

MASSIMODECARLO

THE PARRINOS

Maybe it was luck, maybe it was meant to be. Or maybe luck is what's meant to be? Though not for everyone. Not for anyone unlucky in their lives, those for whom life is mostly what happens to them. There are others, conversely, propelled by an impatient nature, who set things in motion for themselves, attracting energies and minds similarly self-propelled—not so much a matter of physics as of sensibilities and ideas that mutually excite, that purposefully collide. The convergence of these four artists is and isn't an example of the old notion: opposites attract. They had as much in common as not. John Armleder and Olivier Mosset came from Europe. Cady Noland and Steven Parrino were decidedly American, formed and deformed by their tangled roots, all Americans, with the exception of Native Americans, having come from somewhere else. John and Olivier are Swiss and represent, to my mind, being with and against the country's supposed neutrality/conformity. Olivier, at a restless early age, having left for Paris in '65, to present his paintings soon after with BMPT (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni), an association whose brevity in no way impeded its historical longevity, then went on to New York in '77, where he was based for many years. The fact that he traveled back and forth between New York and Europe, combined with a real curiosity for what others were doing — more so than for his own work? — made him a bridge, eventually an important connector, not only between Europe and the states but between generations. It's because of Olivier that I'm writing this now, which, although it may embarrass him now, is true.

I met Olivier in the fall of 1984, having only recently moved to the city, through Michael Corris, who had been affiliated with New York Art & Language in the mid-'70s and who was fully aware and admiring of BMPT with their pointed antagonism of museum and market structures. (Olivier recently told me something I hadn't known, that the editors of *The Fox*, among them Corris, had stayed with Olivier when they went to Paris.)

Through Olivier I met the gallery owner John Gibson, who would show John Armleder regularly from 1984 on, and I met John Armleder that year. Armleder would have a show in New York every May, arriving from Geneva, quickly making his way around the city to pick up objects and ideas for his assisted readymades and Furniture Sculpture, producing works for his shows directly in the gallery, or nearby. (Gibson, as had been standard practice for gallery owners on both sides of the Atlantic in the late '60s/early '70s, brought artists over to create a show, rather than expending resources on crates, shipping and import fees.) John Armleder's shows were an event every spring, and his New York friends always looked forward to his arrival. John and Olivier knew one another from Geneva. *Peinture abstraite*, the show organized by John in '84 at Ecart, his space in Geneva, brought together works by Helmut Federle, Lucio Fontana, Sol LeWitt, Verena Loewensburg, Robert Mangold, Gerhard Merz, Robert Motherwell, Blinky Palermo, Gerwald Rockenschaub, Robert Ryman, Jean-Frédéric Schnyder, and Otto Zitko, as well as by himself and Olivier. It was a prescient, somewhat perverse view to what would become known as Neo-Geo, and as with so many pivotal exhibitions, it was locally seen but, over time, widely known. We have to remember that in those days word traveled by mouth and through magazines—now generally regarded as irrelevant in the face of the Internet. (Before social media, people had to socialize. before the Internet, we had to connect with one another.) Three years later, in '87, John had a show with Piero Cavellini in Milan, organized by Massimo de Carlo, who worked there at the time. With the opening of his own gallery that year, he exhibited paintings by Olivier, setting up a long-standing debate between John and Olivier, like competitive siblings, as to who showed with Massimo first. When Massimo came to New York, I met him through Olivier.

In terms of luck and what's meant to be, chance plays an important part. Olivier, who had immersed himself in New York's "radical painting" scene of the late '70s, recalls being told by Brigitte Engler, a French artist in the city, about a show of monochromes which were titled after motorcycle clubs, at a gallery in the East Village. This was *Nature Morte*, a gallery run by the artists Alan Belcher and Peter Nagy, and it was, of course, a show by Steven Parrino. This is how Olivier, at a confluence of his interests, motorcycles and the monochrome, met Steven. I was a devoted follower of the artists and shows at *Nature Morte* and knew Steven from that scene. Steven and John Armleder must have met because of Olivier, and all three artists were in numerous shows that I

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organized from '86 onwards in New York, Chicago, Paris, Brussels and Vienna. It's through Steven that John, Olivier and I got to know Cady Noland. Steven and Cady had met at a Nature Morte opening, his interest in her work prompted by Peter Nagy's having shown him her slides (in the days of slides). She knew Steven's paintings from his shows at the gallery, and it's possible that his work, with its sculptural physicality and signs of violence, as well as its irreverent pop humor, is part of what made her want to show there. Looking back on that time, irreverence seems a connective tissue (Steven would say scar tissue!) between all of us: John, Olivier, Cady and Steven, as well as myself.

