

experiments to the more contemporary monumental pieces, but rather to consider the theoretical and critic contexts within which his radical rethinking of painting has arisen. Several rooms are dedicated to artists with whom Mosset was closely associated, such as John Armleder and Sylvie Fleury. The presence of Tinguely's gargantuan sculpture *Cercle et carré éclatés* (1981) and Daniel Spoerri's "tableaux piégés" affirm both Mosset's connection with Nouveau réalisme and the influence of these two personalities on his provocative approach to abstraction.

Mosset's involvement with BMPT, his appropriation of Buren's vertical lines (1974–77), and his first "monochromes" shown at Ecart in Geneva (1976) are some of the crucial stages leading to a red-themed room that includes large shaped canvases. These works also speak to his connection with New York's Radical Painting group as well as his dialogue with Steven Parrino and Cady Noland. The journey ends with an entire floor devoted to his monumental "non-paintings" and "Cimaises" that symbolize his "side-stepping into the third dimension." The retrospective offers a rhizomatic understanding of Mosset's relentless questioning of painting's limits, documenting his lucid take on abstraction as an exercise in finding the balance between staying with the most relevant debates in art and refusing any specific style.

12 Sveta Mordovskaya  
"Monuments"  
Cherish, Geneva  
by Sylvain Menétray

Around the world, anti-racist protesters are toppling symbols of colonialism such as the statue of the slave trader Edward Colston, which was recently thrown into Bristol Harbor. The same anger now extends to the numerous Christopher Columbus monuments all over America and Spain. History is not only written but also erected on pedestals, projecting the shadow of the disasters its victors have caused. The lush, untidy, and uncultivated garden in the backyard of the Geneva



12 Sveta Mordovskaya, *Monuments III*, 2020. Straw, PVC sheets, variable dimensions. Installation view of "Monuments," at Cherish, Geneva, 2020. Courtesy of Cherish, Geneva.

artist-run space Cherish faces another type of monument typical of the city: the glass-covered headquarters of the multinational corporation Procter & Gamble. This is where Russian-born, Vienna-based artist Sveta Mordovskaya toys with and dismantles the idea of the monument. In the garden, a display of second-hand kitchenware and trinkets, placed on the ground, welcomes visitors. Rainwater has filled the teapots and eggcups to the brim. Insects explore a cheap gypsum bust and owl statuette. Like mushroom fairy rings popping out of wet grass, the objects look arranged – in a curved shape akin to a big smile – by natural mystery rather than human (read: male) pride translated into prestige and verticality. Yet each object remains invested with the far-off memories of its previous owners, acting as memorials without hubris or monumentality. Further down into the garden, two heavy transparent PVC sheets cover a pile of straw. Beneath the vinyl surface, humidity condensates. A recurrent material in Mordovskaya's work, straw, when she uses it in a gallery, points to a desire to create a makeshift protective space for oneself. In this outside setting, however, the nest of straw promises to decay, the PVC sheets accelerating the entropic process by creating a warm and moist environment. Conversely, by compressing the straw, the PVC sheets freeze the pile's shape as if it were a photogram. The site and non-site of the work collapse in a combination of decomposable and resistant materials.

The two other works in the sculpture garden<sup>1</sup> are a big synthetic tumbleweed made out of shiny crumpled gift foils and a thin, human-scale tube covered with air-dry clay to which is attached a cloud of folded wire. The self-effacing formal and material choices open up a dialectic of the artwork as a transient memorial detached from any authoritarian referent – a memorabilia of our industrial civilization after its transformation into junk by the next storm.

1 "Sculpture Garden" is the title of an outdoor biennial concurrently opening in Geneva.

106

107

13 Benjamin Hirte  
"First Houses"  
Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna  
by Max Henry

The great exodus has begun. Lockdown 2020 ensures reverse migration will be the death knell of dense urbanism. City life has lost its luster. The crowds will head for the hills to recolonize rural byways and small towns everywhere. The great era of the city is over. Cultural theorist Paul Virilio said so in his prescient 2005 treatise *City of Panic*, a post-9/11 polemic on the "pathological regression of the city" and the retreat into virtual reality. Sound familiar?

