Skylark, Carré bleu sur fond blanc*, 1987  
Acrylic on canvas, 426x213 cm  
mac<sup>LYON</sup> collection,  
Saint Pierre Museum, Lyon  
© Blaise Adilon

together two visions of time: a work in ice that is temporary, though still intended for conservation, and stones which are without any apparent artistic value, but which are reminders of something that no longer exists, and thus a sort of “historic monument”. Exhibited before the museum without any particular artifice, they are in a way a return to the “heap”, but imbued with art and history.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP TO TIME

mac<sup>LYON</sup> regularly invites artists to create setups resembling all of their works that belong to its collection, thus reinventing the cohesion of an ensemble according to a new, updated point of view. This is the “retrovision” principle that has been implemented by Marina Abramović and Ulay, Jan Fabre and François Morellet.

The relationship to time is central to the museum’s ethos. Works are conserved for the long term, and their status can vary over time. Creations that are disparaged during a certain period can be the masterpieces of another. It’s all a matter of context and taste. Olivier Mosset’s retrovision (in other words the entire current exhibition) poses the question of the way in which

the perception of works changes, and invites us to be both participants and observers of this phenomenon.

And let us recall, to conclude, the contribution made by Mosset (working with his accomplice John Armleder) to the 1995 Lyon biennial: an exhibition of a functioning skateboard track; nothing less than a superimposed variant of the stabile and the mobile; and the one that was designed for *Expat-Art-Center* (an exhibition that could be visited when the museum was closed, with Brian Eno, Pierre Huyghe, Claude Lévêque and others), which consisted of modifying nothing in the presentation of *Skylark*, *Escort*, *Estate* and *Carré bleu sur fond blanc*, other than the cards that presented new modalities of perception, which were related to a very particular context.

A previously unreleased DVD is available during the exhibition. It has an exclusive interview with Olivier Mosset on the themes of creativity, the original and the similar, the duration of retrovision, the invisible ready made, colour, constructed abstract painting, printing and paintings, which are treated with the utmost seriousness, in other words with humour and detachment.

**Exhibition**  
**11 September–**  
**31 December 2010**  
**Wednesday–Sunday**  
**12:00–19:00**

#### Guided tours

*Reservation advisable*

**Olivier Mosset focus visit**  
*A Step Backwards, Bob’s Kitchen, Caprice...*  
› Thursday, 21 October, 12:30

**An hour in the museum**  
› Thursday, 12:30

**Adults’ visits**  
› Saturday, 15:30  
› Sunday, 15:00

**Family visits**  
› Sunday, 15:30

**Guided visit with French sign language**  
*O. Mosset et G. Adilon peintres et plus encore...*  
› Saturday, 18 December, 14:00

#### Groups

Guided visits are available for one or more exhibitions, for adults or young people.

*By reservation*

#### Talk with Olivier Mosset

› Friday, 26 November, 19:00

*Free entrance, by reservation only*

#### Information and reservations

T 04 72 69 17 17  
publics@mac-lyon.com

#### European Heritage Days

› Saturday and Monday, 17 and 18 September  
Free entrance to all the exhibitions

#### Upcoming exhibitions

18 February – 31 July 2011

1ST AND 2D FLOOR

*INDIAN HIGHWAY*

More than 30 artists for a panorama of contemporary indian art

18 February – 15 May 2011

3D FLOOR

*PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU*

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# A STEP BACKWARDS, BOB’S KITCHEN, CIMAISES, LES SOCLES RÉVOLUTIONNAIRES...

## 11.09 31.12.2010



*Toblerone*, 2005  
8 sided ice polyhedron  
180 x 220 x 180 cm  
mac<sup>LYON</sup> collection  
Exhibition View,  
La Salle de Bains, 2006  
© Olivier Vadrot



# OLIVIER MOSSET



*Caprice*, 1987  
Acrylic on canvas  
426x639 cm  
Saint Pierre Museum, Lyon  
mac<sup>LYON</sup> collection  
© Blaise Adilon

*A Step Backwards*, 1986  
Oil and cellulose paint  
on canvas – 300x600 cm  
Saint Pierre Museum, Lyon  
mac<sup>LYON</sup> collection  
© Blaise Adilon

In 1987, mac<sup>LYON</sup> put on an exhibition by Olivier Mosset, with paintings that were specially created for the occasion, exclusively constituted of two superimposed colours, apart from one, entitled *A Step Backwards*. Six of them were afterwards acquired by the museum.

For Mosset, “WORKS CHANGE, THEY EVOLVE IN TIME”. And now, more than 20 years on, he is re-staging the exhibition so as to look at yesterday’s paintings with today’s eyes. And he is including all of his works that have become part of the museum’s collection. Through the changes he introduces, he shows the effects of passing time.

The titles of the works give their names to the exhibition, and the artist’s identity is concealed by them.

**PAINTING ABOVE ALL**  
Olivier Mosset was born in Switzerland in 1944. In 1966, he began painting pictures, now famous, composed of black circles, always of the same dimensions, at the centre of a square white surface. With just a few exceptions, the paintings were in the same format. By producing the “same” painting, Mosset was seeking to “MAKE

VISIBLE THE MECHANISM FROM WHICH PAINTING PROCEEDS”. Though ostensibly identical, each was distinctive and unique.

