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Museum of Contemporary
Art Detroit

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MOCAD PRESENTS

**UNFURLED:
SUPPORTS/SURFACES
1966-1976**

ON VIEW FEBRUARY 1 – APRIL 21, 2019



View of works by Patrick Saytour, Daniel Dezeuze, and Claude Viallat in the Streets of Coarse for Poetic Encounters, 1969.

Detroit, MI –The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit will present the first exhibition in the Midwest and most comprehensive show to date of the French art movement **Supports/Surfaces**. This group of twelve artists, along with several others who were closely affiliated, lived and worked in the south of France and Paris, producing artwork marked by an interest in materiality, a lyrical use of color, and expansive ideas of what constitutes a painting. French society was undergoing social protests and upheavals in the 1960s that mirrored the civil rights and anti-war movements in the USA. The Supports/Surfaces artists sought new forms and methods to reflect their times: standard art materials were dropped in favor of homespun non-art materials (bed sheets, rope, dish rags) and figuration was replaced by loose, permeable grids that hinted at a more democratic method of art-making and a proposal for humane society.

Although working abstractly, these artists shared a deeply political approach to making and showing art. The fact that they were based outside Paris was already a counter-institutional thing to do in an extremely centralized country like France. They purposefully sought small towns in the south to do impromptu, temporary shows. They often abandoned the art and moved on to the next place to create another “exhibition.” They displayed art in cafes and on river banks and beaches and on the walls of cities. **Unfurled: Supports/Surfaces 1966-1976** will employ similar strategies in the MOCAD exhibition space: hanging art from the rafters and

employing an “all-over” approach to installation, using the original, historic pieces by these artists. “This is the first institutional survey in the United States honoring fourteen French artists from Supports/Surfaces,” says Hervé Ferrage, Deputy Cultural Counselor of the French Embassy. “Developed during the French political turmoil of the late 1960s, this movement saw a handful of leftist artists explore the same complexities as their American Minimalist peers, questioning the standard procedures linked to painting. We’re thrilled to see that this short-lived movement is finally getting today some deserved attention across the Atlantic.”



Left: Daniel Dezeuze, *Chassis*, 1967. Courtesy of Ceysson & Bénétière.

Right: Patrick Saytour, *Intérieur/Extérieur*, 1970.

The Supports/Surfaces artists were responding to their times in ways similar to how artists are currently reacting to contemporary culture. France was actively urbanizing and industrializing during the time period that the work in *Unfurled* was made and the artists were responding to these large-scale changes. The alienation felt from the loss of direct workmanship often fuels a simplicity and directness in studio practices, then and now. Daily utilitarian craft practices were being lost as people who formerly worked the land spent their days in factories; this reality was folded into Supports/Surfaces. Urban homesteaders and artists today are creating handmade plots of their own inside the faded dream of mass industrialization in Detroit and other American cities. It is the impulse to live and work with immediacy, agency, and ambition that is one of the bracing messages embedded in *Unfurled: Supports/Surfaces 1966-1976*.

Supports/Surfaces Featured Artists

André-Pierre Arnal

Vincent Bioulès

Pierre Buraglio
Louis Cane
Marc Devade
Daniel Dezeuze
Noël Dolla
Toni Grand
Jean-Michel Meurice
Bernard Pagès
Jean-Pierre Pincemin
Patrick Saytour
André Valensi
Claude Viallat





Top: Patrick Saytour, *Pliage*, 1974. Courtesy of Ceysson & Bénétière.

Bottom left: "Supports-Surfaces", Exposition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de La Ville de Paris, 1974.

Bottom right: Toni Grand in his studio, 1970, photo Jean-Claude Rancière.

Unfurled: Supports/Surfaces 1966-1976 is organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) and curated by Wallace Whitney.

Exhibitions and public programs at MOCAD are supported by the A. Alfred Taubman Foundation. Additional funding for the exhibition is provided by Étant donné Contemporary Art, a program of the French American Cultural Exchange (FACE) Foundation. Étant donné is developed in partnership with the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States, with lead funding from the Florence Gould Foundation, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Chanel USA, the ADAGP, the French Ministry of Culture, and Institut Français. *Unfurled: Supports/Surfaces 1966-1976* is in collaboration with Ceysson & Bénétière.

Related Supports/Surfaces Public Programs

Exhibition Opening

Friday, February 1, 2019

Opening Reception: 7-11pm

Members Only Preview: 6-7pm

Live DJ set with John FM: 6-11pm

Performance by TETRA: 8:30pm

Admission: Free for MOCAD Members (\$5 suggested donation)

Curator's Talk

Saturday, February 2, 1pm

Curator Wallace Whitney speaks about the Supports/Surfaces exhibition

Exhibition Talk

Thursday, April 4, 6pm

Curator Wallace Whitney and writer Rachel Stella speak about the Supports/Surfaces exhibition



Noël Dolla, *Étendoir aux serpillères*, 1968, dyed mops and metal structure, 34.3 x 24.8 x 11.4 inches. Courtesy of MOCAD and Ceysson & Bénétière.

