

POST-PERFORMANCE PAINTING

Following the concept of “Post-Performance Future” published in *Mousse 63*—which deals with ideas of dematerialization, power, and production in the time of invisible work—this article examines approaches toward painting practices, intended not only as the residue of different activities, nor as simply the outcome of the activities, but as the symbiotic coexistence of these two dimensions.

BY MARIE DE BRUGEROLLE

In this third chapter titled “Post-Performance Painting,” I’d like to target paintings that develop out of an artist’s performative practice. For the group of artists I will focus on, painting is a script, painting is a stage, painting is a character, painting is a curtain, painting is a prop, painting is a performative sketch. There are paintings that have to be read in relation to the enacting body that gives rise to them: the act of painting as a starting point (Simon Bergala) or as a destination (Manon Vargas), an ongoing process (John Baldessari) or a critical tool (Anne Imhof). After decades of Postmodernism and post-media theories, some artists have made their way back to studio practice. Sometimes they use their studio as a stage (Guy de Cointet) or as a backdrop (Stephen Prina) where painting can extend to the wall, ceiling, or ground and create a physical effect on the audience. The painting is not the residue of an activity, nor is the activity simply the means of producing the painting—both coexist symbiotically. In fact, many of these artists have a strong separate performative practice or engagement with performative forms, as in the case of Charlie Hamish Jeffery. Anne Imhof says that she composes her performances “as images,” and that she draws “post-performance” at a later time, after actions.

Looking at Imhof’s still images as frozen moments from the 2017 Venice Biennale, and the positions of the performers and public over and under a glass grid, I’ve wondered about the status of images in our “screen time” moment. Watching the public taking pictures with their iPhones, I wondered what types of images were sharing the same time and space: the *tableaux vivants* in real time, or the snapshots taken loosely? Are the printed screens still images or stimuli?

The activity of painting instantiates a resistance to the flow of scopopic desire, by means of the here and now of looking at pigments, traces. Painting is a series of actions whose result is matter-of-fact: an evidence of being, standing still, in front of the screens, with time. And seeing the Yellow Vests’ demonstrations in France, especially the way they build installations at the roundabouts, I’ve starting to wonder what would be the great historical painting of today.

A BREACH IN THE CANVAS, CANVAS AS A BLANKET, CANVAS AS A MATTRESS

Modernity opened with a painting beyond canvas. Whereas *Le Serment des Horaces* (1784) by Jacques-Louis David is like the fixed memory of a *tableau vivant*, a suspended moment of the ancient world, and *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume* (1790–1794) marks the unfinished aspect of modernity, *La Mort de Marat* (1793) is one step further toward the instantaneity of the “event”: it is painted as a snapshot of a news story, with the crudity of a police report. It is said that David, whose studio was installed in the Louvre, had the public paying to look at the huge *Enlèvement des Sabines* (1799) with curtains and mirror. In such a way they could be included in the painting, which became a backdrop.¹

This evokes Dan Graham’s *Performance Audience Mirror* (1975). Thinking about the Yellow Vests as *tableaux vivants* and visual events, the environments were outcomes of the fact that the protests settled especially at a point that avoids the city and makes the cars turning without stopping (non-sites), participating in the same ideology of control, erasing the public common spaces, and furniture, like the benches. The settlement reenacts a forum, and citizenship arises from this “monument” transformed into “momentum.” Looking at

the colors, uses of cardboard, and paint, I wonder about the death of painting announced in the 1980s and its survival or new visibilities. I’ve thought about Thomas Hirschhorn’s use of cardboard and his *Musée précaire Albinet* in the Paris suburbs in 2004, but also Allan Kaprow’s environments with his *Hysteria* (1956), a painting including cardboard, fabric collage and letters (AHAHA) as material. The first happening-environments created forums, spaces outside of traditional frames.

The idea of togetherness was typical for the American 1950s. Dan Graham, in a discussion we had recently, remembered that the slogan of Dwight Eisenhower’s presidential campaign was “I Like Ike,” and that his was the first presidential campaign to commission animated TV spots.² What interests me are marginalized historical narratives and stories that have not already been written. Once Kaprow told me, “Art history is not in books, it is in gossips.” And later: “Performance is what we did between two paintings to seduce girls.”³ Another unexpected gossip was Pierre Restany, who kept telling me stories about artists’ relationships. Regarding Yves Klein, he had a special theory about why he used women’s bodies as paint-brushes: to avoid touching them. Yves Klein’s memory and impact is a true thread between France and California.

KLEIN STORIES, CONCATENATION

Camila Oliveira Fairclough and Karina Bisch both recently re-enacted Klein’s *Anthropometries* (1960), in different ways. Fairclough’s *Klein d’oeil* (2013) consists of a series of five canvases stretched over Transat chairs. Arranged in a line or group, they create a conversation piece in green, brown, and dark red. It is much more physical and incarnated than the Klein blue. The way Klein used female bodies was dematerialized, the women serving mostly as objects in the sense of sponges or brushes. Fairclough’s series, with its traces of different colors (yellow, brown, violet, red) and the imperfection of the folds, enhances the furniture status of the piece. As I mentioned in my earlier article about “Post-Performance Future,” one aspect of its etymology stands in the *perfourner*, the question of furniture.⁴ The artist works with language and letters, and creates a grammar of signs in which the body is a character, a real person, not idealized.