In 1967, Mosset exhibited with Daniel Buren, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni. Together they put on three notable events, between “performance” and exhibition, which interrogated some of the fundamentals of painting. They brought their collaboration to an end after a few months, and Mosset carried on with his paintings of circles. By 1974, he had painted almost 200 of them. This motif gradually became a form of signature, and he gave it up for another, most of whose exemplars were tone on tone: vertical stripes. But he ended this series too, given that they were beginning to resemble monochromes. He subsequently became interested in the relationship between single colours and the format of paintings.

Some of Mosset’s monumental paintings give the viewer an impression of a total immersion in colour. In 1977, at the Paris biennial, he exhibited a red painting with exactly the same dimensions as the wall on which it was hung. The effect was striking, though the work was actually seen by very few people: they didn’t

know if it was a painting or simply a painted wall. With the monochrome, Mosset continued to think about painting, and to maintain his critical distance.

The same year, he moved to the United States and exhibited with other artists who were interested in colour alone: Marcia Hafif, Günter Umberg and Phil Sims, several of whose works have been acquired by the museum. The talk was of “radical painting”.

**A STEP BACKWARDS**  
After some years of monochromes, Mosset once more feared a fall into systematism. In 1988, he participated in the exhibition organised by mac<sup>LYON</sup> entitled *Colour alone*, which followed this strange mode of painting in a single colour from Monet and Malevich to our own day. In 1986, Mosset was painting geometrical colour fields (stripes and triangles) that moved away from the monochrome, while seeming to comment on it. These were the “CONSTRUCTED ABSTRACT PAINTINGS”, and *A Step Backwards* was the first of the series. Although the painting seems to be uniformly grey, three white stripes can be made out, framing the work on the

left and right, and at the top. The eye assimilates these “edgings”, but it is a disconcerting experience: where does the work end and the wall begin?

In a modernist perspective, artists have sought to “go beyond” the innovations of previous generations. Painting geometrical forms that are historically older than the monochrome may thus be seen as a retrograde step. The title of the work is facetious: in some people’s eyes, it would indeed seem like a backward step.

**THE BICHROMES**  
With *A Step Backwards*, the 1987 exhibition presented nine bichrome paintings, which are now being brought together again. In four of them, two colours were superimposed on the same canvas. *Caprice*, on the other hand, was comprised of two monochrome paintings, one grey, the other white. And the same principle was present in *Trésor public* (“Public finance department”), where the two canvases were covered in white paint of different types: oil and acrylic. There were indeed two colours, but could we tell them apart?

In 1987, mac<sup>LYON</sup> was temporarily housed in the Palais Saint-Pierre, along with the public



*Cimaïses – sculpture en cinq éléments*, 1993  
Five elements, painted wood,  
200x302x50 cm  
L’Usine/The Consortium, Dijon, 1993  
Gift from the artist to mac<sup>LYON</sup> and The Consortium, Dijon  
© André Morin

/I SIMPLY USED THESE FORMS BECAUSE I’D SEEN THEM IN NATURE, AND THEY INTERESTED ME AS SUCH./

Their massive, geometrical appearance gives them a similarity to minimalist sculptures like those of Tony Smith. And their truncated pyramid form is similar to that of the famous Swiss chocolate bars, hence their title.

Mosset’s interest in the *Toblerones* is also linked to their origin. These blocks are a sort of fragmented Maginot line, and they seem like a derisory protection against an improbable invasion, in contradiction to the image of Swiss pacifism. By exhibiting them, the artist humorously underlines the absurdity and ineffectiveness of all things military.

In 2007, the museum acquired a statue in ice by Mosset, which is reincarnated for each exhibition, and then melts. The work is exhibited outside the museum. Like the “circles”, but in another form, the *Toblerones* are intrigued by the question of the *original*. The same, the similar, the identical: do they belong to the category that founds the work of art?

Here, in the exhibition space, the artist decided to present five elements. After their melting away, two real-time videos, by giving them a mediated presence, “embodied” the absurd, tragic quality of their short lives.

**THE REVOLUTIONARY PEDESTALS**  
Intrigued by the discovery of some pedestals, one bearing the words “Hommage à Cézanne”, Mosset discovered that they were “mere stones”, supposedly vestiges of the Bastille that had provided pedestals for the Muses. Originally quadrangular, almost like minimalist sculptures à la Robert Morris, they actually have no intrinsic function or value. They make sense only through the use they are put to, or if their origin is known.

By placing these immutable, inert pedestals in front of the museum, close to an evanescent *Toblerone*, the artist is bringing

finance department. *Trésor public* was thus an amused comment on the location of the museum. Mosset was not separating the fields of art and life. And when he was surprised by the colour of the walls in a friend’s kitchen, he covered a canvas with it (*Bob’s kitchen*).

The 1987 exhibition was held in a room of the same dimensions as that of the current one, but adorned with arcades. And at the exact places where they would have been, Mosset has put a prior variant of his five-element sculpture *Cimaïses* (“Picture wall”).

**WALL-SCULPTURE IN FIVE ELEMENTS**  
This work entered the collection in 2003 as the result of a gift. It was initially made up of five stacked “walls”. It is both a module, a sculpture and a picture wall; plane, volume and geometry in space. Mosset multiplies configurations of this form, always identical, with differences in the scale of the visit and the duration of perception.

**LES TOBLERONES**  
These pieces reproduce the concrete anti-tank obstacles that were installed in Switzerland in 1943. Almost two metres high, they are still visible in some fields.