

ARTFORUM

Raymond Hains

GALERIE MAX HETZLER | PARIS  
57 Tue du Temple  
October 22–November 21

This exhibition categorizes Raymond Hains’s wide-ranging oeuvre in three parts: science, abstraction, and wordplay. The first two segments are on view in Berlin, the latter in Paris. Hains crisscrossed references linguistically, visually, and conceptually: One metallic suitcase packed with an assemblage of books serves as a microcosm of this method. The publications spotlight “Lapalissade,” a French figure known for the platitude inscribed on his epitaph: “If he weren’t dead, he would still be alive,” which is in fact a distortion of his real quote. Hains punned on this figure’s name with *Les vérités de la palisse* (Sweets of la Palisse), 2005, an oversize bronze sculpture of a rum-flavored candy. An earlier piece from 1976, *Palissade de beaubourg* (Palisade of Beaubourg)—his first in a series started in 1959 of fencing adorned with torn posters—is propped against a wall.

Also on view are examples of his hypnagogic, distorted photographic experiments created using a ribbed-glass lens. Here, the artist’s warped forms blend with Lettrist concepts, depicting undulating, senseless calligraphy on a large canvas for *Echelle Optométrique* (Optometric Scale), 1964/1990. Following the same principle, Hains also made the experimental unfinished film *Pénélope*, 1950–54, with artist Jacques Villeglé, featuring colorful collages in Matisse-esque compositions. Hains later enlarged several stills from the film on Plexiglas, one of which is on view here. The exhibition is a testament to the artist’s diverse output, from a Pop art jumbo-size matchbook created in 1964 to a neon he made forty years later, inspired by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s interest in Borromean rings. This Borromean model of inextricable linkages fits neatly with Hains’s approach of interconnectedness across mediums and muses.



Raymond Hains, *Echelle Optométrique* (Optometric Scale), 1964/1990, paint on wooden panel, 98 x 73".

— Sarah Moroz