In Bisch’s recent exhibition at Kunstverein Langenhagen, Germany, three elements embody the post-performance painting effect and form a concatenated structure involving the costume, the props, and the immersion of the artist’s body. The general title, *Le Marabout*, has a double meaning in French. It is the name of the African witch doctor, and a word game in which the end of each word is the beginning of the next. The three pieces—*The Armchair*, *The Painter*, and *The Painting*—are colored objects that have names and functions. A seat dressed with a colorful textile, the Wink Chair by Kita, is a metaphor for a human

1. J. C. Milner, *Malaise dans la peinture, à propos de la mort de Marat* (Paris: INHA, éditions Orphys, 2012), 28.

2. Conversation with the author, October 2018. “There is a performance piece of mine, *Performance Audience Mirror*, which deals with the politician or the politician-artist, like [Joseph] Beuys, who describes both the audience and himself the artist-performer to the mirror and the audience’s projection—identification of themselves onto the performer. The performer’s description of himself, and the audience as a group, as a play-by-play description, I wanted it to be phenomenological and also the description of a baseball or soccer match on the radio.”

3. Conversation with the author, 1994.

4. Marie de Brugerolle, “Post Performance Future,” (*Mousse Magazine* 63, April-May 2018), 266.

figure. The applied body on the canvas looks like Klein's anthropometries, with generous curves. It appears as a fragmented body, which has a unique presence. The nipples are highlighted with different colors and the belly button is quite high. It is the artist's self-portrait as an imprinted Venus. It is not a canonized body but a real cast made with a painted body. From a distance, the body looks like a large mask. Indeed, it recalls Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* (1914).

Both artists address the question of femininity and feminism, with the subtle and sharp weapon of humor. The feminine shapes that they use are anti-canonizations of bodies controlled by fashion norms. Performativity is also how we consider objecthood and the status of human beings, in a civilization that treats objects as persons. Isn't the reverse a possibility? Performance in work, being performative in function, turns people into furniture. Bisch speaks about "animated paintings," a term we could use to describe her use of fabric. It is sometimes the blouse of the painter, her working cloth. In a time where body pressure has become part of the global violence against subjectivity, Bisch and Fairclough's works stand up as generous flags.

Klein, like Jackson Pollock, was a reader of Gutai. Eugen Herrigel's *Zen and the Art of Archery* (1948) was a book that any young artist would read.

ZEN AND THE ART OF ARCHERY, THE EGO IS
THE TARGET, DRAW A LINE AND FOLLOW IT:
BALANCE YOUR PAINT

The strong connection between Gutai and California's performance practices might be a good angle from which to look at Hiro Kosaka, very close to Saburo Murakami, who is a key part of this history, from Wolfgang Stoerchle up to Naotaka Hiro. Gutai is linked to notions of concreteness and incarnation, the real and the body. If the German and the Japanese immigrants in California became best friends in the post-war area, they also participated in inventing a new body language going beyond the borders of what Modernism defined strictly as painting. The question of the liminal, and space-time as material, became as much a form as a canvas on a frame, and beyond. Kosaka made films and actions, and used painted targets as a set, like a *sfumato* atmosphere.⁵

Today Hiro says, "Painting is the result of performance."⁶ The body of the artist is a tool and the painting looks like a target. Sometimes the artist paints in an immersive way, inside the fabric taken as a bag or cloth, but also as he films his body spraying and splashing pink all over, like in a womb. Both the film and color action are the painting, not just the remaining canvas hanging like a nest from the ceiling. Hiro literally performs the painting. He makes a parallel between his process and casting in sculpture.

In the early 1970s Stoerchle was the first artist to hold a hybrid performance-video class at California Institute of the Arts, mixing musicians and sculptors and using video to record performance. Stoerchle was best friends with Kosaka, knew Klein, and was a reader of *Zen and the Art of Archery*. Sculpture and painting were the basis of his work, especially his series of *Mattress Paintings* (1968-1970). They look spray painted but were painted in a quite traditional manner, playing with the dots and spots on the surface. Not only because of their illusionism, but also because of the quite intestinal and organic pink colors, the early paintings relate to Stoerchle's very last performance in 1975. This famous *Untitled (Last Performance)* happened in John Baldessari's studio and there was a mattress used by the artist, too, on which a person from the audience made him an unfinished "blow job," after his public coming out. From the very first mattresses used as a fake pattern until this very last one, the canvas had become a prop. Pollock's drippings became waste semen on a fabric surface.

DO WE STILL NEED TO BURN PAINTING?

