

## “Let’s Dance”

Group exhibition from October 22 2010 to January 16 2011, for the 5th anniversary of the museum.

Fanny Adler et Cécile Paris, Saâdane Afif, Doug Aitken, Darren Almond, Pierre Ardouvin, Fiona Banner, Walead Beshty, Christian Boltanski, Rebecca Bourmigault, Anne Brégeaut, Claude Closky, Nathan Coley, François-Xavier Courrèges, Jeremy Deller, Peter Dreher, Elmgreen & Dragset, Valérie Favre, Sandra Foltz et Laurent Sfar, Douglas Gordon, Stuart Haygarth, Pierre Huyghe, Claude Lévêque, Arnaud Maguet, Melanie Manchot, Bernhard Martin, Kris Martin, Pascal Martinez, Gianni Motti, Marylène Negro, Vincent Olinet, Amy O’Neill, Hans Op de Beeck, Christodoulos Panayiotou, Philippe Parreno, Élisà Pône, Bruno Serralongue, Elisabeth Subrin, Jean-Luc Verna, Mark Wallinger.

### Press release

The title « **Let’s Dance** » is of course a reference to the 1983 David Bowie album with melancholy overtones. Is it an invitation? An order? Strangely, the catchy title sounds like an Act Up slogan : *J’irai danser quand même [I’ll go dancing anyway]*. It is, indeed, a form of resistance. This group show gives us a view behind festivity’s mask, and is in a certain way melancholy. The irrepressible need for group commemorations of life’s milestones is one of the themes unifying the over fifty works by forty international artists brought together in « **Let’s Dance** » from October 22, 2010 to January 16, 2011.

« **Let’s Dance** » addresses the clichés of celebration through its markers: birthdays, fireworks, candles, cake, block parties, rites of passages, and music, all things that bring people together but cannot prevent loneliness. The exhibit is designed as a grand memento mori. Fragments of narrative come together during the course of the exhibition. Events conveyed in installation, sculpture, video, or painting are fleeting moments, disturbing and incomplete, which we view as if unobserved. But the scenes are sufficiently universal to have meaning for everyone.

For **Douglas Gordon**, birthdays bring him “to tears”, and thus on his own birthday he drills star-shaped holes into a skull to symbolize the years gone by. Artists each in their own fashion employ ritual : each year **Valérie Favre** paints a new canvas in her Balls and Tunnels series according to a precise procedure. Day after day, German painter **Peter Dreher** paints an empty glass on a white table. In defiance of passing time ?

Flemish artist **Hans Op de Beeck** produces videos steeped in melancholy. In *All together now...* the images repeat endlessly. He presents a world that whirls like a carousel gone mad, a world in which everything repeats ad infinitum, and in which all attempts to communicate are doomed to failure. His works, however, are never pessimistic; they veer between seriousness and irony, between sadness and levity.

Unlike the clichéd depictions of hackneyed situations, “Let’s Dance” exploits the ambiguity of objects. **Claude Closky**, for example, pixelates a screen to make fireworks, while **Christodoulos Panayiotou** examines fireworks as a means of communication among the Mafia of Naples. **Philippe Parreno** questions the idea of a timeframe in *Fraught Times : For Eleven Months of the Year it’s an Artwork and in December it’s Christmas [March]*. Is it a Christmas tree or sculpture ?

**Bernhard Martin**, in *Single Disco*, gives us a closet-sized disposable dance club, and **Pierre Ardouvin** offers a solitary bumper car in *Love Me Tender*. The artists create images imbued with humour and poetry that short-circuit our emotional response systems. The works are composed of the basic ingredients of celebration and party, but result in a tension that produces a sensation of disquiet and paradox. The individual in a group cannot escape loneliness.

Nothing in « **Let’s Dance** » is ironic or morbid - effusion and empathy are absent. No manipulation of the past, no anticipation of the future. When time stops, even nostalgia disappears.

## ASHES TO ASHES

Frank Lamy

Director of temporary exhibitions at MAC/VAL and curator of "Let's Dance"

There will be fireworks.  
Candles and gifts.  
Meal scenes.  
All sorts of birthdays.  
Music.  
A solitary bumper car.  
Stars.  
A skull  
Black holes.  
A disco ball  
Celebrations.  
Souvenirs.  
A disposable disco.  
A street fair.  
A bouquet of flowers.  
A Christmas tree.  
Scenes of crowds celebrating.  
A store window filled with presents.  
A ghost tank.  
The remains of a carnival  
Wristwatches.  
Black banners.  
A young man in search of lost time.  
There will be other things.  
There will be no miracles.  
Shall we dance?

### Excerpts from an interview with Frank Lamy

"The starting point for the exhibition was to try to understand what a birthday is. A birthday occurs once a year and is an occasion for group celebration. From there, I became interested in works that keep time, that are produced through recurring processes, like the pieces by Valérie Favre, Douglas Gordon, and Peter Dreher. Then there is a group of works that examine the idea of "being together". How, for example, is a community built? There is also Melanie Manchot's idea of reiteration, the idea of picking up on street fairs, which are the origin of our apartment building parties. Then Jeremy Deller, who recreates a confrontation between organized labor and law enforcement to highlight social violence."

[...]

"One of the goals of the exhibition is to try to see behind the mirror. What is really at work in a fireworks display, what is going on at a party? Without providing an answer, of course, and without pretending to be complete, it is worthwhile to examine what is going on, and what the meaning is of getting together to celebrate an event, whichever it may be. I also think that, thinking in terms of culture as an industry, it is a way of reaffirming art's role as a way of thinking about and understanding the world, as an analytical tool. That is more than just glitter and festivity – it is a space for thought."

[...]

"There are several types of birthdays and celebrations. Celebrating an individual or an object is a way for the citizenry to get together, unite, and reaffirm values. It's a way of turning back time, struggling against death. A birthday marks time, it highlights. It's also a way of strengthening a community, and one reason why human beings feel such a need to celebrate is because celebration is a uniting social ritual."