

FRANÇOIS MORELLET 100 PER CENT

FROM 03.04 TO 28.09.26

GALLERY 3 AND SNCF TECHNICAL CENTER

 Centre
Pompidou-Metz

PRESS RELEASE

January 16, 2026

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OPENING HOURS
Every day except Tuesday and May 1st

01.11 > 31.03
MON. | WED. | THU. | FRI. | SAT. | SUN. | 10:00 – 18:00

01.04 > 31.10
MON. | WED. | THU. | 10:00 – 18:00 / FRI. | SAT. | SUN. | 10:00 – 19:00



FRANÇOIS MORELLET. 100 PER CENT

From April 3 to September 28, 2026 – Gallery 3

Curator: Michel Gauthier, Curator, Contemporary Art Collection,
Centre Pompidou, National Museum of Modern Art

2026 marks the centenary of the birth of François Morellet (1926-2016). To commemorate it, the Centre Pompidou-Metz presents a retrospective in 100 works ranging from 1941 to 2016 — the most comprehensive retrospective to date of François Morellet.

Morellet is unique in that he was both the leading French figure of geometric abstraction and the one who most decisively contributed to destabilising it. Through the selected works, this major retrospective explores the ambivalence between reason and unreason, between the legacy of Francis Picabia and that of Piet Mondrian, whom the artist liked to refer to.

Within the 1,200 square metres of Galerie 3 of the Centre Pompidou-Metz, the exhibition offers the public the chance to experience this ambivalence through two chronological paths, from Morellet's early pictorial experiments from the 1940s, rarely shown until now, to his baroque neon works from the 2010s. The first path reveals Morellet's work within the prevailing rules and the glories of pictorial materialism. The other path focuses on Morellet's optical irrationality and Neo-Dadaist distance. One of these two aspects alone would have been sufficient to establish Morellet's historic grandeur. From April 3 to September 28, 2026, the Centre Pompidou-Metz will therefore offer visitors the chance to see the two sides of Morellet's greatness.

After discovering the work of Max Bill during trips to Brazil in 1950 and 1951, Morellet decided to pursue the path opened by concrete art. In 1952, a visit to the Alhambra convinced him to abandon all ideas of composition. From then on, he adopted **an elementary geometric vocabulary, and developed creative methods that left no scope for subjectivity**, using pre-established procedures, applied in a neutral and precise manner. Reacting against the lyrical abstraction that was dominant at the time, he sought to keep all expressiveness at bay, thus embracing a programmed, systematic art. Rejecting the figure of the inspired artist, he sought to limit both his sensitivity and the number of decisions to be made in the conception of the artwork, which logically led him to rely on chance. Over the decades, in a narrative that would lead him to dialogue with concrete art, then with minimalism, of which he was a precursor in many respects, Morellet gradually became interested in the painting as an object, placing it in relation with the wall, and later, with the surrounding space. In this sense, he can be considered as **one of the main proponents of the powers of rules, advocating for the poetics of reason**.

However, as early as the 1960s, Morellet observed that his elaboration programs sometimes resulted in optical aberrations, and ended up **joining the experiments of the GRAV** (Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, Visual Art Research Group), **becoming one of the major representatives of op art, an aesthetic that valued the destabilisation of the gaze and the instability of perception**. With Morellet, the op movement found an unexpected ally in a Neo-Dadaist spirit, nurtured by a long engagement with chance and its virtues. In his work, the proud, literalist neon light of minimalism and Dan Flavin thus often turned into an accomplice to deviations that he himself playfully likened to rococo. In other words, optical irrationality and derision were, just like rules, one of the constitutive dimensions of Morellet's art. This retrospective presents Morellet's work as constitutively founded on that ambivalence.

In order to highlight the aspect of Morellet's practice that invests public space through what he designated as his "architectural disintegrations", **the exhibition extends beyond the walls of the Centre Pompidou-Metz over a long period of time**, and invests in the surrounding neighbourhood. One of his ceremonial works, *Trames 30° - 60° - 120° - 150° partant d'un angle du mur. Intervalles : 5,5 m* (1977-2026), is thus **reactivated on the monumental scale of the SNCF technical Center façade, and is visible from Galerie 3**.

The exhibition catalogue is published by the Centre Pompidou-Metz. Following an introductory essay by the exhibition curator, the book includes contributions from Domitille d'Orgeval, Michel Gauthier, Marion Guibert, Roxane Ilias, Sonja Klee, Victor Vanoosten, and Erik Verhagen. It raises questions about the international dimension of Morellet's journey in particular, and pays homage through its graphic design to the systematic and playful practice of the artist.

The François Morellet. 100 per cent retrospective **inaugurates the centenary of the birth of François Morellet**. On this occasion, many institutions come together and pay tribute to one of the major figures of contemporary art, at the initiative of the Centre Pompidou.