If the ongoing motto of the 1980s was about painting as a dead art, a dead end, we can say that it had a long agony. When John Baldessari did his *Cremation Project* in 1970, it was not to claim the end of painting. As he expressed, it's like when you're on a diet, you need to express it out loud, make a statement, so that if someone sees you eating chocolate, they will stop you: "Hey, you said you were on a diet." But he named his dog Giotto, knowing that painting always comes back.

Six Colorful Inside Jobs (1977), a video piece by Baldessari, was a key point in the retrospective I organized at Carré d'art, Nîmes, in 2005. In it a man dressed in a worker's outfit paints and repaints the walls of a white cube from floor to ceiling. The film is a delegated performance, as painting is a daily job. The year 1977 was also that of Douglas Crimp's *Pictures* exhibition. In its aftermath, the term "appropriation" emerged. "Making an image" could also mean "taking an image;" re-photography, readymade images, and the simulation era started. In the performances of Guy de Cointet, paintings are used as props but also as paintings, albeit paintings that make people feel hot or cold, or that tell stories. In the play *Tell Me* (1979), one character describes a painting first as comfortable and finally as "beautiful to look at." Cointet's objects were paintings in volumes, themselves used as props, texts, and characters. They performed a function. His studio was made like a set; he would say that if a table worked on stage, it could be used in the studio.

I recently discovered a key piece in Cointet's oeuvre.⁷ I'd been told about this work by Jeffrey Perkins and Larry Bell, his early friends. It became a "gossip," a grail that any art historian would look for, like the artist's film *IDream, (Old Woman)* (1968-1970), which was the masterpiece I found in 2010. *Untitled (Sticks)* (ca. 1966) was probably made when Cointet was in New York, and he brought it to Los Angeles in 1966 or 1967. It consists of a series of colored wooden sticks (originally in bright primary colors of red, yellow, blue) hung vertically in a square frame. It is a link between the "ping pong" paintings that he made just before moving to the United States and the object-props that he created for his first performances of the mid-1970s. The former works integrated heterogeneous objects into the canvas. Cointet was moving from the letter toward the object. His work was dealing with the status of things and getting beyond objecthood. As the letter was growing out of the page, and the book becoming a three-dimensional shape, the character (letter) evolved toward the Character (protagonist).

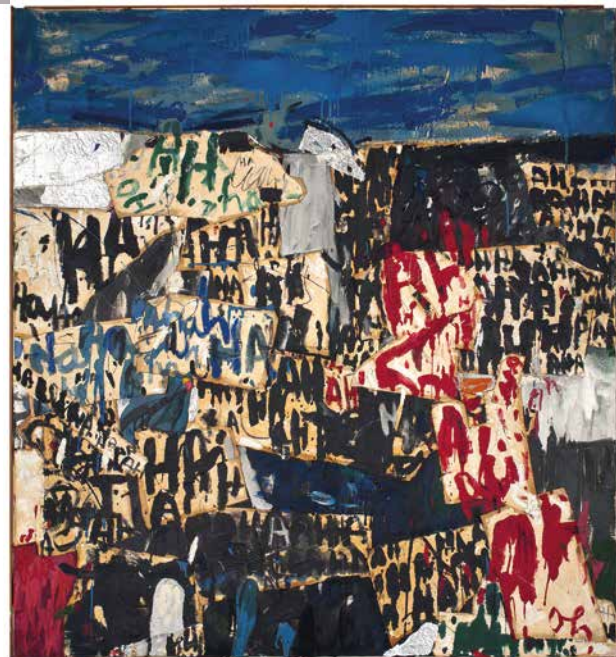
The seriality and systematic order of the piece is totally relevant to the structuralist ontology of Cointet's work. The relation is obvious as well, with the permutation principle of André Cadere's colorful "sticks." The circular wooden pieces systematically used by the Romanian artist who migrated to France are dated 1973; his early paintings, including the wooden sticks currently on view at the MNAM-Pompidou Center, are from 1968-1970. We note the evolution from a composite board with wooden sticks, *Quatre mètres quatre-vingt quatre noir Citroën (Panneau noir Citroën)* (1969), to a cylindrical combined object, *Six barres de bois ronds* (1975). Not only mobile but actually walkable paintings, Cadere's sticks have an anthropomorphic aspect. They are visual events, like Cointet's props or actresses. He confirms that they are paintings and not minimal sculptures.⁸

The artists knew each other and corresponded. They both worked against Minimalist hegemony, creating a personal mythology—Cadere maybe addressing Joseph Beuys, and Cointet as the "Duchamp of Los Angeles." If the elements of Cointet's performances are props, they function also as actors, director, and, as Mike Kelley expressed it, phonemes. We can say that they exemplify the "message as the medium" announced by Marshall McLuhan. They are painting in volume when not activated. This ambivalent status, depending on the use of the forms, distinguished it from the "one concept, one form" straight definition of conceptual art. They are painting performing painting—an animated discourse, a *tableau vivant*, literally. Often the table becomes a painting from the horizontal