What attracted me to them? What attracted them to me? Massimo to them, and they to him? He would go on to show Steven and Cady, and in many ways his gallery began with a European/American parallel (and here Rudi Stingel figures as well), one that echoed the '60s/'70s in a radicality that was relevant once again. An art dealer of that generation, Rolf Ricke, was similarly drawn to Steven and to Cady, along with Laurie Parsons (who I introduced Olivier to, and to whom he was immediately drawn), and showed them in Cologne. Laurie's unaltered found objects, as those recombined in canny and disturbing ways by Cady, had resonance with the '60s/'70s as these artists went on to define a brief but thrilling period across the '80s/'90s. So too did Steven's mis-stretched canvases and his shaped and cut-out monochromes. Olivier saw this clearly, and it was true for John Armleder, for Massimo, for Rolf, and for myself. The parallels and their shift into that moment were recognized right away, and still resound. Although I say this was a brief but thrilling time, interest has never been stronger than it is now for the work of Steven and Cady—witness her recent exhibition at the MMK in Frankfurt, a tour-de-force that drew visitors from far and wide, and in which she prominently included many of Steven's paintings. The heightened interaction of his work and hers is undeniable. It's true as well that something unexpected happens when you see a painting of Steven's alongside one of Olivier's. Is it possible to see Olivier's monochromes as, in attitude, "mis-stretched" without having been wrested from their stretcher? And when a painting of Olivier's is placed next to one of John's, one in which a canvas is paired with a set of metallic Venetian blinds, we understand that neither artist believes a painting to be a window on the world. A grouping of security domes by John reflects the sense of opticality and distortion that at times will arise in Steven's work. John's fluorescent light fixtures strewn on the floor — Flavin as scatter piece? — parallels the composed chaos we associate with similar strategies of Cady's. Her funhouse mirrorlike silkscreens on aluminum readily call to mind Steven's quoting of sociopathic Manson by way of Raymond Pettibon: "I am your reflection, not your opposite," while also reminding us of Lou Reed's lyric from the Velvet Underground song, "I'll Be Your Mirror"—reflect who you are.

Despite any potential discomfort for all concerned, even from the great beyond, we can go on record as stating that John, Olivier, Cady and Steven are clearly heroes for a younger generation of artists, critics and curators, not for anything particularly heroic, as a gesture, but for the fact that they would not be swayed on their course by external forces or demands, each self-determined in their own fashion—John, the diplomatic dandy; Olivier, the perverse existentialist; Cady, the forensic sociologist; Steven, the punk de-formalist. Reflect who you are? We all saw something of ourselves in the others.

—Bob Nickas, New York, Aug. 2, 2019.

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THE PARRINOS

JOHN ARMLEDER, GÜNTHER FÖRG, OLIVIER MOSSET,
CADY NOLAND, STEVEN PARRINO

Massimo De Carlo is pleased to inaugurate the new season with the group exhibition *The Parrinos*, presenting works by Steven Parrino alongside his friends and fellow artists John Armleder, Olivier Mosset and Cady Noland and Günther Förg.

Steven Parrino is best known for his signature-misshaped monochromes with slashed canvases. Throughout his career the artist applied to his practice a relentless punk radicalism, revitalising the history of abstraction through a combination of painting, photo collage, drawing, film, video and performance. At the core of Parrino's work lies the strongest belief that "radicalism comes from content and not necessarily form" and such a belief was born from a deep understanding of the history of the painting and the avant-garde.

The Parrinos is an exploration of these distinctive relationships he had and the symbiotic influences between the works of Parrino's friends and contemporaries, including John Armleder, Olivier Mosset and Cady Noland. Günther Förg didn't directly harbour personal relationships with the other artists but Förg, along with Armleder and Mosset, served as a European counterpart to the coterie of the spirit of punk united by Steven Parrino. In fact, Förg was a great admirer and collector of Parrino's work, which is palpable in the level of existential pessimism inherent in the abstraction and repetition of the large-scale canvases he creates.

