

galerie lange + pult

Olivier Mosset  
Art Basel 2018

hall 2.0. – booth J8

### Olivier Mosset: The Death of Painting - The Birth of the Circle

“The Death of Painting – The Birth of the Circle” traces the origins of the iconic “circle” paintings in this very first showing of examples of each of the first four surviving series of Olivier Mosset’s œuvre. The artist produced the circle series between 1966 and 1974 some of which were exhibited alongside the work of Buren, Parmentier and Toroni in the famous 'BMPT' exhibitions of 1967. The circle sign is generally assumed to have been created in Paris together with BMPT, yet in fact Mosset was already painting 1m x 1m circles in 1966. These early works establish that the circle found its source during the 2 years that preceded its creation. Mosset started working in series from the very beginning onwards. This characteristic is to be found throughout his entire career.

In 1962, Mosset saw a Rauschenberg and Johns exhibition in Bern and reports having been very impressed. Around this time, he was Tinguely’s assistant in Paris. He had met Duchamp and was interested in Allan Kaprow’s installations. By 1964 he was aware of Stella’s “Black Paintings” and of Warhol’s repetitions.

The show starts with “kôAN VII”. This black wall relief painted at the age of 20 is part of Mosset’s very first series of works. They consist in framed wooden panels with classical framed canvasses mounted on top. They were then bad painted in white, only one of them was painted black. These paintings were Mosset first exhibited artworks. This is one of only two surviving examples of this first group of works, the other being a white piece titled “Portrait”. “kôAN VII” already contains important concepts: interest in Buddhist philosophy, the negation of established Art and his decision to work in series.

Mosset was linked to the French anarchist movement that led to May 1968 and anarchist symbols such as the black flag and, in particular, the circled A (which appeared in Paris in 1964) are important in understanding Mosset’s approach to his next two series of works and their symbolism. The source for these two series is the “Circle-A”, which is almost certainly the best-known present-day symbol for anarchy: the capital letter “A” surrounded by the capital letter “O”; combined, they stand for “Anarchy is the mother of Order”. Mosset painted the «A» and the «Dot» paintings in 1965 and 1966. Both of these series are characterized by their very small scale, something that is not to be found later in Mosset’s oeuvre.

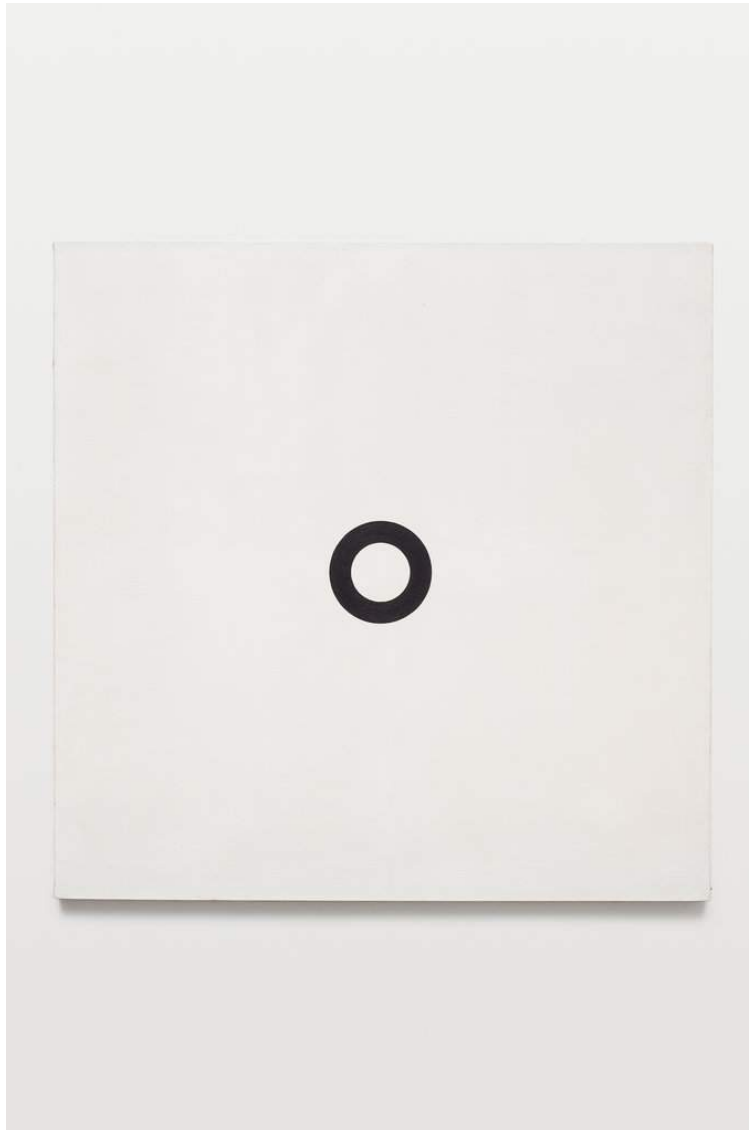
Olivier Mosset painted his most famous “Circle” series from 1966 to 1974. The circles bear a clear affinity to both Pop and Minimal Art as they can be directly linked to Kenneth Noland’s targets, in that they are reduced to essential expression, and also to Warhol and his repetitions of the same subject. Mosset painted around two hundred of them, half of which have been destroyed. We’re exhibiting four examples of these icons: one exceptional work dating from 1966, made before BMPT, two nailed canvases from 1967-1968 and one stapled canvas from 1970.

