

PRESSBOOK

Bernard FRIZE

ARTFORUM

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 Michael Wilson



View of "Anish Kapoor," 2016. From left: *First Milk*, 2015; *Today You Will Be in Paradise*, 2016. Photo: David Regen.

the distorting mirrored surfaces of his earlier sculptures give back images that verge on dreams, these works transport us, with no chance of escape, into an emphatically physical world. Nothing is dreamy here; we hover between repugnance and curiosity. Kapoor seems to be provocatively asking, "Does this overload of realism repel you?" Well, if it does, that's *your* problem, because this is what lies beneath the skin—everyone's skin. This is what allows your body to be healthy and beautiful. Without that heap of fiber, blood vessels, and intestinal loops we simply would not exist.

At the gallery's Twenty-Fourth Street location, works such as *Fetish Body Inside Out* and *Unborn*, both 2016, evoked a kind of Quentin Tarantino-grade gore, showing us bodies consumed by fire, shredded by explosions, transformed into mounds of dark and clotted material. Others, such as *Internal Object in Three Parts*, 2013–15, and *Today You Will Be In Paradise*, 2016, were bewitchingly matter-of-fact, oases of stillness amid the violence and chaos. Here, Kapoor points us toward that dark, disturbing place that is our mortality, allowing us to marvel at the vulnerability of the human body. He opens up an inner space of empathy, of intimacy, displaying the finitude of every sentient body.

The works in the show also nodded to art history, most obviously to the pictorial tradition of the *vanitas*. Yet there were other references too: The triptych *Internal Objects*, 2013–15, exhibited earlier this year at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (in a room adjacent to Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*, 1642), declares its classical roots, a lineage that goes from Titian's *Flaying of Marsyas*, ca. 1570–76, to Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632, up to the animal carcasses of Chaim Soutine and Francis Bacon, and the works of Hermann Nitsch.

She Wolf, 2016, exhibited in Gladstone Gallery's Twenty-First Street location, is an enormous arch of resin and earth that rests on a white, gouged-out marble base. The looming figure resembles a wolf with swollen breasts, coarse and heavy in nature. She forms an overwhelming vision of the maternal: engulfing and smothering rather than loving and nurturing. But this was all to the point—Kapoor reminds us that art, like life, is always charged with danger.

—*Ida Panicelli*

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

Bernard Frize
 GALERIE PERROTIN

"It is a rather complex thing to arrange situations in which you do nothing and things happen by themselves." French artist Bernard Frize's

consciously paradoxical statement relates of course specifically to the activity (or nonactivity) of abstract painting, his rigorous approach to which continues to yield a beauty that is at once distanced and engaged. Through processes that, when they avoid gimmickry, tend toward the artless, Frize achieves results that echo the most outwardly expressive of styles, even as they otherwise approach the condition of machine-made permutations. "Dawn comes up so young" featured entries from two current bodies of work alongside others from an early-1990s series, underscoring the artist's remarkable consistency; his is a practice that, at its most successful, exists almost outside of time.

To produce the works in the gallery's first room, Frize dragged a bundle of small brushes through multicolored fields of acrylic paint and resin, generating luminous veils that he then half-draped in black. (All of the works in this space were dated 2015, save for one, dated 1992, that was produced using a different process.) The results suggest rainbow-tinted rain streaming from hovering thunderclouds; they also evoke various dye and photographic techniques, and are firmly rooted in a lineage of post-painterly abstraction, from early-1960s Morris Louis to late-1990s Peter Davies. The works' single-word titles—*Capiteux*, *Effluenté*, *Fragrant*, *Nuavela*—are poetic but oblique, and while the canvases differ from one another in their fine details, their basic format remains consistent, such that any preference for one over another could only ever be a reflection of taste.

In the second room, a row of seven smaller, square canvases—also all from 2015—hung across one corner. Again made with acrylic and resin, these radiant abstractions were the results of a wet-on-wet pouring technique that sees the media flow together, creating chemical slicks of pink, blue, and yellow that bleed together against inky black grounds in ethereal lava-lamp puffs and swirls. The resulting biocosmic vibe is at once banal and lovely. Finally, in four works from 1992 and '93, Frize employed ink and mother-of-pearl in addition to pigment. Here, bands of pale color were allowed to billow into areas of white, the resultant shapes suggesting mountains, rivers, and trees—a kind of rough take on traditional Chinese landscape painting—as opposed to the celestial or microscopic events of the later series.

Rather like Scottish artist David Batchelor, author of the revealingly titled 2000 book *Chromophobia*, Frize has a complex relationship to color; while claiming indifference, he still produces work that often appears to use or focus on it almost to the exclusion of all else. By explicitly disowning color as a vehicle for expression or quantifiable communication—of states, emotions, even ideas—he positions it as a different kind of tool, one that allows him to circumvent the purely subjective in favor of a rigorous, yet still consciously aestheticized, sequence of experiments in the activity of making itself. His peculiar talent lies in embracing and applying what Batchelor discusses as the "impurity" of color—its associations with decadent notions of ornament and sensation—to an outwardly self-contained program of formal investigation. By establishing rules and regulations that allow for natural variation, Frize creates the perfect conditions for activity that resonates beyond conscious intent.

—*Michael Wilson*

Bernard Frize, *Euros*, 2015, acrylic and resin on canvas, 31 1/2 x 31 1/2".

