

# SHAPING LIGHT

CURATED BY ALBERT BARONIAN

*David Brognon & Stéphanie Rollin, Marie José Burki, Tracey Emin, Dan Flavin,  
Mekhitar Garabedian, Joseph Kosuth, Mario Merz, François Morellet,  
Bruce Nauman, Alain Séchas, Keith Sonnier*

10.11 – 15.12.18

To celebrate the 45th anniversary of his gallery, Albert Baronian has the pleasure to present to you a group exhibition exploring neon as a medium, which takes place at Fondation CAB in the context of the art centers' Special Projects program.

*Shaping Light* illustrates how the dozen of participating artists have worked with neon to give form to light, to draw with it, sculpt it and reconfigure exhibition spaces with it. The selection of works is subjective rather than exhaustive, juxtaposing historical pieces with contemporary artworks by artists who use this seductive medium in aspects of their artistic practice.

Originally introduced in advertising, neon and fluorescent tubes are now an integral part of the urban landscape and the modern psyche, and allow visual artists to highlight their concerns, whether spatial, conceptual, linguistic, abstract, figurative or political.

Deflected from their original function, neon and fluorescent tubes became prevalent in art in the 60s. Minimalist and conceptual artists appropriated them, using them as vehicles for aesthetic research, thereby expanding the traditional boundaries of art. They used neon to reflect on the status of art and its dematerialisation.

The pulse of light enables **Dan Flavin** and **François Morellet** to transform our perception of space and architecture. Their geometric abstractions mobilise raw lighting that, starting as an element of staging, becomes the sculptural object.

Using "ready-mades", taken straight from the production line, **Dan Flavin's** industrial fluorescent tubes are no longer confined to the simple lighting of commercial surfaces or factories: installed in situ, the tubes come in pink, yellow, white, blue or green hues that invade the space and surround the spectator in an almost mystical halo.

A mathematician by training, **François Morellet** places the repetition of geometric motifs (lines, circles, squares) at the centre of his work and develops his at once graphic and pared-down compositions according to a rigorous protocol rejecting all subjectivity.

**Mario Merz**, spearhead of the Italian Arte Povera movement, also incorporates the seemingly "poor" material that is neon in his sculptures and installations: he electrifies the back of a jacket and rewrites a series of numbers (the Fibonacci sequence), digits used to illuminate the walls of igloos.

Neon imitates the suppleness of a brushstroke for **Keith Sonnier** who distinguishes himself from his contemporaries by combining fabrics, found objects and other recycled materials with his sensual and colourful light installations. The inclusion of metal or glass panels allows him to modulate light, to reflect or refract it.

For other artists, the neon of advertising slogans is once again talkative: it calls out to us, but instead of inciting us to consume, it becomes the favoured playground of conceptual artists such as **Joseph Kosuth** and **Bruce Nauman**. Joseph Kosuth blurs the lines between words and utterances, signified and signifier, shape and text. What we see and what is stated forms a whole. Bruce Nauman also manipulates language. Blinking neon animates letters and characters, making them dance in a colourful partition.

The fluorescent tube can be twisted and this gives artists who shape it the possibility of creating shimmering lines that unfold, between drawing and sculpture, across the exhibition space or on a wall. Instead of an intangible and immaterial wave, light becomes a malleable substance.

Others make neon "express" more personal or intimate thoughts, with the walls acting as pages inscribed with scrolling sentences. Since it is a form of writing, typography becomes a determining element. The traced curves mimic the artists' handwriting in works by **Tracey Emin**, **Mekhitar Garabedian** and **Marie José Burki**. The artists use neon to tell stories, to quote someone or to draw our attention to the poetry of certain words.

Abstract at first glance, **David Brognon & Stéphanie Rollin**'s neons are inspired by chiromancy and reproduce the shape of the line of destiny of drug addicts and of the heart line of forcibly married people. In doing so, the artist duo also exploits the malleability of light.

**Alain Séchas** chooses to prioritise drawing, his preferred medium. He harpoons our line of sight with the neon of his mischievous and offbeat feline avatar of Marilyn (Monroe).

Natural and artificial light are intimately linked to art. As evidenced by its omnipresence at contemporary art fairs, electric light is as trendy as it is essential and allows artists to give free rein to their creativity.

Zoé Schreiber

## About Fondation CAB

Reflecting Bonnet's passion for minimal art and his personal art collection, Fondation CAB draws inspiration from the Constructivist period to the present day seeking to show work by artists who share a distinct practice and aesthetic. The programme is composed of two core exhibitions a year: one major curated exhibition of minimal art featuring internationally renowned artists, and one exhibition of minimal art-inspired works by young contemporary artists, including special commissions as well as in-situ installations. In addition Fondation CAB hosts a series of special projects, inviting targeted initiatives from galleries, museums, curators and artists worldwide conceived in accordance with its mission.

Fondation CAB is a key player in Brussels' flourishing art scene and an important fixture in the city's contemporary art circuit.

## Practical Details

Opening: Friday 09 November, 6 – 9PM

Exhibition Dates: 10.11 – 15.12.18

Opening hours: Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6PM