Our presentation thus demonstrates that, contrary to BMPT who described their works as arbitrary signs, Mosset’s chosen geometric symbol is not merely anecdotal. It is clearly the essence of his research throughout the preceding years and not only an appropriation of an image from his predecessors. In fact, Mosset’s circle paintings can just as well stand for Zen Buddhism’s sacred Enso circle, the Anarchist’s «O» for Order, a «Zero» representing the grounding of painting or indeed a simplified Noland target.

In 1964, Olivier Mosset exhibited two paintings that declared the death of painting, one stating the words “The End” and the other stating “RIP”. By creating the simplified “o” sign, and turning it into an anonymous symbol, he found a new conceptual approach to painting that is not only still relevant today, it is timeless.

Galerie Lange + Pult focuses on conceptual and minimal artists with a particular interest in threedimensional works. It was founded in June 2007 by Céline Lange and Stefano Pult and is situated in the Löwenbräu Areal in Zürich. The gallery has a distinctive international roster of well-established artists as well as a program that promotes and supports newcomers. Olivier Mosset is represented by Lange + Pult since 1999.

Olivier Mosset



Untitled, 1966  
acrylic on canvas  
100 × 100 cm

Olivier Mosset



Untitled, 1967 - 1969  
acrylic on canvas  
100 × 100 cm

Olivier Mosset



Untitled, 1967 - 1969  
acrylic on canvas  
100 × 100 cm

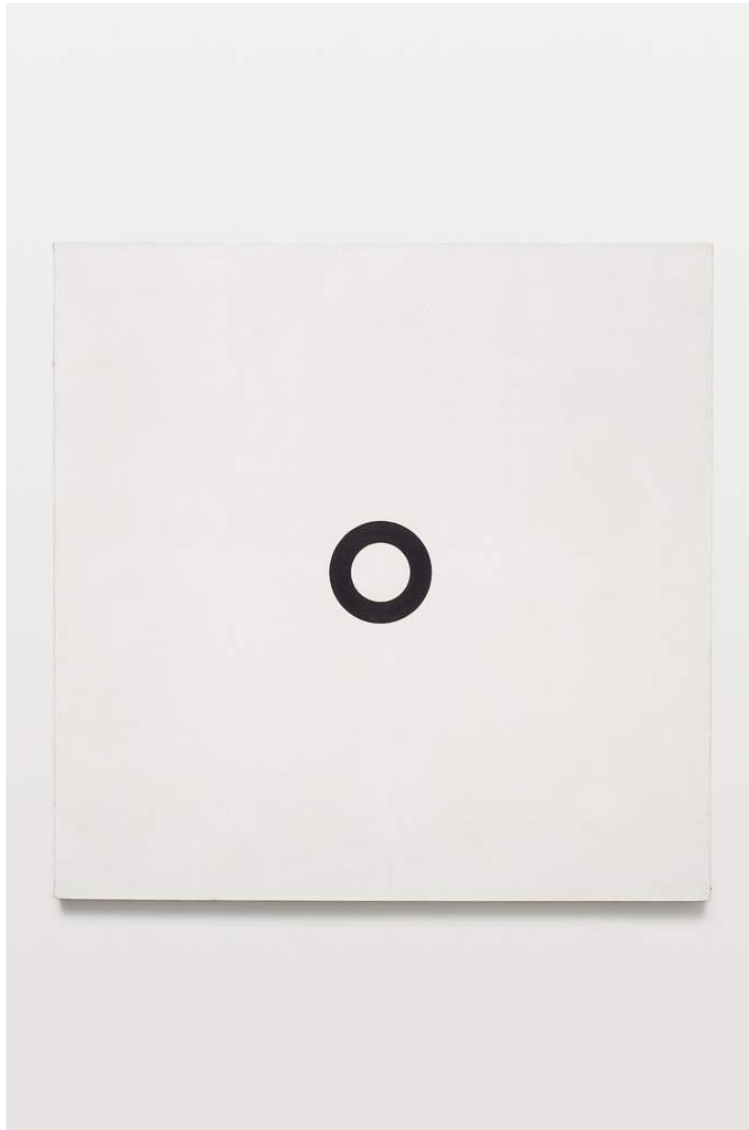
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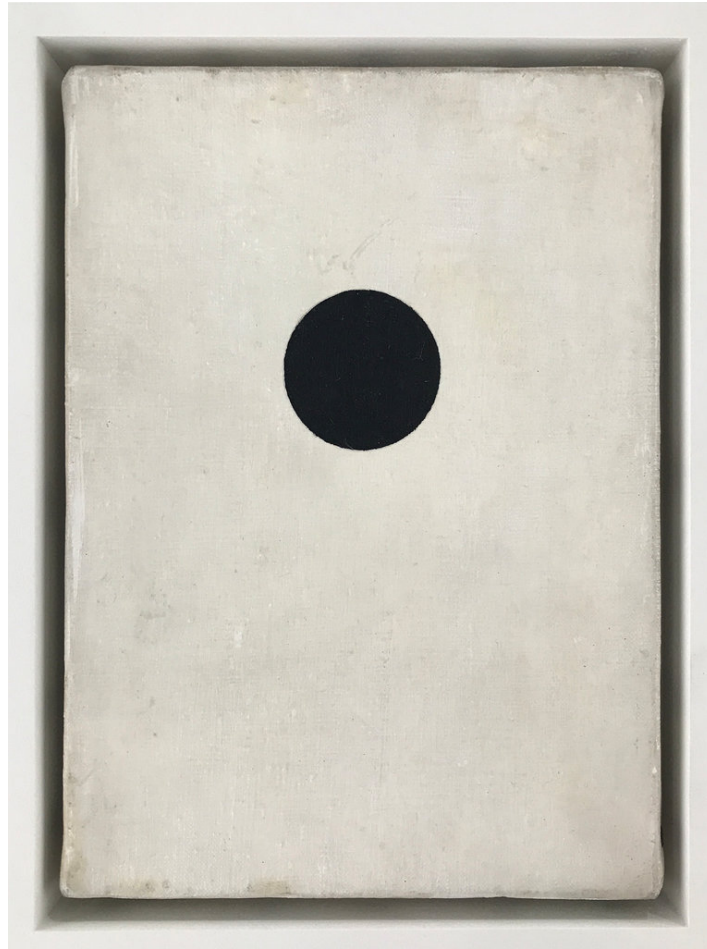
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Olivier Mosset



