

# FRANÇOIS MORELLET

## *ROMAN PICNIC*

Exhibition at Villa Medici

October 9, 2026–January 18, 2027

Curator: Alessandro Gallicchio

To mark the centenary of the birth of François Morellet (1926–2016), Villa Medici is exhibiting five works by this master of geometric abstraction in its heritage spaces. The exhibition is being held as part of the national tribute program *100 × Morellet*, launched on the initiative of the Centre Pompidou, the Morellet Estate, the Fonds de dotation Morellet, and of the Italian project *∞François Morellet∞ Centenario in Italia 1926–2026*.



Archival image of François Morellet's installation *Lamentable ø 8m20 bleu* (2006), presented during the *Ouvert la nuit* festival at Villa Medici, Rome, in 2017. Photo: Daniele Molajoli © François Morellet, by SIAE 2026

# VILLA MEDICI

This fall, Villa Medici pays tribute to one of the leading figures in contemporary art through the exhibition **François Morellet: Roman Picnic**. Presented from **October 9, 2026 to January 18, 2027** and curated by **Alessandro Gallicchio**, director of the Art History Department of the French Academy in Rome, the exhibition showcases five of the artist's works, distributed around several of Villa Medici's historic spaces.

The painting *40 lignes au hasard* [*40 Random Lines*] (2002) takes its place in The Muses Room, in the heart of the Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici apartments. Two works composed of neon tubes, emblematic of the artist's practice, are presented in the small Balthus studio, as well as the adjacent loggia: *Lamentable Ø 4m50 blanc* [*Despicable Ø 4m50 White*] (2006) and *Triangle néons rouges interférents* [*Interfering Red Neon Triangle*] (1973). Finally, in Balthus's studio, the two mural installations *3D concertant* [*3D Concertant*] and *3D bandes décimées* [*3D Decimated Bands*] (2015) reveal all the power of his abstract language.

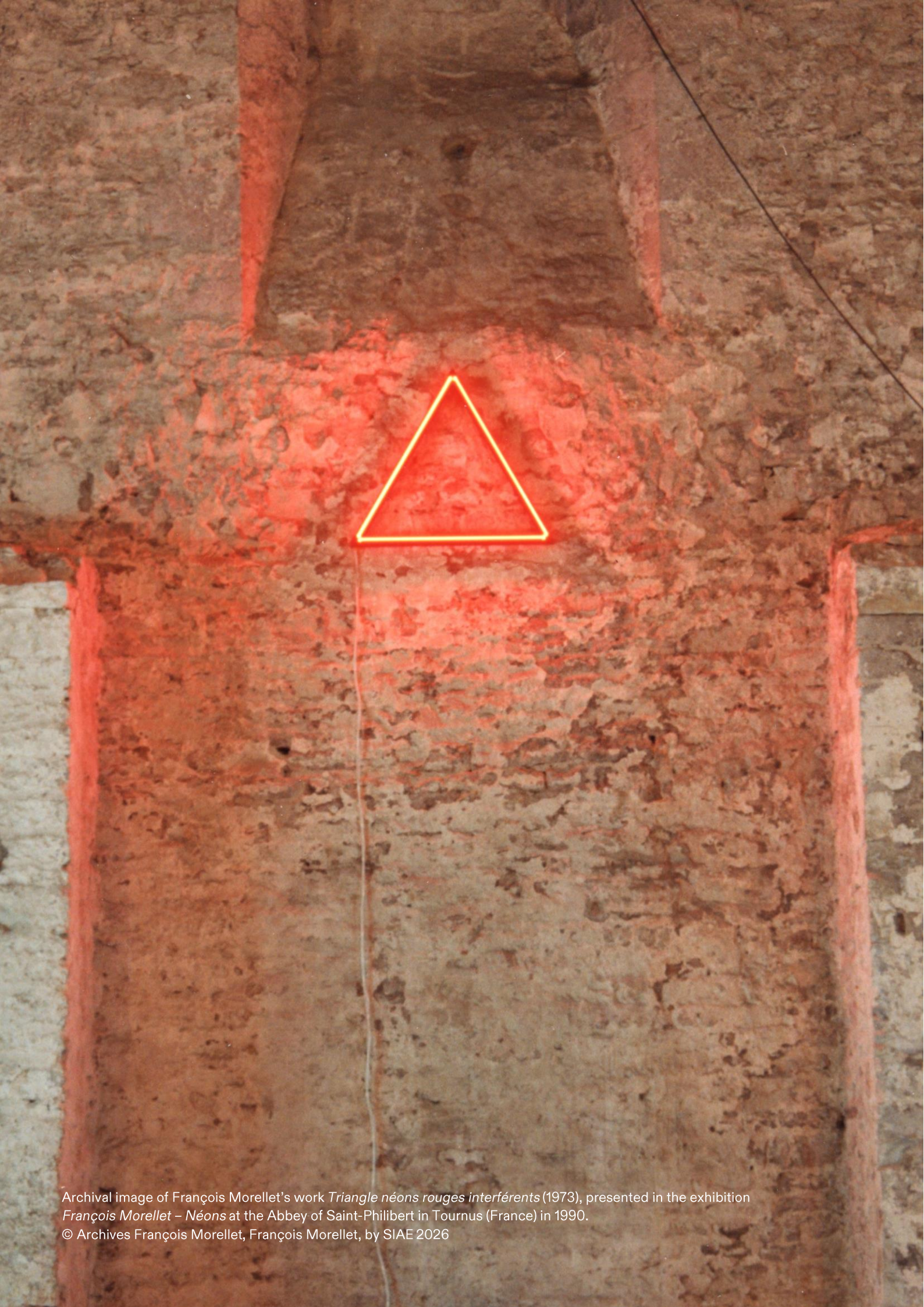
A prolific self-taught artist, François Morellet developed a radical approach to geometric abstraction over the course of a career spanning more than six decades. Working mainly with simple forms (squares, lines, triangles, circles), he embraced an aesthetic of reduction and sought to demystify the figure of the inspired artist, using multiple materials (paint, steel, neon tubes, adhesive tape, wood...).