5. Hiro Kosaka, email to the author, 2017. "My archery target is called *Kasumi mato* [Hazy Target]. Full moon is cast by passing clouds."
6. Naotaka Hiro, email to the author, December 2018. "My works (paintings, drawings, video and life-cast sculptures) are a documentation of time and process, my action and proof of existence, yes."
7. The moment was June 2018. I'd like to thank Tim Johnson, the poet who owns Marfa's bookstore, for having contacted me in 2012 and put me in contact with Kathryn Bogie, early friend of Guy de Cointet and owner of this piece.
8. André Cadere in conversation with Linda Morris, 1976, reprinted in André Cadere, *Peinture sans fin [Unfinished painting]* (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 2008), 27: "Does it worry you that the object, your round bar of wood, is just a piece of Minimal Art?" AD: "Yes, it is like a painting and can be shown like a painting, and I think it is always necessary to show it exactly like a painting. It is not Minimalist because if you show my work to a real minimalist artist my round bar of wood would never be seen as a minimalist work of art. They have a very abstract idea about their work. If we speak about the work itself we have to think about the structure. There is a relationship between order and mistake. In Minimalism the mistake is excluded, you cannot make a mistake. Minimalist is completely idealistic thinking."



Mickey Mahar in Anne Imhof, *Faust*, 2017. German Pavilion, 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, Venice. Courtesy: the artist and German Pavilion 2017. © Photo: Ugo Carmeni



Allan Kaprow, *Hysteria*, 1956. Alexandre Carel, London. © Allan Kaprow Estate . Courtesy: the Estate and Hauser & Wirth.



Camila Oliveira Fairclough, *Klein d'oeil*, 2013. Courtesy: Luis Adelantado, Valencia and Galerie Joy de Rouvre, Genève. Photo: Costanza Smith



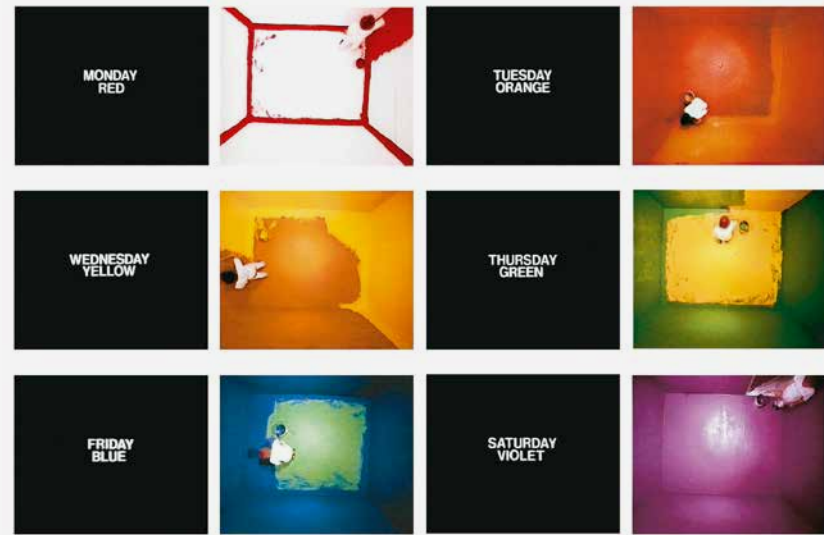
Wolfgang Stöerchle, *Untitled*, ca. 1968. Permanent Collection, Art, Design & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara. Photo: Tony Mastres



Karina Bisch, *Le Marabout*, 2018, *Sie ist die Zukunft/She is the future* installation view at Kunstverein Langenhagen, Langenhagen, 2018. Courtesy: the artist, Galerie Thomas Bernard, Paris and ADAGP, Paris



Naotaka Hiro, *Untitled (Crawl)*, 2016. © Naotaka Hiro. Courtesy of the artist and The Box, Los Angeles. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio



John Baldessari, *Six Colorful Inside Jobs*, 1977. Courtesy: the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris



John Baldessari, *Cremation Project*, 1970. Courtesy: the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris

Guy de Cointet, *Tell Me*, 1979. Performance view at Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain Languedoc-Roussillon, Sète, 2006. Performed by Denise Domergue, Helen Mendez Berlant, Jane Zingale. © Photo Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Guy de Cointet Society and Air de Paris, Paris.





Guy de Cointet, *Untitled (Sticks)*, ca.1965.
Collection Kathryn Bogie, Palm Springs, CA



André Cadere, *Six barres de bois rond*, 1975. Collection Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle, Paris. © Courtesy: Succession André Cadere. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/Philippe Migeat/Dist. RMN-GP