Morellet's work is found in the greatest public collections in France, as well as many collections internationally. He also made a lasting impression on public space, with over 100 works visible in our cities — on building façades, in gardens, at train stations, and on public squares. Thanks to the freedom and humour with which he embraced the vocabulary of geometric abstraction, he created a vibrant dialogue between art, architecture, and the public. Echoing the François Morellet. 100 per cent retrospective presented at the Centre Pompidou-Metz, **a vast national programme has been initiated by the Centre Pompidou, in collaboration with the Estate François Morellet and many partner institutions**.

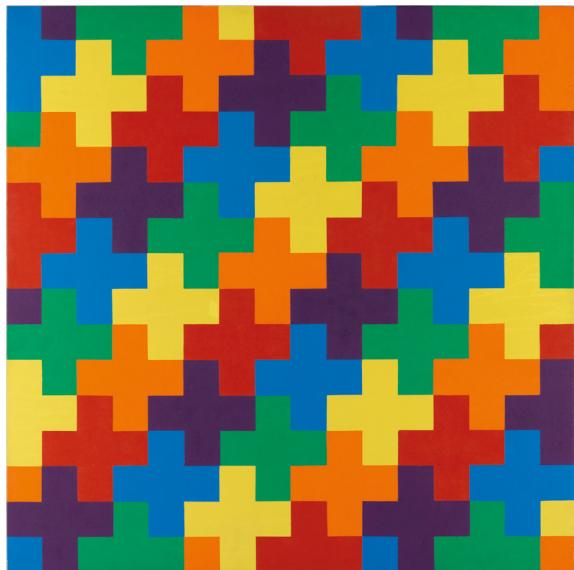
This large-scale project will unfold across France through unprecedented exhibitions featuring works on display for the first time, rediscoveries of works from various collections and public spaces, as well as a series of talks and conferences. The aim is to re-examine Morellet's legacy, his place in art history, his relationship to heritage and architecture, and his enduring influence on contemporary artists.

PARTICIPATING VENUES

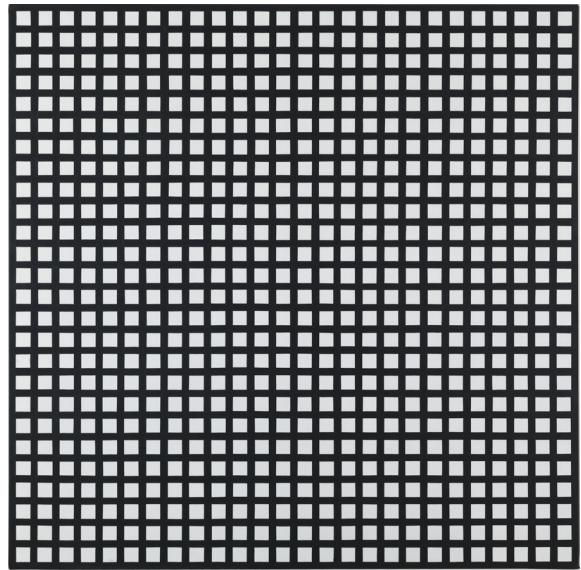
Centre Pompidou-Metz
Château de Montsoreau – Museum of Contemporary Art
Château de Versailles
Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Paris
National School of Art, Bourges
Espace de l'Art Concret (eac.), Mouans-Sartoux
Frac des Pays de la Loire, Hellcity, Clisson
Galerie de l'Hôtel de Ville, Chinon
Galerie Mennour, Paris
Grand Palais RMN, Paris
[mac] musée d'art contemporain, Marseille
MAC VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Cholet
Musée d'arts de Nantes
Musée de Grenoble
Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Angers
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes
Musée du Louvre, Paris
Musée national Fernand Léger, Biot
Villa Médicis, French Academy à Rome

Centre Pompidou Francilien – Fabrique de l'Art, Massy, at its opening

PRESS IMAGES AVAILABLE



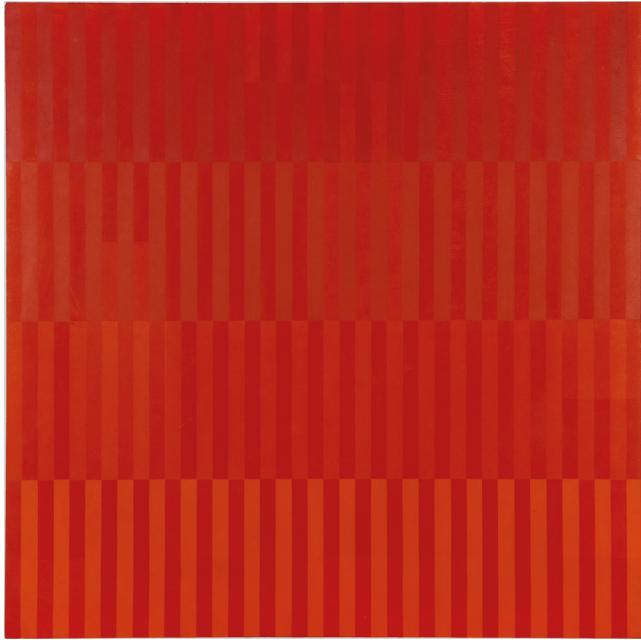
François Morellet, *Violet, bleu, vert, jaune, orange, rouge*, 1953
Oil on wood, 80 x 80 cm
Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, AM 1985-494
© ADAGP, Paris, 2026
Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Audrey Laurans / Dist. Grand Palais RMN



