

EXPERIENCES

Oct 14, 2023 — Feb 3, 2024 | Kunsthalle Marcel Duchamp, The
Forestay Museum of Art (KMD), Cully, Switzerland

Born in Geneva in 1948, John M Armleder has always cultivated an art form at the porous boundary with everyday life. In 1969, in the wake of the Fluxus movement, he founded the Ecart group with Patrick Lucchini and Claude Rychner, whose gallery and bookshop hosted exhibitions, performances and creation of multiples artists prints until 1982. This alternative space is considered by many to be one of the most important in Europe during the 1970s. In 1986, Armleder represented Switzerland at the Venice Biennale. His «furniture-sculptures», named after Erik Satie's furniture music, brought him international acclaim. In the 1990s, in reference to American abstract painting, he developed what he calls «pour» and «puddle paintings», in which pigment is spread randomly over huge canvases, concealing nothing of the work's production process. In the 2000s, his practice increasingly took the form of exhibitions in themselves, where large-format equipment, neon lights and B-movies accumulated to form the basis of a keyed scenario, a freely interpretable score.

The human brain first appeared in Armleder's repertoire in the early 2000s. At the time, it was a decorative, almost abstract motif, whose line-covered volume combined sculpture with drawing. During a trip to London, the artist had stumbled across some 19th-century papier-mâché animal brains in a fashion store window. These had been made by Dr. Auzoux, who at the time spearheaded the use of anatomical models for medical studies. By transposing the organ into another material and exhibiting it in series, the decontextualized object had unwittingly become a sculptural model. For the singular beauty of its form, perhaps, but also for its over-chewed chewing-gum pop aspect, yet still in control of our actions and gestures. An organ of all paradoxes, then, which prompted the artist to create sculptures of it, sometimes exceeding human size, sometimes tiny, in polished glass, or even in silver, as in this occasional exhibition. Here, the brain takes on the appearance of a gleaming object, an abstraction with precious accents that is strangely familiar to us.

— Julie Enckell