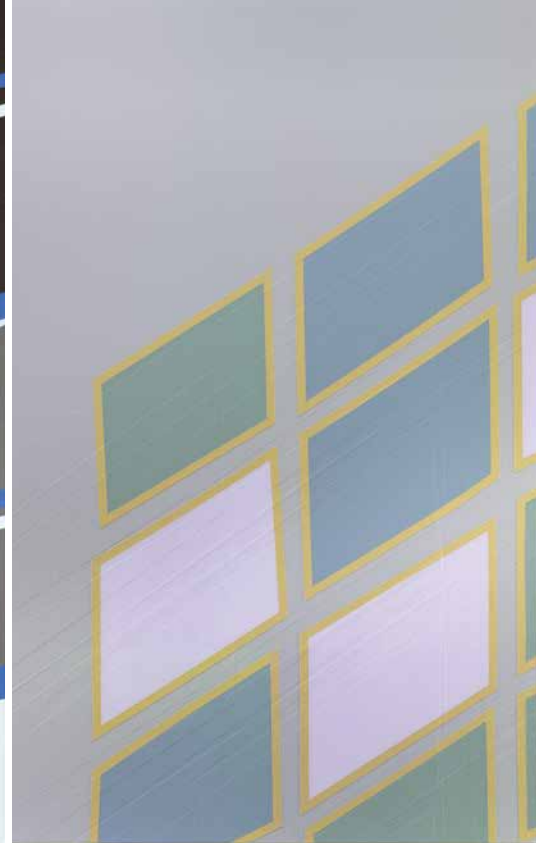
Guy de Cointet, *A New Life*, 1980. Performance view at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1981. Performed by René Ricard and Nile Yasici. © All rights reserved. Courtesy Guy de Cointet Society and Air de Paris, Paris.



Michael Zahn, *The Crayon Miscellany* installation view at OMI International Art Center, Hudson, 2015. From left: *Dennis*, 2015; *Yep Yep Yep etc.*, 2015; *Base Blocks Brown Boxed Babe*, 2015. Courtesy: the artist. Photo: Ron Amstutz



Kate Spencer Stewart, *Binary System (Theta B)*, *Binary System (Theta A)*, 2018, *Paintings*, The Gallery @ Michael's, Santa Monica, 2018. Courtesy: The Artist. Photo: Bjarne Bare



From left - Ron Amstutz, *Untitled (blue tape)*, 2016-2018. © Ron Amstutz, New York; Ron Amstutz, *Untitled (grey)*, 2016-2018. © Ron Amstutz, New York

Kirsten Mosher, *The Rest of the World is Lover There*, 2014. From: *Love, Gumhead* (2010-ongoing), Mobile Station, Beacon, New York. Photo: Flynn Larson



Julien Bismuth, *Oops color paint painting (orange)*, 2016, © Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois, Paris. Courtesy: Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois, Paris

Glenn Ligon, *Debris Field/Notes for a Poem on the Third World/Soleil Nègre* installation view at Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. Photo : Florian Kleinfenn

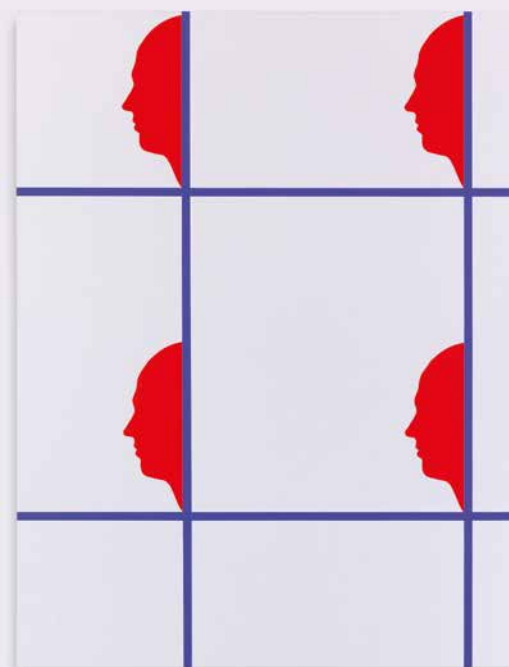




Clément Rodzielski, *Untitled*, 2018. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. Photo: Florian Kleinfenn



Stephen Prina, performance at Maureen Paley, London, 2012. © Stephen Prina. Courtesy Maureen Paley, London.



Nick Oberthaler, *Untitled (Topology)*, 2018. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Maria Bernheim Zurich. Photo Credit: Annik Wetter, Geneva



Richard Jackson, *La Palette*, 2016-2017 installation view at Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois, Paris, 2017. © Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois, Paris. Courtesy : Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois, Paris

MANANCE PAINTING
BRUGEROLLE



Manon Vargas, Hugo Ferretto, Pierre Masclef and Floris Dutoit, *Le regard des peintres*, in Salon Discret, Mnam Centre Pompidou. © Marie de Bruggerolle. Photo Credit: Juliette Guérin



Simon Bergala, *Untitled (red hood)*, 2012. Courtesy: the artist. Photo:



Charlie Hamish Jeffery, *Studio situation*, 2017. Photo: Charlie Hamish Jeffery



Jessica Warboys, *Sea Painting*, 2014, *RIDEAUX/blinds* installation view at Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne / Rhône-Alpes, 2015. © Blaise Adilon

flatness standing against a wall or hung on it. In *A NEW LIFE* (1981), the poet René Ricard sits on the “Preparation H,” a yellow armchair in the shape of this mute letter (in French it is not pronounced, but is a white space, a silence in a score).

