

MARTOS GALLERY

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Olivier Mosset

Drive-In

OPENING FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH, 6 – 8 PM

February 14 – March 29, 2025

Martos Gallery is pleased to present Olivier Mosset, *Drive-In*, an exhibition featuring a specific triangulation proposed by the artist: one car, one painting, one video.

The car is an El Camino from 1964 which the artist painted primer gray, a reference to a similarly painted 1955 Chevrolet 150 which features prominently in the revered cult movie *Two Lane Blacktop* (1971), directed by Monte Hellman. Mosset's attraction to the movie, beyond his interest in car culture and the story of a cross country race, as well as the performances, is likely due to its minimal/existential structure and sensibility. In an interesting coincidence, an El Camino appears near the very end of the movie. Mosset's El Camino was for many years the car he used in Tucson, Arizona, where he has lived since the mid-'90s. Only exhibited once previously, although it had the status of a sculptural object in the context of a gallery, it served primarily as his way of getting around town. Primer is also significant in that it is a base coat. Mosset never selected a color to be the topcoat for his car, or rather intentionally chose not to, emphasizing the material aspect of the auto-body.

The painting is an untitled monochrome from 1983. Mosset was initially associated with conceptualism and art reduced to a "zero degree," firmly established by the repetition of the "circle" paintings he made between 1966 and 1974, of which there are more than 200. His position of neutrality and an ongoing engagement with a repeated motif and the idea of an assisted readymade led him to produce stripe paintings in the mid-'70s, followed by monochromes (until the mid-'80s.) His is a particular iconoclasm—an existential indifference in parallel with an abiding belief in an art work's autonomy. Of the monochrome he might say, "It is what it is." And not only. Because the monochrome may be thought to contain the memory of all painting while steadfastly representing the denial of an image, which can always be considered politically. We can also think of a car painted primer gray as a monochrome, one with actual use value.

The video documents an event held on New Year's Eve 2004 at Circuit, an artist-run space in Lausanne, Switzerland, titled *Last Run at Montriond 14*. The date was chosen, in part, because on that evening noise could be made with little or no complaint, and noise was made. A driver, Steve Paley, got behind the wheel of his Chevy Malibu SBC 350 Blower, revved the engine for many minutes, creating clouds

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of exhaust which sent all but the most die-hard in attendance outside, then spun the wheels to leave dark burn marks on the floor—an automotive drawing of sorts, supercharged. Though Mosset had “orchestrated” Last Run, he was unable to attend, an example of how he is happy for something to happen or be produced—an artwork, a show, an event—while maintaining a certain remove.

Drive-In may be thought to refer to the Chevy that was driven in to Circuit, formerly a mechanic’s garage, to Mosset’s El Camino having been brought into the Martos Gallery, and with Two-Lane Blacktop in mind, to drive-in movies.

—Bob Nickas