"I have very stubbornly produced systematic works whose constant approach has been to reduce my arbitrary decisions to the minimum. In order to limit my sensibility as an "artist", I have eliminated "composition", removed all interest from execution and rigorously applied simple, obvious systems that can develop either through genuine chance or through viewer participation."<sup>1</sup>

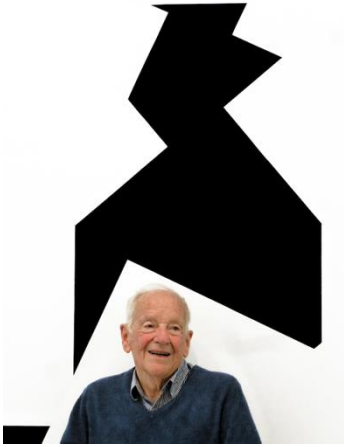
His work is present in the leading French public collections, as well as in numerous international museums. Already shown at Villa Medici in 2017 as part of the *Ouvert la Nuit* festival, under the curatorship of Chiara Parisi, François Morellet's art returns to Villa Medici for the exhibition *Roman Picnic*, which invites us to take it at its word. Indeed, as early as 1971 François Morellet envisaged an artwork as a "picnic spot": an open space where each viewer contributes and shares whatever they wish. Doing as little as possible therefore becomes an artistic approach, an act that involves a radical reductionism, imbued with rigor and playfulness. The exhibition at Villa Medici continues that spirit and celebrates a demystified form of art in which the viewer becomes a participant, free to organize their own Roman "picnic" in turn. The walkthrough extends beyond the confines of Villa Medici, as far as the Re di Roma metro station, where visitors can discover the mosaic work created by the artist in 1997 for the *Arte Metro Roma* urban art program.

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<sup>1</sup> François Morellet, *Du spectateur au spectateur ou l'art de déballer son pique-nique*, 1971.



Archival image of François Morellet's work *Triangle néons rouges interférents* (1973), presented in the exhibition *François Morellet – Néons* at the Abbey of Saint-Philibert in Tournus (France) in 1990.  
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## Centenary of the birth of François Morellet

*100 x Morellet* is a wide-ranging program of tributes launched in France on the initiative of the Centre Pompidou, the Morellet Estate and the Fonds de dotation Morellet, in collaboration with the Mennour gallery in Paris, which represents the artist, and numerous partner institutions all over France. In Italy, the A arte Invernizzi gallery, which also represents the artist, has joined in the celebrations through a program of events scheduled in several cities in the peninsula, curated by Alessandro Gallicchio and Paolo Bolpagni. A catalog recounting the Italian portion of the celebrations has been published by Metilene, containing images of the installations as well as critical essays. Thus, more than 30 venues in France and Italy are hosting new exhibitions, rediscoveries of works in collections and public spaces, and international meetings, lectures and symposiums. This rich program is an invitation to reconsider François Morellet's legacy, his place in art history, his relationship with heritage and architecture, and the influence that he continues to exert on contemporary artists.

For further information on the program of events, see:

- France: <https://francoismorellet.com/fr/>  
<https://mennour.com/exhibition/françois-morellet-100-x-morellet>
- Italy: <https://www.aarteinvernizzi.it/en/appuntamenti/francois-morellet-centenario-1926-2026-2026-05-21/dettaglio>



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## Alessandro Gallicchio

### Curator of *François Morellet: Roman Picnic*

Alessandro Gallicchio (b. 1986 in Italy), director of the Art History Department at Villa Medici since 2025, is a lecturer in contemporary art history at Sorbonne Université and a member of the Centre André-Chastel Research Laboratory. His research, drawing on the social and political history of art, explores the connections between totalitarian propaganda, colonialism, and urban space. After studying the impact of Italian fascism in the Balkans and the idea of “dissonant heritages” through postcolonial theories, he is currently working on the representation of urban spaces by contemporary painters in the Mediterranean and the Balkans. Winner of the André Chastel scholarship in 2021, he was a fellow at Villa Medici in 2024–25. For further information on the Art History Department at Villa Medici, see: <https://villamedici.it/en/la-recherche/>



**Mobility partner**



#### **PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

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