

Good or Trash
Galerie d'art
91 quai de Valmy

Unglee
Ghislain Mollet-Viéville
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Interview with Ghislain Mollet-Viéville by Pierre-Alexandre Mateos

Pierre-Alexandre Mateos — You define yourself as an art agent rather than an artists' agent or a collector. What does that mean?

Ghislain Mollet-Viéville — I created the term *art agent*, which didn't exist in everyday language; it belongs to a liberal profession. Unlike artists' agents who represent each artist individually, I wanted to promote, in a broad sense, a mindset of art that breaks away from what one generally expects from it, with the aim of placing myself at the center of art and its organization.

PAM — You began by collecting Roland Topor, which goes against the minimalist and conceptual artists of your later collection. What drew you to this neo-surrealist author with dark, sometimes morbid humor?

GMV — I was a student at the time, and I very much appreciated his sharp and cynical black humor, which highlighted, with a certain cruelty and bitterness, the absurdity of respectable moral standards. The drawing I bought from him depicted a fat man defecating. I liked that provocation. And it wasn't expensive. I also bought a drawing by Jean-Michel Folon for completely opposite reasons. I was captivated by the lost expression of his figures, as if they were floating, sometimes in vast barren landscapes, or conversely in oppressive and enigmatic urban spaces. These two works gave no indication of what I would later seek in art.

PAM — How did American Minimalism transform the notion of the object into a perceptual device where the artwork only exists through the viewer's relationship to space?

GMV — First, one should note that Minimal Art applies the famous formula "*less is more*" by architect Mies van der Rohe. It is an art that presents anti-illusionist geometric forms stripped of any aura in order to focus on the analysis of what a sculpture can be when composed only of its essential elements. Any emotional or sensitive expression is therefore excluded to better concentrate on its own reality. This art also leads us to a new artistic approach in which the site of reception can play a decisive role. Many Minimal works ask us to match their material presence with the spatial and temporal experience we have of them.

PAM — If Minimalism favors neutrality, serenity, depersonalization of gesture, the *masterpiece* on the contrary implies hierarchy, singularity, permanence. Are there masterpieces in Minimal Art?

GMV — Masterpieces imply formal perfection often coupled with admirable imagination to express exceptional beauty linked to virtuosity and technical mastery. Minimal art structures, produced in factories, offer the exact opposite; they cannot correspond to the idea we have of a masterpiece. There are major works in Minimal Art, but they cannot match the definition of the term *masterpiece*.

PAM — You also began collecting Conceptual Art, which shifted the artwork toward language, idea, or the invisible. Where does your interest in Conceptual Art lie?

GMV — Conceptual Art is too often confused with a clever activity built on sending elliptical messages, but one must emphasize its analytical character: Valéry said that the only real thing in art is art, and Ad Reinhardt affirmed that art is art-as-art. This corresponds to a self-definition of the work of art that conceptual artists propose through reflections questioning the nature of art itself.

PAM — In 1975, how did installing your Minimal and Conceptual collection at 26 rue Beaubourg create a domestic setting that rethought the presentation of works in a living environment, as opposed to the “white cubes” of galleries?

GMV — In my apartment on rue Beaubourg, I arranged my collection by reflecting on its integration into my living space. I used to say that the frame of my works was the apartment itself, along with the social context attached to it. You could see art in my living room, bedroom, or even bathroom. My goal was to show that Minimal and Conceptual Art could represent a certain art of living. I wanted this art to coexist with furniture I had designed—very functional and comfortable. Everything aligned: my living environment, my way of life, the collection itself. I like to live in a space where anything decorative is excluded.

PAM — In 1994, Christian Bernard recreated your apartment at the Musée d’art moderne et contemporain de Genève (MAMCO), turning this domestic space—at once living environment, collection, and mediation site—into a real environmental artwork. Could you revisit this museum transposition: how did you feel when Christian Bernard “re-performed” your space?

GMV — From the start, for Christian Bernard, the idea was to present my apartment as an archetype of the 1970s. He considered that even before its recreation at MAMCO, it was already a “museum object.” The major works were placed exactly where they had been in my Paris apartment. Their configuration perfectly reflected the mindset that drove me, aligning the aesthetics of the domestic space with the function of art agency. The whole thing corresponded to my way of life, which mirrors Minimal and Conceptual Art.

PAM — Your collection was born in a living space, outside institutional codes. Its reconstitution at MAMCO re-inscribes it within a museum framework. Do you see a paradox between your material detachment and the museum reification of your gesture?

GMV — Since 1992, my new apartment was empty: for me, the Minimal and Conceptual works in my collection belonged to history. And history is for museums to show. So yes, the reification (in fact more a reconstitution) in the museum was justified — it was the most appropriate setting to show art that, while not outdated, belonged nevertheless to the past.