

PRESSBOOK

Bernard FRIZE

Modern Painters

April 2016



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May 2016
Scott Indrisek

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ART / ARCHITECTURE / DESIGN / PERFORMANCE / FILM

MAY 2016

"I DON'T WANT TO THINK AND THINK AND THINK AND THINK BECAUSE THINKING DOESN'T DO ANY GOOD." —JEREMIAH WOJCIK



MINERVA CUEVAS
LIFE HACKS IN MEXICO

GOSKA MACUGA
WOMEN OF ALL LANDS UNITE!

DUKE RILEY
PIGEONS AS PERFORMERS

BETTY TOMPKINS
GETS EXPLICIT WITH **MARILYN MINTER**

+
THE LONG SHADOW OF RUSCHA'S SUNSET

< BERNARD FRIZE
SPEED AND PLAY IN THE STUDIO

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PHILIPPE CHANCEL, DENNARD BRICE, ADAGNI PARIS, PARIS, NEW YORK, AND GALLERIE PERROUIN, PARIS



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Bernard Frize relates more to performance artists than painters. He values speed in the studio and throws out 10 works for every one that succeeds. Now he's unveiling an even more hands-off process:

How should [a painting] be?
that makes itself.

BY SCOTT INDRISEK



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“Rules are just a strategy to start—otherwise, I would stay in bed.”

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he first painting that Bernard Frize remembers completing, in 1977, took him a year of Sunday labor (he was, at the time, distracted by dual day jobs: ski instructor and print-maker). These days, the Paris-

and Berlin-based Frenchman—whose exhibition “Dawn comes up so young” opens May 3 at Galerie Perrotin in New York—tends to spend around 10 minutes on a single canvas. That’s a decision born less out of laziness than from Frize’s own conception of himself: a painter, sure, but one who identifies with Fluxus and Gutai. “What I’m doing is an action, done really quickly,” he tells me. “If I fail, I don’t retouch or amend—I just take another canvas and do it again.”

Much has been made of a certain detachment in Frize’s practice. “I’m from a generation, with people like Sol LeWitt and other artists, who were doing work with distance and a cold mind,” he says. “I’m not an Expressionist.” Frize is far from comfortable with the idea of “creating, with godlike authority, a beautiful thing.” His paintings, completed in sets and series, are often simple and goal-oriented. One such series involved real-time teamwork with assistants, creating abstract geometries by “exchanging brushes on the

surface of the canvas without lifting them up,” he explains. “I would give you my brush, then you’d give it to someone else, and back to me.” For a group of works begun in the 1990s, he painted horizontal lines of pigment that, thanks to gravity, drooped and warped into what Frize likens to accidental Chinese landscapes. “Rules are just a strategy to start—otherwise, I would stay in bed,” he jokes. “I’m starting with an idea that motivates me, but it’s not an order. During the painting process, there’s so much that can happen that I have to respond to.”

Still, the language Frize uses to discuss his work is more utilitarian than emotive. When a painting goes wrong, it’s generally due to a “technical mistake,” he says, rather than a creative failure—an insufficiently taut canvas, for instance, rather than any deficiency of gesture. He speaks in terms of efficiency, productivity, a casual outsourcing of decisions. Frize’s studio is now a one-man shop, and has been for around a decade, but when he was working alongside assistants he often delegated major aesthetic choices to them. “They would decide the colors themselves,” he admits. “It was funny to me. People would say, the work is so beautiful and tasteful! But they weren’t my choices at all.”

With his most recent paintings, the artist has ceded control to chance. A series of square-

PREVIOUS PAGE:
Bernard Frize in his
Paris studio, 2016.

OPPOSITE
PAGE:
Euros, 2015.
Acrylic and
resin on canvas,
31 1/2 x 31 1/2 in.



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CLAIRE DORN, BERNARD FIZE, ADA CP, PAINS, NEW YORK, AND GALLERIE PERROTIN



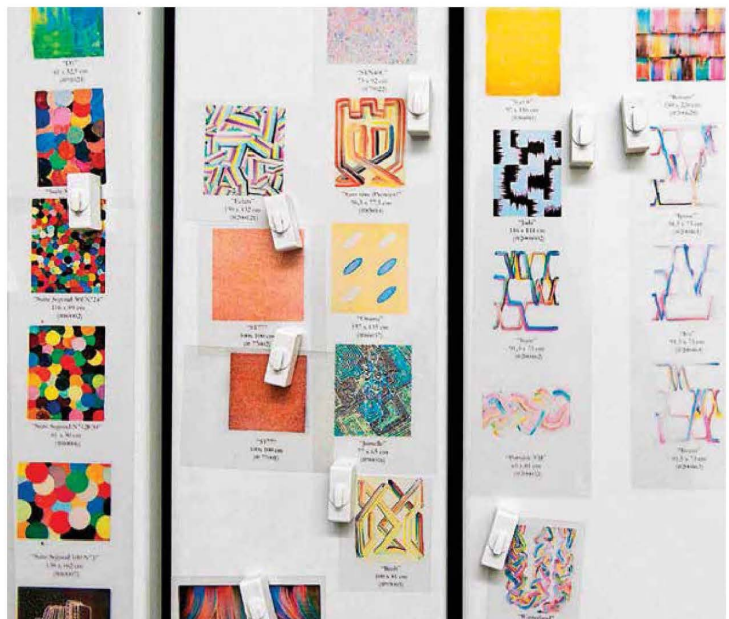
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ALL IMAGES THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: PHILIPPE CHANCEL, BERNARD PRIZE, ADAOPH PARIS, ARS, NEW YORK, AND GALERIE PERROTTIN



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ABOVE: Images from Frize's studio.

OPPOSITE: *Novea*, 2016. Acrylic and resin on canvas, 74½ x 63 in.

formatted acrylic-and-resin works were made, he says, with elements of J.M.W. Turner's landscapes in mind. Despite their almost psychedelic, celestial air, they're not explicitly meant to represent "skies, or clouds, or wind," he stresses. These pieces were made in a rudimentary way: pouring pigment onto the level surface and then angling the canvas so that the paint moves across it. Frize thought of a vortex, or the way water circles down a drain. "It's not a gimmick that I just invented for this exhibition—it's a desire I've had for several years," he says. "These paintings are the result of an attempt to realize my dream—of a painting that makes itself." These works, like most of Frize's output, are "very, very flat," he says, "a frozen picture, like photography."

An accompanying series of canvases, also on view at Perrotin, feature looming masses of black atop a cascading waterfall of color. Frize's own associations are again refreshingly intuitive and unacademic—the paintings, he thinks, might recall clouds emitting some type of fluid, or laundry hanging on a clothesline. Speaking with the artist, I'm reminded of a conversation I had years

ago with the German artist Gerhard Richter. Based on his towering reputation, one might assume that Richter would be self-serious and ponderous when discussing his practice; on the contrary, I found him almost mischievously frank, more than happy to leave highbrow theorizing to the critics responsible for catalogue essays. In discussing a suite of all-white abstractions, I was eager to delve into the deep philosophical import of whiteness. Richter shruggingly explained his choice: He had originally tried them out with green but found they simply looked better in white—end of story.

Frize shares something of Richter's down-to-earth approach, an unwillingness to contribute to his own mystique. His practice has proceeded thanks to a restless playfulness in the studio. "The idea of a series is to exhaust it," he says. "There are several ways to do this—the first is to get bored. Another is that it leads to something else; you find another spark. But I have the feeling that I'm always painting the same canvas." Despite that, he has yet to exhaust his own curiosity. "The only reason to paint," he says, "is to be excited by what you do." MP