Untitled, 1970  
acrylic on canvas  
100 × 100 cm

Olivier Mosset



Untitled, 1966  
acrylic on canvas  
22 × 16 × 2 cm

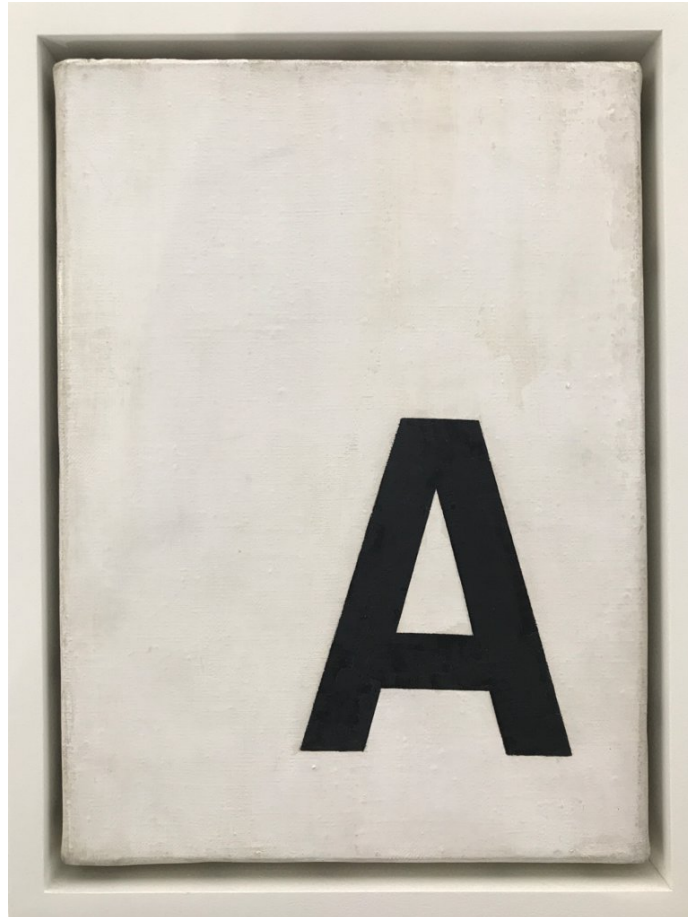
Olivier Mosset



Untitled, 1966  
acrylic on canvas  
22 × 16 × 2 cm



Olivier Mosset



Untitled, 1965  
acrylic on canvas  
22 × 16 × 2 cm

Olivier Mosset

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kôAN VII, 1964  
acrylic + framed canvas on artist framed board  
75 × 62 × 8 cm