The gist of Benjamin Hirte's extremely spartan exhibition "First Houses" is essentially three pieces: a handsome sandstone sculpture shaped like a bulky hybrid drinking fountain/animal form; a small framed photo of a L.E.S. rooftop at night indicating a performance going on; and a projected photographic series of public spaces in which all is not what it seems. Hirte used a 3-D application to scan the locations. The images are compressed architectural fragments, like pieces of the Rosetta stone. Subtle virtual modifications add to the eerie dissonance of public spaces devoid of people. A pin drop can be heard. Thirty minutes of this montage communicates melancholy, romance, and the bleak defacement of a failed utopia. Cycles of boom and bust are ingrained into the well-worn bricks and cracked surfaces of concrete, steel, asphalt, and stone. Urbanism is a palimpsest overwritten time and again. Back in the edgy 1970s, NYC was nearly bankrupt, and lots of prime real estate previously abandoned to squatters was reclaimed by the city and sold off to developers. Class war and gentrification are the twin poles of city life. Blocks of old tenements are contrasted against newly built luxury high-rises. Public spaces are the breadcrumbs left for the unruly masses. Give them a skate park and water fountains for those sweltering summer days. Smell the chlorine in the pool, the urine in a vestibule; read the graffiti proclamations ("Jessy is sexy"); witness the grandeur of decay and wander amid the brutalist architecture.

Art here was fated to imitate life. NYC, silenced under lockdown, brought to mind downtown poet Jim Carroll's "Fragment: Little N.Y. Ode":

I sleep on a tar roof  
scream my songs  
into lazy floods of stars...  
a white powder paddles through blood and heart  
and  
the sounds return  
pure and easy...  
this city is on my side.



13 Benjamin Hirte, *First Houses*, 2020. Video projection, beamer. 27'. Courtesy of Galerie Emanuel Layr, Wien.

14 Jim Dine, *Tie Tie*, 1961. Oil and graphite on canvas. 73 × 77.5 in. Private collection, Rome. Courtesy of Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome. © Azienda Speciale Palaexpo.



14 Jim Dine  
Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome  
by Eleonora Milani

In a 1966 film directed by Lane Slate and Alan R. Solomon, Jim Dine, with a downward gaze and the attitude of someone who had already tired of the New York art scene, in one passage declares his complete trust in objects, in the way they exist together. After passing through the first room of Palazzo delle Esposizioni's large survey dedicated to the artist, I confronted that film. Those words, "I trust objects so much, I trust disparate elements going together [...] I think anything goes next to another thing; it's just what you bring to it," were epiphanic. They are also key to understanding an exhibition that traces Dine's entire career, from the early self-portraits *Head* and *Small Head* (both 1959) and their implicit dialogue with the first environments and happenings, from *The House* (1960) to *A Shining Bed* (1961), or the final performance, *Natural History (The Dreams)*, in 1965.

An extraordinary connection with the 1960s art scene in Rome is quite tangible in the second room, where works such as *Black Shovel* (1962), *Window with an Ax* (1961–62), and *Two Nests* (1960) recall Kounellis or Paolini, particularly their rigorous, almost sacramental approach to incorporating an object within a space (whether it be on the wall or on the floor). In the same room, works with painted objects accompanied by the word that describes them are both obvious yet also at the mercy of the spectator: *Shoe* (1961) is precisely a shoe, just as *Tie Tie* (1961) represents two ties – an attitude that echoes Picasso's intentions more than Dine's contemporaries Johns and Rauschenberg.

With the latter, Dine had in common the use of assemblage in exploring what occurs between the "literalness of the object and the mystery of the story of a comedy of waste," as Francesco Guzzetti aptly points out in the catalogue text "'New Uses of the Human Image': Jim Dine's Happenings," which cites Lawrence Alloway – specifically the text that accompanied the exhibition "New Forms New Media" at Martha Jackson Gallery in 1961.

The self-referentiality that Dine transfers to objects is