François Morellet, *1 double trame épaisse - 0°*, 1972
Oil on canvas, 240 x 240 cm
Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, AM 2021-573
© ADAGP, Paris, 2026
Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Audrey Laurans / Dist. Grand Palais RMN



François Morellet, *4 trames 30° - 60° - 120° - 150° partant d'un angle du mur. Intervalle : 5,5 m*, 1977-2026
Black adhesive tape
Rendering simulation
© ADAGP, Paris, 2026



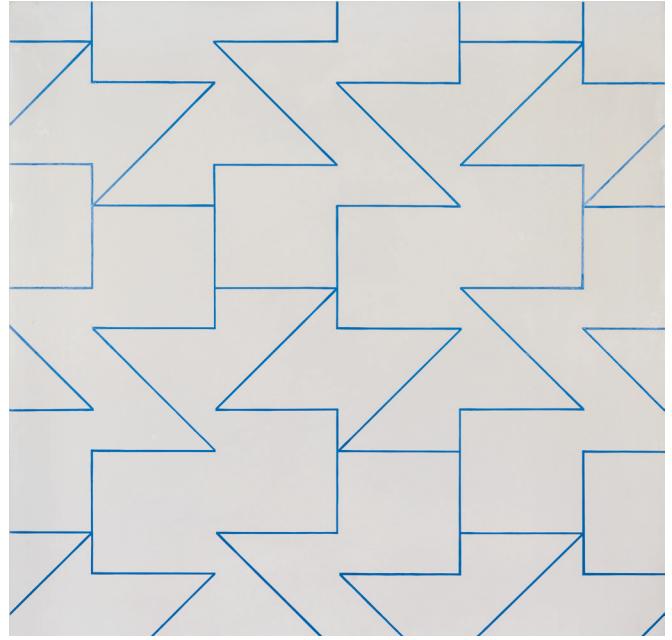
François Morellet, *5 rouges différents*, 1953

Oil on wood, 80 x 80 cm

Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, AM 2021-565

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François Morellet, *2 fois 90°, 90°, 45°, 45°, etc. n°1*, 1957

Oil on wood, 80 x 80 cm

Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, AM 2021-567

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Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Hélène Mauri / Dist. Grand Palais RMN



François Morellet, *Ligne continue sur 4 plans inclinés à 0°, 30°, 60°, 90°*, 1979

Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 800 cm (each canvas: 200 x 200 cm)

Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, AM 2021-574

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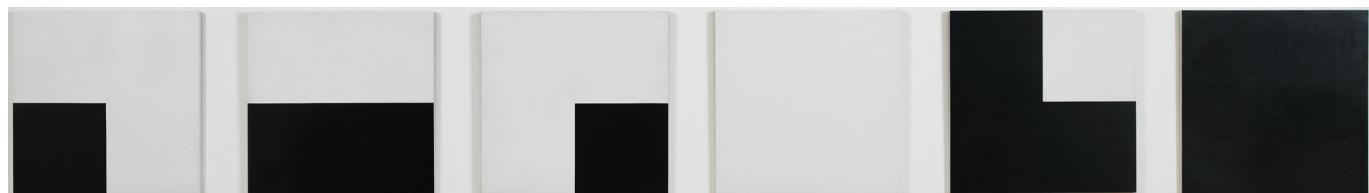
Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Bertrand Prévost / Dist. Grand Palais RMN



François Morellet, *3 x 3*, 1954
Oil on wood, 134.3 x 134 cm
Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, AM 1985-496
© ADAGP, Paris, 2026
Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Georges Meguerditchian / Dist. Grand Palais RMN



François Morellet, *Du jaune au blanc*, 1953
Oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm
Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, AM 2021-566
© ADAGP, Paris, 2026
Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Hélène Mauri / Dist. Grand Palais RMN



François Morellet, *6 répartitions aléatoires de 4 carrés noirs et blancs d'après les chiffres pairs et impairs du nombre pi*, 1958
Oil on wood, 80 x 80 cm (Each panel)
Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, AM 1982-16



François Morellet, *Du jaune au violet*, 1956
Oil on canvas, 110.3 x 215.8 cm
Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, 1982, AM 1982-15
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