HOW DOES PAINTING POST-PERFORMANCE
PERFORM ITS FUNCTION TODAY?

Michael Zahn captures images on his mobile that are framed by the iconography of the device. The way Zahn employs these “default” signs marks an intention, which requires making the “whole” as a painting: “W. Benjamin is of the opinion that advanced art either destroys genre or creates a new one of its own.”⁹ In the large work in the gallery at OMI Contemporary, Hudson, the emoji paintings, hung flatly on the wall, appear even more flat and definitively “painted” in relation to the *trompe l’oeil* cardboard boxes on the floor in front of them. These volumes are decoys placed by the artist in a performative act. They are not “real” objects but props, and the whole in itself may therefore be understood as a set. In doing so, Zahn deludes our senses: Which is the actual, and which is representation? This plays with the consciousness of being in or out of representation, and instills a doubt between what we think belongs to the digital image and what to the analog image. “Perhaps in addressing the ‘whole’ I can find a new genre... and open a door onto what you are calling a ‘post-performative’ type of painting,” the artist says.¹⁰

As we know, for the believer, icons are not representations but incarnations. Zahn’s boxes play as the detail that reveals the fact of the painting as a painting; in a way, it acts this very fact. This points to the basic economy of painting as a whole. That is what Pollock’s dripping broke in the late 1940s and what Donald Judd considered in his 1967 text “Jackson Pollock”: “I think that it’s clear that Pollock created the large scale, wholeness and simplicity that have become common to almost all good work... The dripped paint in most of Pollock’s paintings is dripped paint. It’s that sensation, completely immediate and specific, and nothing modifies it.”¹¹

I broke my teeth and head trying to get at what was “specific” in the “Specific Object” when I was a student in the mid-1990s. When I visited Judd’s foundation and especially saw how he arranged his works always with a bed nearby to be able to look and think, how he collected Indian blankets and how he organized his kitchen and library, always with stones taken from outside and a relation to the horizon line, I got it. This work needs to be set. It might be the crucial point of setting that is at stake here, in the post-performance painting moment.

SETTING A PAINTING AS SETTING A TABLE

The very light brush movement on the surface of Kate Spencer Stewart’s paintings and her squarish dimensions look at first glance like a backdrop of an Edouard Manet or other nineteenth-century modern painting. The work is hung quite low, lower than normal eye level, which creates a sense of strangeness and discomfort for the viewer. We need to be quite close to it, and it makes us part of the set in an ambiguous, uncanny manner. In her installation at Michael’s Gallery, Santa Monica, which is in fact a restaurant, the paintings create a set effect, as if the tables, chairs, and fireplace are the artifice and the paintings the “real furniture.”

This almost choreographic movement is also at stake in Ron Amstutz’s recent large paintings. *Bluetape* (2018), and *Grey* (2018) came out of the experience of *RE:ENACT* (2014), a performance that took place in his studio for more than a year and became a stop-motion film. The paintings are taped strips on large canvases. If presented as vertical panels, their dimensions are the same as the large studio windows. This element has been the set of the ongoing performance that animated the body of the artist for months, creating a global work with costume, floor and wall paintings, and music. The set changed according to the light, from sunrise to sunset. Twelve hours became the rays of lines on the ceiling, walls, floor, and from the studio box the artist created a post-performance film and then a post-film painting series.

This opens a new perspective to the strip line pattern (the abstract painting history from action expressionist to Color Field painting), and the zip line—in reference to Barnett Newman “zips” made with

tape—is actually the gaffer’s work in the studio. It wouldn’t exist without all the process of acting out a space, creating an ongoing work-opera. Here the painting is a post-score, which wouldn’t have existed without the enactment. It is a choreography of light on a wall that has shaped the canvas, as a dance score. Here again, each prop is handmade and as for Cointet, they are “volume paintings”. Through this pop-up ongoing grammar, Amstutz reenacts the initial lines and post-performs the painting, which becomes a performed film.

Each sequence is a painting in action.

MOBILE STATION OWNER AS CURATOR, PAINT THAT
SUCKS, OOPS, I DID IT AGAIN

Kirsten Mosher is an artist I have been following and inviting to many exhibitions since we first met when I was at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 1995. One hour and ten minutes from the Big Apple and you are out of the gallery world. Mosher built a large corpus of works under the generic title *Gumhead* (2010-ongoing). The brightly colored gums that she chews become part of poetical and sharp tableaux set in the streets of Beacon, New York, where she also performed wearing cardboard outfits. Her posters and paintings are made from the fluids issued from the chewing activity, and objects. The Mobil gas station in Beacon became her experimental performing place. She undertook an ongoing negotiation with the manager as her personal curator. This act of transforming her domestic place into her studio and then a very public place (a gas station) into her gallery correspond to the radical critique of using the body (saliva as aesthetic fluid, organic pictorial binder) and performs the yellow home Post-Its in larger post-performance paintings.

