

CARDI GALLERY



Arman, Nero's Piano, 1999, Baby piano immersed in acrylic paint on canvas board, 182.9 x 243.8 x 111.8 cm (72 1/8 x 96 x 44 1/8 in)

ARMAN

Emersions

February 17-June 23, 2017
Corso di Porta Nuova 38, Milan

Cardi Gallery in Milan is delighted to present the Italian debut of *Arman: Emersions*. The exhibition, staged in collaboration with Corice Arman and the Arman Marital Trust, features thirteen works from the series conceived in 1998 and 1999 by the artist, a French-born naturalized American.

The *Emersions* mark a new relationship between painting, which he had practiced since his childhood in Nice, and objects, to which he was drawn starting with his exhibition *Allure d'objects* (Galerie Saint Germain, Paris, 1960).

"Emersion" is the opposite of immersion; it is the act of surfacing, of coming out of a liquid environment and appearing on the surface, manifested before the eye. The fragmented objects appear to emerge from the organic background after having survived a shipwreck. As Arman commented when creating them: *"Many works from this series make you think about natural accidents, such as lava flows or rivers of mud. But a manmade object finds itself drowned in it, as if it were wrong for man to oppose nature"*.

These untitled paintings draw their inspiration from the tragic vision of a contaminated human landscape, covered with oil, garbage, or mud. The mineral effect of the surfaces of the objects derives from the metal plating applied to chairs and bicycles, fans, watering cans, and other objects, whereas the uniformity of color derives from the acrylic paint that Arman uses as coating or glue.

The series has only been exhibited once before at the Galerie Piltzer in Paris in 1999, and was published in a limited-edition book, where it is referred to as *Nec Mergitur*, echoing the motto of Paris, *"Fluctuat nec Mergitur"*, literally, being tossed by the waves but not sinking. The exhibition will be accompanied by a richly illustrated book featuring texts by Arman and Marcelin Pleynet, Corice Arman and Chiara Spangaro, and photos of the paintings, the artist at work in his studio, and the Milan exhibition.

Arman Born in Nice in 1928, Armand Pierre Fernandez showed a precocious talent for painting and drawing as a child. Inspired by Vincent van Gogh, he signed his early work with his first name only and retained a 1958 printer's misspelling of his name for the rest of his career. The son of an antiques dealer and amateur cellist, the young Arman absorbed a passion for music, art collecting, and free will. After studying at the École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs in Nice, Arman decamped to Paris to study art history at the École du Louvre. His work in these early years focused on abstract painting inspired in particular by the art of Nicolas de Staël and Serge Poliakoff. An avid reader, Arman sought inspiration in books and art journals, also enriching himself culturally by frequent trips through Europe with his Niçoise friends, Claude Pascale and Yves Klein, whom he had met in 1948 at the police judo school in Nice, where the three trained.

Sharing both mental outlooks and artistic sensibilities, Arman and Yves Klein were inspired to organize joint exhibitions and happenings in the early 1950s. In 1953, Pascale was Arman's best man at his wedding to Eliane Radigue. Influenced by the work of Kurt Schwitters, in 1955 he conceived his neo-Dadaist Cachets, created using ink stamps on paper, and in 1957 the Allures, prints made with objects dipped in paint.

In 1960 the Galerie Saint-Germain in Paris opened the solo exhibition Arman: Allures d'objets, where he first unveiled his artistic quest with objects. He chose the coil spring, pincushion, necklace of fake pearls, and the egg-shaped pebble *"by the function of their possible paths on paper... in a functionalistic vision of the world"*, as art critic Pierre Restany writes in the catalogue. Arman does not consider the objects in themselves, but *"very precisely and very lucidly for their possible progression, for their potential inscription into a theoretical space. They are made dynamic in their very essence"*.

Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf presented *Poubelles et Accumulations*, in June of that year and in October Iris Clert inaugurated *Arman. Le Plein* in her Parisian gallery. The inner space of Galerie Clert's was rendered inaccessible by the artist, who filled it with furniture, objects and the city's refuse, some of the materials coming from Clert's warehouse, some gathered at the Les Halles market in Paris. The first show sold out and the second, conceived in response to Klein's *Le Vide* (Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, 1958), placed Arman at the forefront of the French avant-garde.

He created his famous *Poubelles* [literally: trash cans] in the early 1960s by filling acrylic containers with discarded everyday objects, and from these works developed *Accumulations*, a collection of similar objects collected in glass or wood cases by which the artist ironically questions the commonly understood sense of garbage and discards in mass-consumption society.

Two days after the opening of *Le Plein*, Pierre Restany invited Arman and the other co founders of Nouveau Réalisme to sign the movement's manifesto "*The New Realists have become aware of their collective singularity. New Realism = new perceptive approaches to the real*". To cope with industrial expansion and the role of the object in consumer culture, the New Realists reassessed the concept of art and artist and their roles in twentieth-century society, seeking to reaffirm humanistic ideals.

Arman's relationship with objects has always been very specific, seeking to remove their material function by transforming them. As he slices, burns or disassembles them, their purpose becomes solely that typical of art, that of "feeding the mind".

Starting in the mid-1960s Arman made numerous visits to the United States, and especially to New York, for solo or collective exhibitions, soon coming to regard the city as his second home. After years of extended stays, he took up residence in a loft. In 1973, one year after his second marriage to Corice Canton in Nice, he became a naturalized American.

While continuing his studio work, producing important series of sculptures and paintings over the years – from *Coléres* to *Fragmentations*, from *Hard and Soft* to *Sandwich Combos*, just to name a few – Arman also dedicated himself to monumental sculptures. In addition to the amphitheater in Parco Sempione in Milan, created in 1973 for the 15th Triennale, between 1975 and 1983 the artist created *Long Term Parking*, commissioned by Fondation Cartier: at the Jouy-en-Josas complex, at the gates to Paris, Arman embedded sixty automobiles in a cement totem pole rising to a height of 18 meters. After having worked in drawing and photography, sculpture and painting, furniture and jewelry, and artistic publications, always exploring new techniques and materials since his debut in the 1940s, Arman continued working through the Eighties and Nineties. He entered the new millennium as a successful, world renowned artist featured at such internationally acclaimed collective exhibitions as *The Art of Assemblage* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1961), *The New Realists* (Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1962), *The Rhyme and the Reason: Selections from the Menil Family Collections* (Grand Palais, Paris, 1984), and *Zero und Paris 1960* (Galerie der Stadt Esslingen, Esslingen, 1997).

He was appointed Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite (Knight of the Order of Merit) by the President of the French Republic Georges Pompidou in 1972 and Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres (Commander of Arts and Letters) in 1984 by the French Minister of Culture Jack Lang. In 1987 he received the Légion d'Honneur (Legion of Honor). He died in New York on October 22, 2005.

With this exhibition, Cardi Gallery reaffirms its interest in historical national and international artists.

#Arman