

MAMCO GENEVA
11.10.17–04.02.18

PRESS KIT

William Leavitt, *Retrospective*

General Idea, *Photographs (1969-1982)*–extended

Narrative Art

Fictional Artists

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Food*

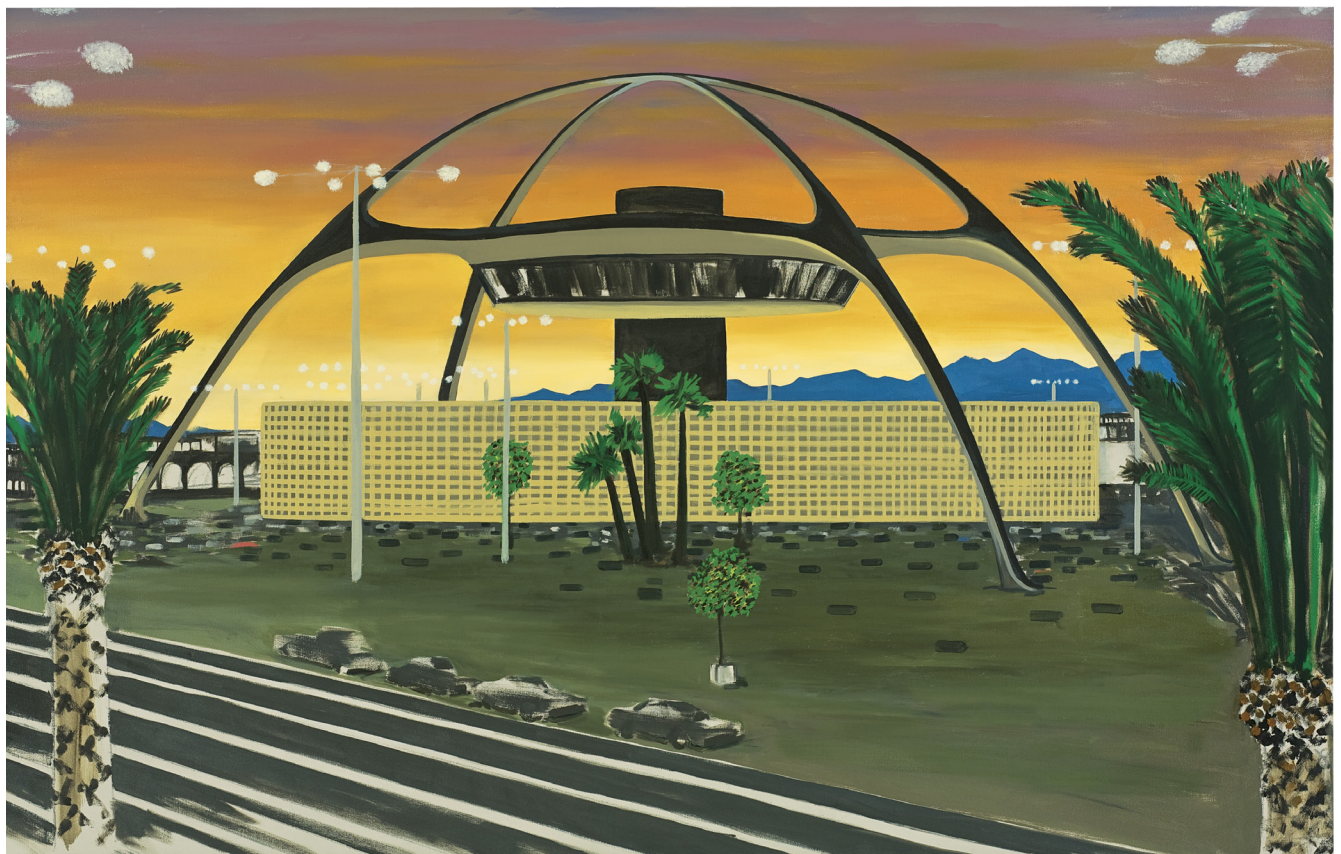
Adrian Piper, *The Mythic Being*

Martha Rosler, *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*

Allen Ruppersberg, *The Never Ending Book*

Opening: Tuesday October 10, 2017 – 6pm

10, rue des Vieux-Grenadiers, 1205 Geneva



William Leavitt, *Theme Restaurant*, 1986.

