



press release

neon

who's afraid of red yellow and blue?

curator: David Rosenberg

at la maison rouge February 17th may 20th 2012

press preview Thursday February 16th 2012 9h30am to 11am

private view Thursday February 16th 2012 6pm to 9pm



Maurizio Nannucci, *Who's afraid of red yellow and blue?*, 1970

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Throughout winter 2012, la maison rouge will stage the first major international exhibition of neon art from the 1950s to the present day. Some one hundred works will be presented in all, many of historical significance, many being shown for the first time. They will include pieces by such pioneers as Lucio Fontana from the early 1950s, François Morellet, Bruce Nauman, Stephen Antonakos, Joseph Kosuth and Mario Merz from the 1960s, and some of the many contemporary artists working in this medium, such as Jason Rhoades, Sylvie Fleury and Claude Lévêque.

On the right-hand side of Mendeleev's periodic table are the so-called 'noble' gases, a group of chemical elements with common properties: under standard conditions, they are all odourless and colourless, but under pressure these mono-atomic gases produce a coloured light when an electric current is passed through them. Neon (Ne), from *neos*, the Greek word for new, emits a red light. Argon (Ar) produces a blue light, while the light from sodium vapour is yellow.

French physicist and chemist Georges Claude developed the first neon tube in 1912, exactly one century ago. He unveiled his invention publicly at the Paris World Fair. A few years later, Claude filed a patent in the United States and, in 1923, sold his first two neon signs - reading 'Packard' - to a car dealership. The rest is history...

As early as the 1930s, Moholy-Nagy was predicting that it would not be long before the "field of expression" formed by night-time city lights found "its own artists."

Lucio Fontana showed the first ever work in Europe to be made entirely from neon, at the 1951 Milan Triennial: a vast, glowing, suspended whirlpool.

In the early '60s, in France, Greece and the USA, François Morellet, Stephen Antonakos, Bruce Nauman and Keith Sonnier began to use neon in their performances and visual works. Around the same time, Dan Flavin started working with a specific type of lamp: fluorescent tubes. All the work from this period was of an abstract nature, whether lyrical or geometric.

In the mid-sixties, neon learned to 'talk' and 'count,' first with Joseph Kosuth's neon tautologies then, a few years later, Maurizio Nannucci's early 'writings' - neon words or fragments of sentences in which colours, signs and meaning meld into one. At the same time, Mario Merz and Pier Paolo Calzolari incorporated neon words and numbers into their sculptural and/or sound installations.

Martial Raysse, meanwhile, was including neon punctuation marks - 'signs of desire' - in his assemblage-paintings. Michel Journiac created 'Piège pour un voyeur,' a performance piece comprising a prison cell with neon tubes for bars, and a naked model inside.

In scarcely thirty years, this multitude of experiments and research took neon from a scientific invention, used primarily for advertising in urban areas, to an artistic medium in its own right. Now neon brings together artists as diverse as Tracey Emin, Claude Lévêque, Jason Rhoades .

Art made of colour and light, yes, but neon art is also - first and foremost even - about *line* and *curve*.

Neon invites its public to follow and explore this simple line as it curves its way along innumerable winding, shining paths.

