

Aspen Art Museum  
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# Educator Notes

## **John Armleder: Spoons, moons and masks**

**July 4–October 27, 2019**



Installation view: John Armleder: *Spoons, moons and masks*, Aspen Art Museum, 2019. Photo: Tony Prikryl

## About the Artist

John Armleder was born in 1948 in Geneva, Switzerland, and lives and works in Geneva and New York. He studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, Geneva. His recent exhibitions have taken place at the MUSEION Museum of Contemporary Art, Bolzano, Italy (2018 & 2016). Since the 1960s, Swiss artist John Armleder has been at the forefront of many key developments in postwar art. Often crisscrossing pattern, decoration, and kitsch, Armleder's diverse body of work has consistently challenged the lines between high and low art.

## About the Exhibition

The AAM's exhibition focuses on two of the artist's best-known painting series: his *Pour Paintings* and *Puddle Paintings*. The artist John Armleder utilizes a process-based approach that echoes the work of such modern masters as Jackson Pollock, Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, and Larry Poons. For his *Pour Paintings*, the artist applies different paint colors directly onto the top of his vertically oriented canvases, allowing the poured paint to flow down the surface of the canvas and produce gravity-pulled bands of saturated color. For his *Puddle Paintings*, John Armleder pours paint onto canvases laid horizontally on his studio floor, resulting in vibrant compositions of pooled and spattered paint. Sprinkled over the abstract surfaces are bursts of glitter, toys, and other bits of discarded matter.

## Questions for Discussion

- | How do you think these paintings were made?
- | Can you describe the artist's choice of materials?
- | If you could ask the artist a question, what would it be?

## Suggested Activity

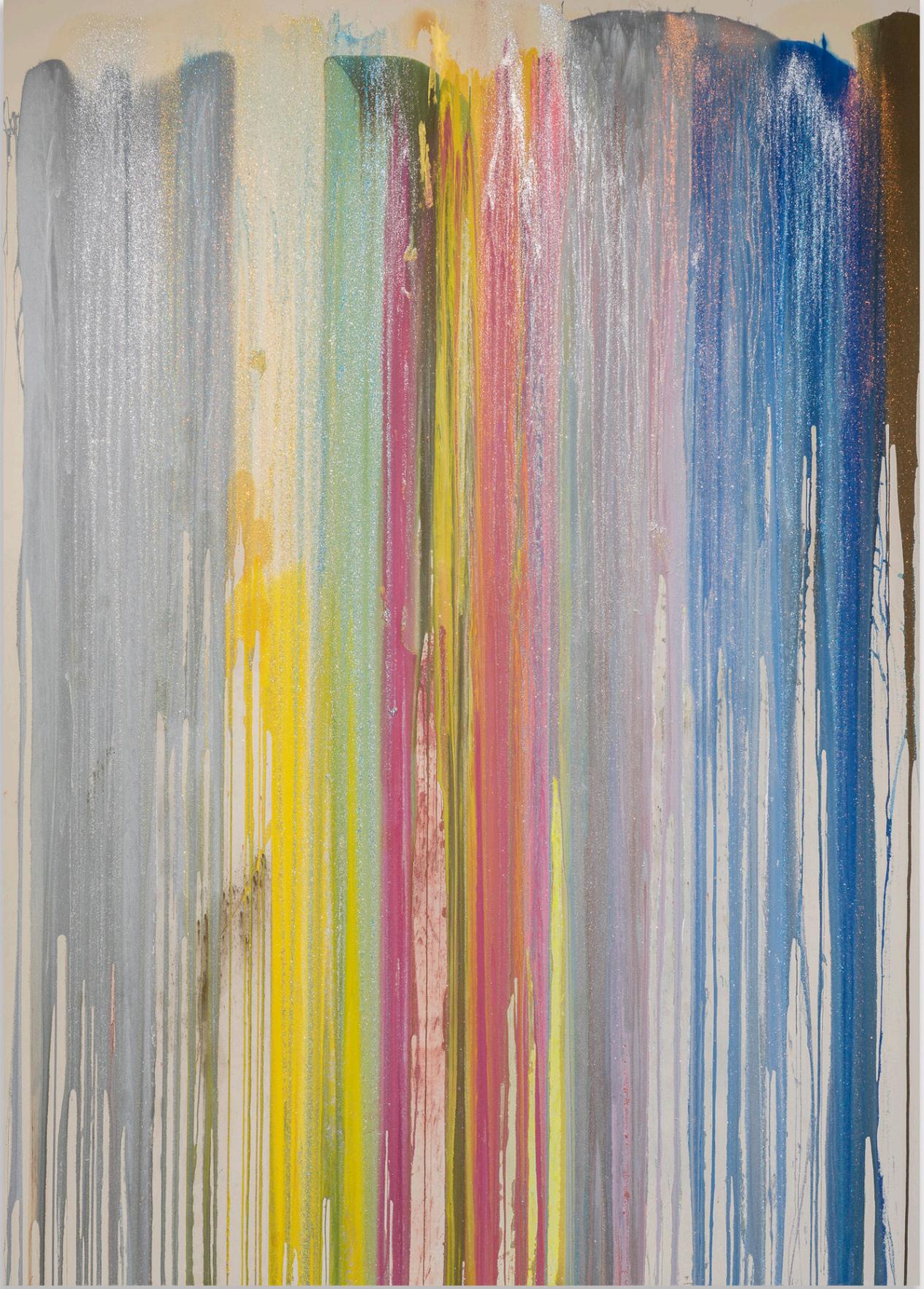
### Pours and Puddles

Begin by gathering canvases or large pieces of thick paper, acrylic paints of various colors, glitter, and stickers. Encourage students to bring in small toys that they would like to incorporate into their pieces of art.

Have students begin by looking at John Armleder's piece *Follow Me*, encouraging them to quietly observe for at least three to five minutes. After giving students time to reflect mindfully on the work, ask them what they think about the painting and how it was made. Explain to the students that Armleder frequently uses a process-based approach and experiments with different types of materials to create his work.

After students have discussed the concept of process art and the importance of experimenting, give each of them a canvas or piece of paper to experiment with materials on their own. Encourage them to pour and drip paint, sprinkle glitter, mix in the stickers, incorporate their favorite toys, and so on. Students should be mindful of the process and how it feels to simply create instead of focusing on the outcome.

Upon finishing the activity, have students display their final creations and walk around the classroom to observe their classmates' paintings. Each student should find their favorite part of every piece and explain what makes that part of the process interesting.



John Armleder, *Follow Me*, 2015. Mixed media on canvas, 138 x 79 x 1 1/2 in (350 x 250 x 4 cm). Courtesy the artist and Massimo De Carlo, Milan/London/Hong Kong. Photo: Alessandro Zambianchi