About Supports/Surfaces

Supports/Surfaces has many origins, the label “Support-Surface” (without the plural “s”) was coined by Vincent Bioulès and employed for the first time in September 1970, for the exhibition Support-Surface which took place at the ARC, the new section of the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, run by Pierre Gaudibert. In regards to style, Supports/Surfaces approaches painting through placing equal importance on the material, production and final work. The subject fades in the background. Painting is deconstructed to its essential components, and the support (frame) and surface (canvas) are put into question. While each artist of the group approaches this question differently, their practices demonstrate their will to return to the first man-made mark, to the very essence and origin of painting.

Supports/Surfaces work has been shown in numerous institutions across the world and belongs to prominent collections, including the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Musée d’Art Moderne, Saint-Étienne; Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul de Vence; Carré d’Art, Nîmes; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Philadelphia Art Museum, Philadelphia; and Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.

Claude Viallat (b. 1936, Nîmes, France)

A leading figure of the Supports/Surfaces movement, Claude Viallat met fellow members of the group André-Pierre Arnal, Vincent Bioulès, Daniel Dezeuze, and

Toni Grand at École des Beaux-Arts in Montpellier. His pictorial practice was hugely influential to the aesthetics of the Supports/Surfaces group. After his teaching experience at École des Arts Décoratifs of Nice in 1964, Viallat took on the challenge of creating a new formal language questioning the conventions of classical painting. It was then in 1966 that he started working systematically with one shape affixed on unstretched fabric. The Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou hosted a Viallat retrospective in 1982. He represented France at the Venice Biennial in 1988. In 1991, he participated in the Supports/Surfaces historical retrospective at the Musée d'Art Moderne of Saint Etienne. His most recent retrospective was in 2014, at the Musée Fabre in Montpellier. His work can be seen in the collections of modern and contemporary art museums the world over including the Museum of Modern Art in New York; Kunstmuseum Luzern; Seibu Museum of Art, Tokyo; Museum Moderner Kunst in Vienna.

Marc Devade (b. 1943 Paris, France; d. 1983, Paris, France)

During his brief career, Marc Devade never gave up stretching his canvases. He aimed less to deconstruct the painting that to affirm the flatness of the surface by using inks that stained the surface through its entire thickness. His strong theoretical stance and attempt to renew the spiritual without invoking religion are traits that position Devade as perhaps the most intellectual of the Supports/Surfaces artists. Alongside the most politicized of the Supports/Surfaces group, Devade participated in the creation of the review *Peinture, Cahiers Théoriques*. Founded in 1971 and active until 1985, the magazine remains a testimonial to the extraordinary intentional agitation of the times. Devade participated in the first exhibition of the Supports/Surfaces group at the ARC in 1970, and has shown work in numerous group and solo exhibitions including at the Musée d'art Contemporain, Bordeaux; Musée d'Art Moderne, Tel Aviv; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Tokyo; ARC, Paris; Musée d'Art Moderne, Saint-Etienne.

Noël Dolla (b. 1945, Nice, France)

Noël Dolla has dedicated much of his work since 1966 to questioning the limits of painting as they are defined by historical and social factors. His drying racks presenting rags, cloths and tea towels dipped in color dye question the status of the work of art, when it can no longer be a mere representation. So do his buoys linked by a floating rope, or the pigments he sprinkled on snowy summits in the Alps, creating situations evocative of Land Art. His use of dots on unstretched fabrics demonstrate the potential for infinite repetition, expanding both the fields of painting and that of modernist esthetics. In the manner in which he expands painting beyond the surface plane, Dolla makes us no longer consider the activity of the artist solely from the aspect of production. His work has been featured in solo and group presentations at Musée de Nice, Nice; Beaux Arts, Paris; MAMAC, Nice; Carré d'Art, Nîmes; ARC, Paris; Grand Palais, Paris; mumok, Vienna.

