ALMINE RECH

Swiss Tonic

Feb 7 — Apr 19, 2026 | Consortium Museum, Dijon, France

In 1983, the first exhibition in the new space on rue Quentin in the heart of Dijon, boldly displaying on its façade a blue-green neon sign reading “le consortium,” was the joint show of John M. Armleder and Christoph Gossweiler, two Swiss artists exhibited in France for the first time. This speaks to the history—marked by great continuity—that binds us to Switzerland.

The Switzerland of all political refugees—the Communards, the revolutionary socialists—and of all modern artists of Dada and company, left its mark on us from our faltering beginnings.
The Switzerland of the Basel Art Fair—still not yet a globally franchised brand—where our regular attendance, as a kind of professional apprenticeship, enabled the acceptance and recognition of our activity.

The Switzerland of meetings on the shores of Lake Zurich with avant-garde pioneers such as Max Bill, Richard Paul Lohse, Verena Loewensberg, and the talented widows of László Moholy-Nagy, Lucia and Sibyl; the bookseller of modernity Hans Bolliger; the graphic designer-artists Josef Müller-Brockmann and Karl Gerstner…
The Switzerland of the Mennonites Rémy Zaugg and his wife Michèle Zaugg, terribly demanding Basel natives, dissecting the German-speaking world and the emblems of modernity, with tragic destinies.

This claimed litany of radical Zurich concrete artists—'Swiss Concrete Art: Memory and Progress,' 1982—followed by other French-speaking or affiliated artists (Armleder, Mosset, Toroni, Fleury, Federle, Floquet, Robert-Tissot, Zaugg, Rondinone), has marked several decades of exhibitions. And consequently, new productions of works entered the collection during the years of monographs and group shows.

Mostly French-speaking, from Geneva or the Valais, the artists presented today share this familial and generational tropism—the pivotal 1980s of Swiss renewal after the magnificent yet isolationist era of the Zurich artists—around the godfather figure of John M. Armleder, unifier, promoter, protector, and advocate of a scene that remains vibrant and now spans several generations.

The heroic stance adopted by Olivier Mosset, survivor of the Paris episode of the (pseudo) group BMPT (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni), naturally resonates with us, as he embodies modern Swiss cross-fertilizations—from the Parisian Marxist, Leninist, Maoist groups (VLR, for the record) to the *Hells Angels*, via the bourgeois ladies of the École du Louvre and their Parisian hippies. Having withdrawn to Arizona on the edge of the desert, while regularly visiting us—often bearing gifts of works he personally acquired to enrich the collection—Olivier Mosset remains a great friend.

Sylvie Fleury came to Dijon, and returned often, accompanying us to Korea as early as the beginning of the 2000s. Let us not forget the flying saucer she installed, at the request of the mayor of the city of Anyang—who created the Anyang Public Art Project biennial—in front of City Hall in 2007. Titled *Vitteaux*, it is the second instance of this UFO planted at the entrance of the Burgundian town of the same name. Sylvie Fleury’s work received the blessing of a local shaman consulted by the artist in Seoul.
Following her first monographic exhibition in 1994, several works joined the collection (*Mondrian Boots*, *Cuddly Palermo*, and *Frank*), barely suggesting the great formal diversity of her practice.

The great Swiss affair—and the one illustrated in the selection 'Swiss Tonic'—is certainly the serious, theoretical, and sometimes sarcastic play with abstract painting.

For Helmut Federle, a Swiss from Solothurn who took refuge in Vienna, whose work balances geometric construction and painterly gesture, the practice is nourished by cross-cultural exchanges—with Pre-Columbian ceramics, with Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophical furniture—or with Olivier Mosset and John M. Armleder, who approach abstraction from a postmodern perspective. Here, the pictorial battle retains all the vigor of these major witnesses.

The long nude (*Der Körper I*, 1989, 120 x 740 cm), a Barnett Newman-like landscape by Balthasar Burkhard, a Bernese photographer who once immortalized Harald Szeemann's legendary exhibitions at the city's Kunsthalle before becoming an artist in his own right—photographing heads, bodies, animals, flowers, and cities seen from a helicopter...

From an Italian family that emigrated to Switzerland, Ugo Rondinone—quintessentially hybrid—trained in Vienna and Zurich at heart before embracing the urban geographies of New York and now Paris, has long intersected with the Consortium Museum: in 1997, then in 2004, interspersed with group exhibitions.

DEADLINE, by Christian Robert-Tissot, has led a life both hidden and visible to all, placed on the southern edge of the building's roof. Stretching nearly 12 meters long, it lines up a public-works construction device, in the form of metal mesh barriers cutting out the letters of the word "deadline."

The line (of the party) is a historical constant in the life of the Consortium Museum. The neo-minimalist-conceptual line once clothed an exhibition program that knew how to free itself from it (from the very beginning). In fact.
The red line (not to be crossed), the blue line (of the Vosges), the Maginot Line (that one could not cross!), the line of life, the ridgeline, the deadline, the buffer line (not to be exceeded)...
DEADLINE. A border, a Swiss linguistic barrier dividing the cantons, a transition between modernities. Hodler, Klee... Tonic Switzerland.

— Franck Gautherot