David Rosenberg

Exhibited artists

Adel Abdessemed (born in 1971 in Constantine, Algeria), **Saâdane Afif** (born in 1970 in Vendôme, France), **Jean-Michel Alberola** (born in 1953 in Saïda, Algeria), **He An** (born in 1971 in Wuhan, Hubei, China), **Stephen Antonakos** (born in 1926 in Laconie, Greece), **John Armleder** (born in 1948 in Geneva, Switzerland), **Fiona Banner** (born in 1966 in Merseyside, England), **Jean-Pierre Bertrand** (born in 1937 in Paris, France), **Pierre Bismuth** (born in 1963 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France), **Monica Bonvicini** (Born in 1965 in Venice, Italia), **Nathalie Brevet** (born in 1976 in La Clayette, France) **et** **Hughes Rochette** (born in 1975 in Saint-Maur-les-Fossés, France), **Stefan Brüggemann** (born in 1975 in Mexico City, Mexico), **Marie José Burki** (born in 1961 in Biel, Switzerland), **Pedro Cabrita Reis** (born in 1956 in Lisbon, Portugal), **Pier Paolo Calzolari** (born in 1943 in Bologne, Italia), **Hsia-Fei Chang** (born in 1976 in Tapei, Taiïwan), **Chryssa** (born in 1933 in Athens, Greece), **Claire Fontaine** (artist collective created in 2004), **Carlos Cruz Diez** (born in 1923 in Caracas, Venezuela), **Stéphane Dafflon** (born in 1972 in Neyruz, Switzerland), **Cédric Delsaux*** (born in 1974), **Frédéric Develay**, **Laddie John Dill** (born in 1943 in Long Beach, California, USA), **Tracey Emin** (born in 1963 in Croydon, England), **Cerith Wyn Evans** (born in 1958 in Llanelli, Wales), **Ian Hamilton Finlay** (1925-2006, born in Nassau, Bahamas), **Dan Flavin** (1933-1996, born in Jamaica, New-York, USA), **Sylvie Fleury** (born in 1961 in Geneva, Switzerland), **Lucio Fontana** (1899-1968, born in Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina), **Michel François*** (born in 1956 in Saint-Trond, Belgium), **Kendell Geers** (born in 1968 in Johannesburg, South Africa), **Gun Gordillo** (born in Lund, Sweden), **Douglas Gordon** (born in 1966 in Glasgow, Scotland), **Laurent Grasso** (born in 1972 in Mulhouse, France), **Jeppe Hein** (born in 1974 in Copenhagen, Denmark), **Bethan Huws** (born in 1961 in Bangor, Wales), **Alfredo Jaar** (born in 1965 in Santiago de Chile, Chile), **Jeff Koons** (born in 1955 in York, Pennsylvania, USA), **Gyula Kosice** (born in 1924 in Košice, Slovakia), **Joseph Kosuth** (born in 1945 in Toledo, Ohio, USA), **Piotr Kowalski** (1927-2004, born in Poland), **Brigitte Kowanz** (born in 1957 in Vienna, Austria), **David Kramer** (born in 1963, USA), **Sigalit Landau** (born in 1969 in Jerusalem, Israel), **Bertrand Lavier** (born in 1949 in Châtillon-sur-Seine, France), **Thomas Lélou** (born in 1976 in Seclin, France), **Claude Lévêque** (born in 1953 in Nevers, France), **Glenn Ligon** (born in 1960, in the Bronx, New-York, USA),

Jill Magid (born in 1973 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, USA), **Pierre Malphettes** (born in 1970 in Paris, France), **Xavier Mary** (born in 1982 in Liège, Belgium), **Mathieu Mercier** (born in 1970 in Conflans Saint-Honorine, France), **Mario Merz** (1925-2003, born in Milano, Italia), **Eric Michel** (born in 1962 in Aix-en-Provence), **Jonathan Monk** (born in 1969 in Leicester, England), **François Morellet** (born in 1926 in Cholet, France), **Thomas Mulcaire** (born in 1971 in Johannesburg, South Africa), **Jan Van Munster** (born in 1939 in Gorinchem, Netherlands), **Andrea Nacciarriti** (born in 1976 in Ostra Vetere, Italia), **Maurizio Nannucci** (born in 1939 in Florence, Italia), **Bruce Nauman** (born in 1941 in Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA), **Ivan Navarro** (born in 1972 in Santiago, Chile), **Melik Ohanian** (born in 1969, France), **Fritz Panzer*** (born in 1945 in Judenburg, Austria), **Laurent Pernot** (born in 1980 in Paris, France), **Mai-Thu Perret** (born in 1976 in Genevea, Switzerland), **Martial Raysse** (born in 1936 in Golfe-Juan, France), **Delphine Reist*** (born in 1970 in Sion, Switzerland), **Jason Rhoades** (1965-2006, born in Newcastle, California, USA), **Sarkis** (born in 1938 in Istanbul, Turkey), **Frank Scurti** (born in 1965 in Lyon, France), **Alain Séchas** (born in 1955 in Colombes, France), **Miri Segal** (born in 1965 in Haifa, Israel), **Keith Sonnier** (born in 1941 in Mamou, Louisiana, USA), **Tse Su Mei** (born in 1973 in Luxemburg, Luxemburg), **Vassiliki Tsekoura** (born in 1947 in Salonique, Greece), **Alan Suicide Vega** (born in 1938 in Brooklyn, USA), **Giancarlo Zen** (born in 1929, Italia).