André-Pierre Arnal (b. 1939, Nimes, France)

Imbued with Mediterranean culture, bathed in the landscapes of the bas-Languedoc and Cevennes, André-Pierre Arnal applies his dual training - literary and sculptural - on a dual activity combining painting and a language lived and transmitted through teaching French for more than thirty years. After a short attendance at the École des Beaux-arts in Montpellier, he developed a solitary research in the 1960s, marked by the discovery of Matisse, the American abstract artists, and especially Paul Klee. From an exploration of the art of "monotype", his taste for folk art led him to draw inspiration from it, making the "paper fortune teller" the starting point for a series of folds on canvas which, in the 1970s, would fall very aptly within the scope of the philosophy of the Supports/Surfaces group. He took a stand against an individualistic conception of the artist. The focus was on the deconstruction of the traditional medium of the work, the individual components of which - the frame, stretcher, fabric and colour - were considered in their individuality. Since then, André-Pierre Arnal has continued to re-invent himself, exploring an endless variety of media and techniques. In recent years, the artist's production is geared to a partitioning of the painted canvas. He also uses cloth-mounted, foldable or sheet maps collected and accumulated over a long time, using several integrated techniques. This "dessus des cartes" gives rise to more complex results than those of the first series of a form of work that now spans over four decades. His work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at the Centre d'Art Contemporain, Paris; Musée Fabre, Montpellier; The Tel-Aviv Museum; and the Metropolitan Museum in Tokyo.

Vincent Bioulès (b.1938, Montpellier, France)

A founding member of the Supports/Surfaces movement, Bioulès moved away from it in the mid-1970s to return to figurative painting. The deep imprint of the abstract years is always felt in the rigour of the compositions and the virtuoso arrangement of the colours. Vincent Bioulès, unlike many other Supports/Surfaces artists, shares with Marc Devade the particularity of never having renounced stretched canvas. But he does not stick to such painterly conventions for tradition's sake. His concern is to work the surface and accentuate the notion of its extent rather than its materiality. In his work, the surface of color is merely a veil, a colored emanation of light, similar to Newman, Rothko, or Noland. Bioules' reference owes much to Clement Greenberg's notion of the painterly. His work has been featured in solo and group shows at the Musée Fabre, Montpellier; Musée Picasso, Antibes; and MAMAC, Nice.

Louis Cane (b. 1943, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, France)

In 1969 Louis Cane's first gallery exhibition (Givaudan, Paris) consisted of a group of unstretched canvases-- sheets in fact, marked only by continuous rubber stamping of his name. He concluded this exercise in personal branding with the insolently tautological series Louis Cane artiste peintre français. By 1970 Cane was done with youthful irony, inaugurating a genre of cut-out paintings, the toiles découpées, which he would continue making for several years. Cane's incision in the canvas produces an aperture which creates a space on the wall. This space is not part of the painting yet remains integral to the picture. Thus, his paintings, which interact with both the

floor plane and the wall, investigate the space of non-representation (what is cut out) and integrate it within the painting. His work has been featured in solo and group presentations at the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris; the Museum of History of Shaanxi, China; and the Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg to name a few.

Daniel Dezeuze (b. 1942, Alès, France)

Dezeuze's work over the years has used a wide variety materials (wood, gauze, found objects, polyethylene etc) and tones, from the austere rigour of his flexible wooden ladders in the 1970's, to the ethereal lightness of his gauze pieces going on to the playfulness of his colourful Peintures qui perlent (Beading Paintings) which were painted wooden cubes and beads attached to a rigid framework. There are two main directions in his work: the first, his deconstruction of painting and its components (Ladders, Trellises, Cut Out Gauzes, Pavilions etc) and the second, his creation of a series of objects (Arms, Gathering Devices, and Receptacles) which evoke humanity's perennial activities. Dezeuze's drawings also can be grouped in these two directions with the addition of his sensitive and delightful evocations of nature in his series La Vie Amoureuse des Plantes (subject of an exhibition at the Centre Pompidou in 1993), his numerous and colourful Butterflies, and his enigmatic Grotesques.

Toni Grand (b. 1935, Gallargues-le-Montueux, France; d. 2005, Mouriès, France)

An exceptional sculptor of the later half of the 20th century, Toni Grand used mainly elements of wood, stone, bone and fish of the congridae family to produce image-forms whose easily recognizable features are not the attributes of a signature style, but of authentic imagination. Grand's production has been considered a response to American Minimalism and Process Art. If his ingeniousness rivals Carl Andre's artlessness, his steel sculptures weigh in with Richard Serra, and his experiments with anti-form compare with Robert Morris. Grand manages this sin machismo. For the 1967 Paris Biennial, Grand presented a series of composite works: rectangular cuboids made of steel containing polyester resin moulded into organic forms. These parallelepipeds could be presented on any of their 6 faces-- and Grand returned to the exhibition every day to turn each piece over. By definition rejecting the pedestal, he too accomplished what Richard Serra called "the biggest move of the century."