Baldessari enacted his *Cremation Project* so that he would never go back to the painting he was making before. The legalistic, notarized act states that all his paintings made before 1970 have been burned. All? Not exactly, as his sister found some early ones from the 1960s in her garage some years after. The return of the paintings was poetically expressed by Baldessari as “Paint is like toilet paper, it sticks to your sole whenever you try to drop it.”¹² Some students in art schools seem to apologize when they present their paintings. It sounds like a sin. Julien Bismuth’s *OOPS Paintings* (2014) are scores to be reenacted. They are made using the “Oops” paint cans that some stores sell for a bargain price. They are errors made products again. Bismuth perverts the capitalist performativity, bringing back the paint as an art tool.

PAINTING AS (RE)ENACTEMENT OF BODY
KNOWLEDGE, PAINTING AS A BREACH OF REALITY,
LETTERS AS SILHOUETTES IN THE BODY OF PAINTING

Glenn Ligon’s 2018 exhibition at Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris, *Debris/fields*, enacted our invisible history through the embodiment of words inside the skeen of the canvas. *Debris* is a French word for a remaining fragment, left apart, junk. The anagrammatic effect of the black letters embodied in the white field like a skin drove me back to my first encounter with Ligon’s work in 1995. I went to the Whitney Museum of American Art and saw the exhibition *Black Male*, which included Ligon and Byron Kim’s piece *Rumble Young Man, Rumble (Version #2)* (1993): a punching bag imprinted with black oil-stick letters. It was what I call an “epiphany of the real”—an encounter of real and imaginary on a surface. Serigraphy and paint are like scars on a body, embodied memory. We, viewers, are in the active position to struggle with texts’ (James Baldwin, Gertrude Stein) own body and memory. There is no escape: we are part of the problem. As Felix Gonzalez-Torres puts

9. Michael Zahn, email to the author, December 2018.

10. Michael Zahn, email to the author, December 2018. He went on to say: “In general, much of this recent work is related to Friedrich Kittler’s sense of ‘media’ as that which is made by humankind, be it music, a photograph, architecture, a boat, the tools that produce these things, or what have you. This question, taken together with Niklas Luhmann’s understanding of social systems, gives me a solid position from which to view the heterogeneous appearance of contemporary culture. Kittler has allowed me to understand genre in a completely new way, and has opened a door onto what you are calling a ‘post-performative’ type of painting.”

11. Judd Donald, *Writings*, edited by Flavin Judd and Caitlin Murray (Marfa, TX: Donald Judd Foundation, 2016), 191–92.

12. Conversation with the author, 2005.

it: “Aesthetics are politics, they are not even about politics, they are politics.”¹³ This use of beauty as a weapon is at stake also in the work of Clément Rodzielski. *Untitled* (2018) is a part of a new series of images in which the artist’s method mimics the model’s attitude. With his eyes closed, the artist applies the paint in a blind way. The green color is the one of arsenic, which can be related to the Pharmakon.¹⁴ This act maintains the ambivalence as toxic and fascinating. The paint’s handmade maculation blinds the flat surface and restores a sensuality to it, forcing us to have a real experience. Nick Oberthaler’s text paintings (*EX, AHAH, S.O.S.*) embody language in the action of painting. The text is not a pattern or flat composition, but as in his recent profile *Untitled (Topology)* (2018), a colored shadow. This orange silhouette-like mask projects the artist’s face on the canvas grid, marking a breach in the decades-long tradition of postmodernist nonrepresentational dogma.

PAINTING AS SHOOTING, PAINTING AS A COMBAT
SPORT, ANTI-PERFORMATIVE PAINTING AS POST-
PERFORMANCE, ERASING MANET AND PERFORMING

Richard Jackson uses the canvas as a shooting exercise. The first time I met him in his studio in Los Angeles, he held a rifle. Reenacting Georges Seurat’s *A Sunday on la Grande Jatte* (1884-1886), each dot became a painted bullet. Jackson applies his hunting skills to paint. Works like *La Palette* (2017) and *Paintings* (2018) are demonstrations of post-performing acts. For the first he had the eponymous restaurant remade inside a gallery as a set for an evening performance where the artist transformed the bar draughts of beer as paint containers and tools. In the latter case, the canvas pieces became also the props of their own setting. They performed themselves: paintings as paintings.

The one-to-one scale is a stage effect. Stephen Prina’s practice is a rock ’n’ roll attitude. The 2012 performance at Maureen Paley, London, was an example of his constant restaging of parts of the ongoing series *Exquisite Corpse: The Complete Paintings of Manet* (1988-ongoing), and *Blinds* (2006-ongoing). The first series consists of two framed papers, forming a diptych. One is an erased work of Manet, following the exact shape and size, with an applied sepia ink solution, and the second is a lithograph of the entire work reduced to a structural grid. Prina erases and reveals at the same time a painting that via this performed gesture becomes part of a common history. The *Blinds* are printed, brush-like gestures on mass-produced canvas, combining red, yellow, and blue and can be rolled according to the set necessities. Since 1999, the artist has signed his presence by emptying the contents of a can of spray paint, spattering like blood on the floor. The overall title is meant to be a provocation: just as Giorgione or Francisco de Goya is in Manet, so Manet is in me. Artists are collaborators with history. “When I first studied neoclassical art and learned, for instance, what was at stake in Jacques-Louis David’s painting—that if he’d spoken directly he’d risk censorship or death—I felt a shock of recognition. As a queer boy and man, I’d been living allegory all my life.”¹⁵ Prina embodies a history and makes us think about what we don’t want to see behind the curtain. If modernity opened with a framed canvas, with David, contemporary art started in 1917 with *Parade*, an opera for which Pablo Picasso made a large curtain. It was the time of one of the largest massacres in world history, World War I.