The exhibition begins with one of Parrino's signature torn canvases, *Crowbar* (1988), whilst the screeching of the stereo guides the viewer sonically towards the studio with a tumult of high-volume fuzz, playing songs from Electrophilia, Parrino's band. Adjacent to the stereo hangs John Armleder's *FS Richoux/Rocket* (2013) (depicting a guitar next to sonically inspired diptychs), creating a sensorial dedication to the great influence of music on both artists' work.

In the living room, an Olivier Mosset's motorbike immediately draws the viewer's attention with its charged and evocative presence, placed in the centre of the room. The Harley Davidson bike, *Untitled* (2019), conjures imagery of an American biker lifestyle that is at once alienating yet personal for Mosset, who is a biker himself. Sitting on the right hand side of the Mosset bike, hangs Parrino's *Warped Hole* (1992), a distorted silver canvas with a hole carved out of the material. Whereas on the left of Mosset's work, Armleder offers a personal interpretation to the limits of the readymade, presenting *Se-Kure Domes II* (1998-1999) a series of silver spherical surveillance domes attached to the wall.

The fumoir hosts a black and white enveloped canvas by Steven Parrino *No Title Painting* (2000) and four smaller works on paper by the artist together with a large Cady Noland aluminium work, *Untitled* (1989).

The scattered piles of neon lights, *Untitled (FS)* (1998), by John Armleder sits diagonally across the floor of the former dining room, playing upon the notion that a discarded or devalued object is saved and then repurposed and elevated it to a higher status. In such a way, it interacts with the misshaped

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Parrino canvas and with Mosset's *o.T.* (1974): the works are symbolic yet symbiotic when placed together, reminding the audience of either artist's punk outlook on the process of art-making.

Steven Parrino's *Blob Fuckhead Bubblegum* (1995), consisting of a 100-yard stretch conglomerate of pink painted canvas, on loan from Le Consortium Dijon museum in France, dominates the former kitchen together with the radical cynicism of Cady Noland's *Fast and Cheap* (1989) is paired with Mosset's six monochrome paintings provide a return to the radical roots of painting. Obsession is a subject matter that creates a thread throughout *The Parrinos*, here embodied by Gunther Förg's *Untitled* (1995) portraying explosions of colour across a vast canvas of negative space, throughout his practice, Förg obsessively repeated his subjects over and over again. In the same room we have the enticing installation *Fast and Cheap* (1989) by Cady Noland and six monochrome canvases by Olivier Mosset, *Untitled* (2006).

The site-specific Armleder wall painting, covering with repetitive illustrations the corner of the bedroom is in front of Cady Noland's aluminum collage panel, *Tanya as a Bandit* (1989). The raw austerity of Günther Förg's bronze canvas, *Untitled* (1995), is in stark contrast with Mosset's *Red* (2017) vivid canvas and Parrino's *Repulsion painting n2* (1992): all three works offer an insight on the materic and gestural, punk and rigor.

With each room serving as an investigation into the various facets of punk, *The Parrinos* is an all-encompassing journey traversing the lives and careers of these legendary artists. With Steven Parrino and Cady Noland emerging from the 1970's New York art scene, both have managed to carve out truly idiosyncratic attitudes that shine brightly through their work. Olivier Mosset, John Armleder, and Günther Förg are prime examples of such, serving as European pioneers to the art historical trajectory, maneuvering through minimalism, abstraction and ready made and aggressively resisting any form of classification.

Hard Facts:

Massimo De Carlo, Milano
Casa Corbellini-Wassermann
Viale Lombardia, 17 - 20131 Milano
Opening: Tuesday 17th of September 7.00 to 9.00 pm
Open Tuesday to Saturday, 11:00am – 7:00pm

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JOHN ARMLEDER

John Armleder was born in Geneva in 1948; he lives and works in Geneva and New York. His solo shows include: Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2019); Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (2019); Madre - Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Naples (2018); Museion, Bolzano (2018, 2016, 2013, 2007, 2005); Museo e Real Bosco Di Capodimonte, Naples (2017); Mamco, Genève (2016, 2007, 2006, 2004, 2003, 1997,1996); Le Consortium, Dijon (2014, 2003, 1996, 1989, 1986); Musée National Fernand Léger, Biot (2014, 1987); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013, 2008, 2006, 2000,1993); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2013, 1987); Swiss Institute, New York (2012, 2004,1993); Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice (2011); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2011, 2004); Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2009); Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (2008); Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai (2006); Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2001); Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2001); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1998, 1996, 1985,1977). In 2011 he received the Meret Oppenheim Prize, in 2007 the Leenaards Foundation Prize and in 1995 the Ville de Genève Prize. He was shown at the Thessaloniki Biennial of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki (2013); the International Triennial of Contemporary Art, Yokohama (2008); the Prague Biennial, Prague (2008); the 7th Biennial of Contemporary Art, Lyon (2003); the 6th Sculpture Biennial, Lugano (2001) and the 42nd Venice Biennial, Venice (1986).