Bernard Pagès (b. 1940, Cahors, France)

Bernard Pagès is a French contemporary sculptor born in Cahors in the Lot in 1940. Bernard Pagès arrived to Paris in 1959. It was at the Workshop of Sacred Art that he became aware of the accessibility of sculpture. In 1967, the artist abandoned the painting and the traditional sculpture after an exhibition of the New Realists in Nice. Bernard Pagès was introduced to the Supports/Surfaces movement in 1967. He uses abandoned materials to create his sculptures, and assembles bricks, wood, stone floor, stone, gravel, pipes, etc into unique sculptural works. He organizes his sets by Inventories, Lists, and Enumerations. As time goes by, his work goes beyond

these recycled materials and turns more and more colorful and baroque. His work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at the Museum of Art, Hong Kong; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; and the Museum of Art, Tel-Aviv.

Jean-Pierre Pincemin (b. 1944, Paris, France; d. 2005, Arcueil, France)

Jean-Pierre Pincemin was a greatly admired and sometimes exasperating figure in the French art world. Close to the Supports/Surfaces artists in his formative years, he parlayed this experience into a protean approach to art making with no particular allegiance to style - archaic, classical, baroque - or medium - painting, sculpture, prints. This permanent attitude of defiance and exploration was described by critic Barbara Rose as "shifting emphasis and redefining premises, permitting an incredibly creative originality." His work has been featured in solo and group presentations at Musée d'Art moderne, Céret; and Denise Cadé Gallery.

Patrick Saytour (b. 1935, Nice, France)

A founding member of the Supports/Surfaces movement, Patrick Saytour holds a marginal and critical stance within the group. With deconstruction as paramount to his approach to painting—leaving aside politics and art historical canon—Saytour questions all the ingredients of faith within an artist and his practice. Nothing is taken for granted, and nothing is obvious. Patrick Saytour's distinctive vision of painting subjects unorthodox materials such as upholstery, tar, glue, wood, rope, plastic toys and canvas to procedures such as folding, cutting, clipping, hanging and burning. Like other works conceived in Paris and Nice during the intellectual and political upheaval of the late 1960s, Saytour's paintings collapse surface and support, materializing both to render them contingent, historical, determined by their environment whether it be the white cube gallery or the streets and beaches of Nice. Recent solo exhibitions have been with Galerie Phillips Pannetier, Nîmes; Chez Valentin, Paris; Ceysson & Bénétière, Luxembourg. Recent group exhibitions have been with Le 109, École de Nice, Nice; Cherry & Martin Gallery, Los Angeles; Reed College, Portland; CANADA Gallery, New York. His work belongs to prominent collections of modern and contemporary art including Centre Pompidou in Paris and FRAC Centre in Orléans.

André Valensi (b. 1947, Paris, France; d. 1999, Lomé, Africa)

André Valensi's Objets d'analyse, which are simple cords, ladders or nets, are made by braiding and knotting various ropes painted in yellow, orange and blue. He cut forms from corrugated cardboard and linked with a single cord, or simply piled them up. Some of these objects can be read as symbolic materials, charged with the artist's experience and his insistence on evoking ideas of class and the status of the subject in art. The square canvases, assembled from pieces of cloth that are sewn together by stitches which delineate a square motif at the center of the canvas. They were then dipped in carbonyl. Through these works, Valensi showed one way that painting after the time of Malevich and other Modernists can continue to address modernity and contribute to the dialogue started by the avant-garde.

The above artist bios were written by critic and historian Rachel Stella and Ingrid Lundgren from the Ceysson & Bénétière.

ABOUT MOCAD

The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) is an innovative addition to Detroit's vibrant Midtown neighborhood, and functions as a hub for the exploration of emerging ideas in the contemporary arts. As a non-collecting institution, MOCAD is responsive to the cultural content of our time, fueling crucial dialogue, collaboration, and public engagement.

The Museum is located between the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Detroit Institute of the Arts, Wayne State University, and the College for Creative Studies. The cavernous 22,000 square foot building, a former auto dealership, has been simply renovated to maintain its raw historic character. MOCAD's ambitious series of public programs includes lectures, musical performances, films, literary readings and educational activities for area youth. *Mobile Homestead*, by late artist Mike Kelley, is a permanent artwork located on the grounds of the museum. It is both a public sculpture and a private, personal construction – based on the artist's childhood home on Palmer Road in Westland. The ground floor serves as a community event space by and for a diverse public, as Kelley intended. MOCAD is generously supported by individual members, private and corporate foundations, and government agencies. More information can be found at mocadetroit.org.

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The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation supports MOCAD in experimenting with technology and new media to engage regional and international audiences both inside and outside the museums' walls. Supported programs include Daily Rush, an online exhibition program for experimental media and moving image; Radix: Experience in the Age of Digital Everywhere, MOCAD's long-term new media and technology initiative; and a series of future-focused, technology-based enhancements to the MOCAD campus.

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