Oil on canvas. 116,84 × 182,88 cm, Collection Richard S. Massey, Miami (FL)

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Exhibitions from October 11, 2017 until February 4, 2018

Press conference Tuesday October 10, 2017, 11 am

This fall, MAMCO is organizing the first European retrospective of William Leavitt (born in 1941, Washington, USA), an historic figure of the Los Angeles art scene. Deployed on the entirety of the first floor, this exhibition brings together pieces ranging between 1970 until now. Through his installations, drawings and paintings, play and sound performances, Leavitt re-examines the production of the Western imaginary, as imposed, since the end of WWII, by the "Hollywood factory." Through a selection of parts of stage sets, the isolation and recombination of fragments coming from everyday culture, which often conceals a conservative social order and politics, the artist turns these representations inside out: he makes us see them as conceptual frameworks in which stories (fictional ones or from our own lives) can be set.

This show, organized by Lionel Bovier and Julien Fronsacq, is thus an opportunity to go back over several issues in art history, whether it be the 1970s movement of

"Narrative Art" or the fictional dimension present in the practice of General Idea, whose exhibition is extended until the beginning of February. Narration is also at the heart of a project devoted to fictional artists by David Lemaire, and the ensemble of works by Adrian Piper and Martha Rosler, respectively brought together by Elise Lammer and Sophie Costes.

This sequence is the third phase of a method of investigation into the art of the past decades, inaugurated by *Zeitgeist* in spring, and then continued with the series of exhibitions organized around the retrospective of Kelley Walker in the summer. In this way, MAMCO has been offering, via a system of nested presentations, a prismatic reading of the artistic movements and debates that have traversed our era. This singular museographical proposition, the result of the collective work of the curators of the MAMCO and its associated curators, is itself set in the heritage of the "global exhibition" concept, which has been prevalent in the museum ever since its opening in the 1990s.

General Idea, *Photographs* (1969–1982) Extended

An exhibition organized by
Paul Bernard and Lionel Bovier

Founded by AA Bronson (b. 1946), Jorge Zontal (b. 1944, d. 1994), and Felix Partz (b. 1945, d. 1994), the Canadian collective General Idea produced one of the most striking oeuvre from the 1970s and 1980s. This multiform work took on the glamour of popular images, the ideology of mass media, and the commonplaces spread throughout the art world, always with a strong sense of irony.

General Idea was founded by the three artists in 1969 in Vancouver when they decided to live and work together. Mindful readers of Marshal McLuhan and Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*, they organized in 1970 a beauty contest to elect a Miss General Idea: a mythological, asexual, faceless, and blurry figure who will become their muse. The following year, they began a 13-year-long fiction, *The 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion*. Behind this "project," a strange fiction is taking place, like the pieces of a gigantic puzzle that is constantly being redefined.

Stemming from the group's archives, the exhibition at MAMCO, conceived in close collaboration with AA Bronson, tackles the first ten years of their career under the specific angle of photography. The aesthetics of these early works borrows from Minimal, Conceptual, as well as Land art, and the regulars from MAMCO will certainly find an echo to works from Dennis Oppenheim, Franz Erhard Walther, or even Victor Burgin. However these photographs are also documents from the group's life within the context of communitarian utopias which left their mark on the 1960s in Northern America.

From the start—and their beauty contest—photography is their privileged medium which they use to feed their mythology. Following their principle of "form follows fiction," the works produced during this period systematically relate to their muse and her pavilion, through an iconographic repertoire constituted of pieces of clothing and accessories, mirrors, Venetian blinds, or the zigurat pattern.

The exhibition also pays attention to the role of edition within the production and diffusion of these images. *FILE Magazine* thus became one of the most accomplished artists' magazine of its time. Presented by General Idea as a "cultural parasite" appropriating and distorting the famous *LIFE Magazine* (the company eventually sued the collective), this publication featured the group's manifestoes and projects, chronicled the artistic life, and introduced new cultural trends. Throughout their 26 issues, from 1972 to 1989, *FILE* contributed to broaden General Idea's audience beyond the art field.

The exhibition received the support of Le Laboratoire and ReproSolution, Geneva.

General Idea, *Photographs* (1969–1982) Extended



General Idea, *Photographs (1969-1982)*, exhibition view
Photo: Annik Wetter – MAMCO, Geneva



General Idea, *Photographs (1969-1982)*, exhibition view
Photo: Annik Wetter – MAMCO, Geneva

MAMCO GENEVE

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The Museum is open Tuesday through Friday from noon to 6pm, the first Wednesday of the month until 9pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 6pm. Closed on Mondays.

Regular admission: CHF 8.–
Reduced admission: CHF 6.–
Group admission: CHF 4.–

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The exhibition of William Leavitt benefits from the support of the Fondation du Jubilé de la Mobilière Suisse Société Coopérative and of the Greene Naftali Gallery, New York.

The General Idea's exhibition received the generous support of Le Laboratoire and ReproSolution, Geneva.

MAMCO's fourth floor "A collection of spaces" exhibition would not have been possible without the essential support of Fondation Leenaards.

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