



Centre
Pompidou

PRESS RELEASE

VOIDS

A RETROSPECTIVE

ART & LANGUAGE, ROBERT BARRY, STANLEY BROUWEN, MARIA EICHHORN,
BETHAN HUWS, ROBERT IRWIN, YVES KLEIN, ROMAN ONDÁK, LAURIE PARSONS

25 FEBRUARY – 23 MARCH 2009

MUSÉE, LEVEL 4, ROOMS 18 TO 31

“I had, precisely, endeavoured to reduce my intervention as a painter to the very minimum for this exhibition. Those few words I pronounced, they were already too much. I shouldn’t have come at all, and my name shouldn’t have appeared in the catalogue.” Yves Klein

With **VOIDS, A RETROSPECTIVE**, the first exhibition of its kind at an art museum, the Centre Pompidou offers an opportunity to explore a crucial chapter in the history of art. After Yves Klein’s exhibition at the Iris Clert gallery in 1958, the empty space became a recurrent artistic theme. This chronological exhibition brings together reconstructions of nine empty exhibitions, from Art & Language in 1966 to Roman Ondák in 2006.

The exhibition is co-produced by the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and Kunsthalle Bern, Berne



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Architects: Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers

"Nothing seems to me to be the most potent thing in the world." Robert Barry

Yves Klein's emblematic exhibition, an empty space presented as such to the viewer, is considered to mark a crucial stage in the history of modern art, like the Armory Show of 1913 in New York, or 0,10 in St Petersburg in 1915. The empty space as exhibited object thus became, in a way, a classic of radicalism, and would be repeated and remade in other contexts, other places and other times by other artists whose intentions might be similar, different or even opposed to Klein's. The principle of the exhibition at the Centre Pompidou is to present only exhibitions where the space is left rigorously empty, without the addition or subtraction of anything. This excludes, for example, shows or works involving the modification of lighting, the installation of sound, the construction of partitions or the exclusion of the public. And it is no part of its goal to reconstruct the original physical space.

"Nothing is less easy to describe than emptiness, nothing more difficult to render than monotony."
Stefan Zweig

Each project offers a different reading of the empty space, representing, perhaps, a claim, a renunciation, or, indeed, a celebration of the architecture of the Centre Pompidou. Contemplating emptiness, one confronts nothingness and absence, the invisible and the ineffable, destruction and negation. VOIDS is offered for what it is, and for what it allows. The visitor encounters the empty exhibitions now in 2009, here at the Musée National d'Art Moderne. This accumulation of empty spaces, similar in appearance but radically different in reality, has echoes and implications beyond its walls.

"I don't want to add anything at all. I believe that it's all there already and I have no choice but to work with what is there." Bethan Huws

This exhibition brings together the work of artists who have attempted this extreme gesture, to show without showing an object, without making any intervention but a single announcement. In this respect, Laurie Parsons' exhibition at the Lorence-Monk Gallery of New York in 1990, announced by a card bearing only an address, with neither dates nor the name of the artist, is perhaps the most radically minimal formulation. From the search for a renewal of perception, through political or ideological statement, to the deconstruction of the very principle of exhibition, these projects pose a range of crucial questions about the role of the museum, and this unprecedented marshalling of eloquent emptiness within the Centre Pompidou represents a true challenge to the institution.

"Let's do nothing, and it will probably be art." Andy Warhol

For an unprecedented exhibition, an unusual curatorial team. VOIDS, A RETROSPECTIVE, which is both an exhibition in the most traditional sense and an art event in its own right, has been put together by John Armleder, who has always been interested in nothing; Gustav Metzger, a key figure in auto-destructive art; Mai-Thu Perret, a young conceptual artist; Mathieu Copeland, a curator who explores the limits of the exhibition; Clive Phillpot, a writer; Laurent Le Bon, curator at the Centre Pompidou; and Philippe Pirotte, director of the Kunsthalle Bern.

The exhibition is accompanied by extensive interpretative provision that establishes the context of each exhibition under consideration. A colloquium is scheduled for the 25th of February, and a catalogue includes a number of original essays by art historians and interviews with the artists. In August 2009, VOIDS, A RETROSPECTIVE, will be shown at the Kunsthalle Bern, where, forty years ago Harald Szeemann curated the key exhibition, "When Attitudes Become Form."

"With the void, total empowerment." Albert Camus, on Yves Klein's exhibition.

In media partnership with



CURATORS

John Armleder, artist, was born in Geneva in 1948 and lives there today. Armleder's anti-establishment and anti-formalist practice has included the production of drip- and pour-paintings, "furniture sculptures" and monumental neon-based installations. In 1969, together with Patrick Lucchini and Claude Rychner, he founded Groupe Ecart, in order to take in hand every phase of artistic production, from creation to exhibition to publication. His work has been shown worldwide.

Mathieu Copeland, independent curator, was born in Lagny-sur-Marne, France, in 1977; he lives in London. After graduating from Goldsmiths College, London, in 2003, he has developed a practice that seeks to subvert the traditional role of the exhibition and to promote new ways of seeing. In 2004, he organised "Expat-Art Centre / EA C." In 2006, he curated "Soundtrack for an Exhibition" at the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, and launched the travelling exhibition "A Spoken Word Exhibition." In 2008, he produced "A Choreographed Exhibition" at Kunsthalle St Gallen and La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel. In 2003, he published the first and last issue of Perfect Magazine, and a collection of artist's videos on DVD.

Laurent Le Bon, curator at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, director of the Association de Préfiguration du Centre Pompidou-Metz

Gustav Metzger, artist, was born in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1926. He lives in London. An artist and political activist, Gustav Metzger is the pioneer and leading exponent of auto-destructive art. In 1959, he published its first manifesto, and in 1966 co-organised the Destruction in Art Symposium held in London. In 1977, he called a three-year art strike, and continues today to energetically promote his ecological, political and artistic principles.

Mai-Thu Perret, artist, lives and works in Geneva. In 1999, she embarked on the continuing art project entitled *The Crystal Frontier*, which revolves around the life of a utopian community of the same name. Perret is obsessive in her exploration of the different ways in which the author/artist can disappear. In 2007, a monographic study of her work was published by JRP-Ringier, under the title *Land of Crystal*. Nothing pleases her more than a recurrent motif.

Clive Phillpot, writer. His most recent work is *Ray Johnson On Flop Art*, London, 2008. He was Librarian of MOMA, New York, from 1977 to 1994, and before of Chelsea School of Art, London.

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11 am - 9 pm
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