** selected work which the medium is not neon*

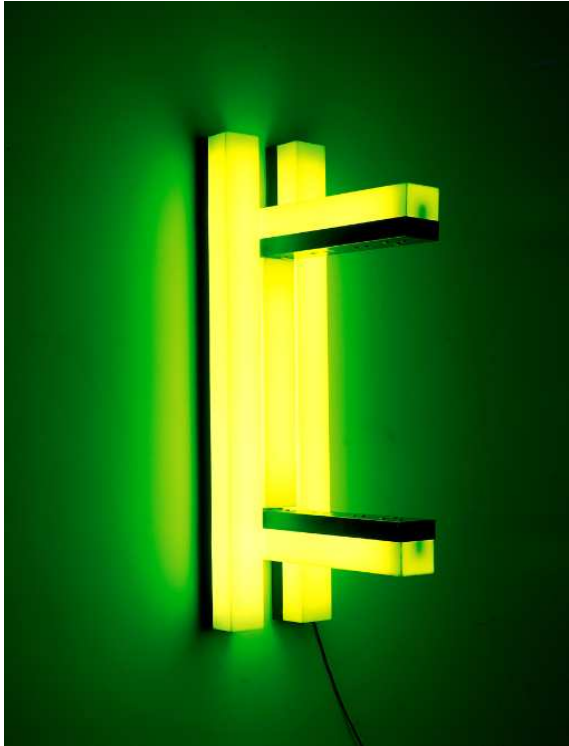
some works



Martial Raysse, *Snack*, 1964

Picture : Art Digital Studio © 2009 Martial Raysse / ADAGP

Courtesy François Pinault Foundation



Dan Flavin, *Untitled*, 1968
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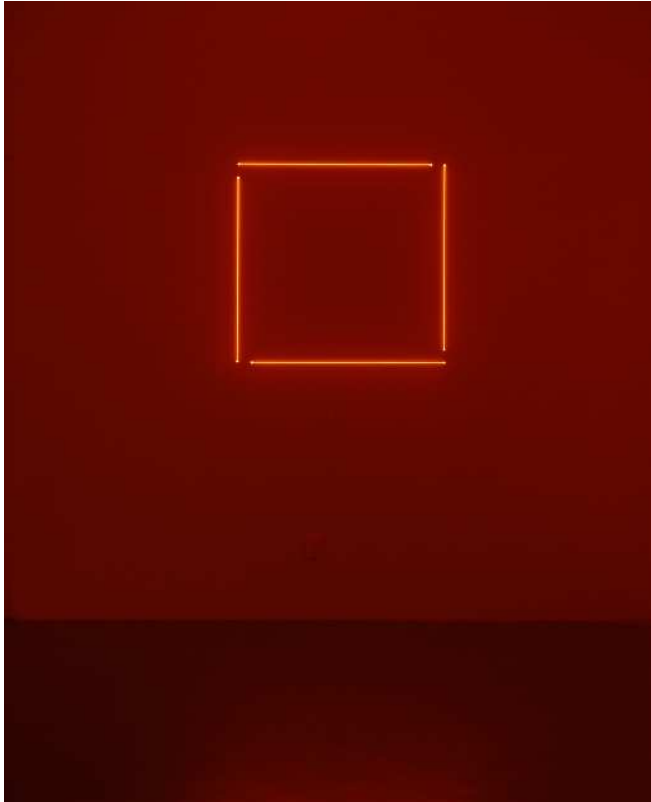
François Morellet, *Neon in space*, 1969/96
Courtesy Denise René Gallery, Paris



Bruce Nauman, *None Sing Neon Sign*, 1970
Copyright Sylvio Perlstein Collection, Anvers



Bruce Nauman, *RAW/WAR*, 1970
Mario Merz, *Dear Cart*, 1970
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Stephen Antanakos, *Red Neon Incomplete Square*, 1975
Courtesy Konrad Fisher Gallery, Düsseldorf



Jason Rhoades, *Untitled*, 2004
Courtesy The Frank Cohen Collection



Sylvie Fleury, *High Heels on the Moon*, 2005
Courtesy Mehdi Chouakri Gallery, Berlin



Claude Lévêque, *Dream!*, 2008
© ADAGP/Claude Lévêque,
Courtesy the artist and Kamel Mennour, Paris



Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Chromosaturation*, 2011

Exposition "*Carlos Cruz-Diez : Color in Space and Time*", Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (États-Unis), 2011

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Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Chromosaturation*, 2011

Exposition "*Cruz-Diez. Color in Space*", Dream Forest Arts Center, Sang Sang Tok Tok Gallery, Séoul (Corée du Sud), 2011

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