GÜNTHER FÖRG

Günther Förg (1952 - 2013) was born in Füssen, Germany in 1952. His work has been shown in important institutions such as Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas (2018); The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2018); Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2014); Museo Carlo Bilotti, Rome (2013); Fountain Beyeler, Basel (2009); Langen Foundation, Neuss (2007); Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel (2006); Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Den Haag (2006); Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv (2002); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (1998); Tokyo Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (1991); Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach (1989); SFMoMa, San Francisco (1989). Works by Förg are part of major museum collections such as the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; Ludwig Museum, Cologne; Tate Modern, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York; SFMoMa, San Francisco; Hamburger Bahnhof-Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin.

OLIVIER MOSSET

Olivier Mosset was born in 1944 in Bern, Switzerland; he lives and works in Tucson, Arizona. His solo shows include: Antonio Dalle Nogare, Foundation (2019); Bolzano Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich (2019); Musée Régional d'Art Contemporain Languedoc-Roussillon, Sérignan (2013); Opéra National de Paris, Paris (2012); Kunsthalle Zürich (2012); Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon (2010); Museo d'Arte di Mendrisio, Mendrisio (2009); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2006); Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2003); FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand (1995); Musée Saint Pierre Art Contemporain, Lyon (1987); Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (1986). His group shows include: Fondation CAB, Brussels (2019); Musée des Beaux-arts, La Chaux-de-Fonds (2018); Espace de l'Art Concret Centre d'art contemporain, Mouans-Sartoux (2017); MAMCO, Genève (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson (2011); Whitney Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2008); Musée

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d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Genève (2007); PS1, New York (2006, 1992); Foundation Beyeler, Basel (2001); the Venice Biennial, Venice (1990); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris

(1996); the Lyon Biennale, Lyon (1993); Kunsthalle Zürich, Zürich (1986); and the 10th Paris Biennale, Paris (1977).

CADY NOLAND

Cady Noland was born in 1956 in Washington D.C. She lives and works in New York. Public collections include Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; and Le Consortium, Dijon. Major museum exhibitions include Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (1995); Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut (1996); "Strange Abstraction: Robert Gober, Cady Noland, Philip Taaffe, Christopher Wool," Touko Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (1991); Documenta 9, Kassel (1992); "MONO: Olivier Mosset, Cady Noland," Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich (1999); "Cady Noland: The American Dream," De Hallen Haarlem (2010–11); and "Regarding Warhol: Sixty Artists, Fifty Years," Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2012).

STEVEN PARRINO

Steven Parrino was born in 1958 and died in 2005 in New York. Solo exhibitions include: Dancing on Graves, Power Station, Dallas (2017); Born to Be Wild: Hommage an Steven Parrino, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland (2009); La Marque Noire. Steven Parrino, Retrospective, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2007); Steven Parrino: Retrospective, 1977-2004, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva (2005-07). Group exhibitions include: Brand New: Art and Commodity in the 1980, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (2018); Black and Blue: Steven Parrino and Yves Klein, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City (2006); Cosmic Wonder, curated by Betty Nyugen, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2006); The Painted World, curated by Bob Nickas, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City (2005); What's New Pussycat, curated by Udo Kitzler, Museum of Modern Art, Frankfurt (2005); None of the Above, curated by John Armleder, Swiss Institute, New York (2004); Following and to be followed, Le Consortium, Dijon (2004); Before the end, Le Consortium, Dijon (2004); Global world/ Private universe, Kunstmuseum, St. Gallen, Switzerland (2004); We Love Painting – American Contemporary Art from the Misumi Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2003); Black Bonds: Jutta Koether and Steven Parrino, The Swiss Institute, New York (2002); Gegen Den Strich, Ludwig Museum, Cologne (2000); Endgames, Kunstmuseum, St. Gallen (2000).

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