What is it that we don’t want to see today?

It seems that the young generation of painters, as Manon Vargas, Hugo Ferreto, Floris Dutoit, and Pierre Masclef for example, address us a look that performs the work of the painter as a witness of his or her time, which alerts the audience and makes them part of it. Behind the glass wall of the private president’s salon, they stood, watching. It was the occasion of the *Salon Discret*, celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Centre Pompidou in Paris. In France the history of the museum is linked to the history of the Revolution. In 1977, the utopia was to open the museum to the city as a modern-day forum. Today the doors are closed and we are scanned before entering because of the terrorist threat. Were we surprised that in Act III of the Yellow Vests demonstrations, a plaster mold of a woman’s head, part of François Rude’s high relief of La Marseille, was destroyed by fascist vandals? In Act VI of the Yellow Vests theater of actions, the museums were on alert, Le Musée de l’Orangerie potentially attacked? Maybe the better answer are Simon Bergala’s paintings, which are made on recycled

outfits to be actually walked around in, in the streets. “They are traditional framed paintings which canvas is the actual jacket’s or sweater’s fabric. Performance builds these paintings in the sense that they are conceived for several situations, the one of the exhibition like a painting on the wall, worn as clothes, in the city. The object contains both options,” explains the artist.¹⁶

February 28, 2013: the recent “poncho” conceived by Bergala with Paul Desravines is like the colorful Harlequin outfit, combining fragments of “readymade” found paintings (as the artists take the canvas from used outfits). Like film editing, the fragmented painting can be worn as a cape, spread on the floor like a carpet, or hung on the wall like an Indian blanket or a painting. The philosopher Michel Serres used the Harlequin costume as a metaphor for the “instructed third” who is the Métis in our post-human times.¹⁷ It is also, dealing in and out of the architectural walls of museums, a way to pollinate the city: painting as a moving structure, a third way in between horizontal and vertical powers.

SNAPSHOTS: AFTERIMAGE, POST-PERFORMANCE,
OVERLAPPING SPACES

“I have always been conscious that the material on which the paint is placed can be extended to the space in which the action happens... I always like to photograph what’s just been made... At certain points, these views become more interesting than the individual works. Things overlap, are hidden or relieved, works and tools in the same plane of vision. There is an energy of the situation that can be interesting in the photos of the studio and the works within,” expresses Charlie Hamish Jeffery.¹⁸ Like Constantin Brâncuși’s studio photos, which are sculptures made of shadows and light, Jeffery’s still images are instant performances. They proceed from an understanding of art technologies as poison and cure, and a turning point that is not archive, but maybe a sketch after a masterpiece. Overlapping studio and exhibition spaces, they exceed the frame of support definition, making the medium a polysemic practice.

This is a revolution, a transformation in process, like a mutation or change of clothes. Turning again to the Yellow Vests, we must beware that they are not black inside, and that the safety vest doesn’t become a uniform. In *Ecran Total* (1997), Jean Baudrillard writes: “When there is a collective loss of immune defenses or loss of symbolic defenses, then some societies become vulnerable to terrorism, drugs, violence, fascism.”¹⁹

That is why thinking the question of painting as a post-performative act is linked to thinking the context in which a practice has emerged from the post-Cold War moment to post-human times. As our history is made of symbols and by symbolic actions, we need to see the new drippings on our monument walls. Considering them as post-performative painting is a way to avoid their transformation into “fatal screens” a tragic issue in a period of “screen times”. Painting, in this context, is a possible future.

Marie de Brugerolle is independent curator, writer, professor (France, Czech Republic, Los Angeles). She organized the first retrospectives of Allen Ruppersberg, CNAC, Magasin, Grenoble (1996), John Baldessari, Carrée d’art, Nîmes (2005) and Larry Bell, Carrée d’art, Nîmes (2010). She rediscovered Guy de Cointet (1934-1983) and curated Guy de Cointet’s first global exhibition *Who’s That Guy?*, MAMCO, Geneva (2004) and *Faire des choses avec des mots/Making Words With Things*, CRAC Sète (2006). She co-curated with Dora García *I was a Male Yvonne de Carlo*, MUSAC, Léon (2011-12), *LA EXISTANCIAL*, LACE, Los Angeles (2013), *ALL THAT FALLS*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2014), *RIDEAUX/blinds*, IAC, Villeurbanne, (2015), *Le Petit A de O*, a tribute to a “A” by Olivier Mosset and Cody Choi, Culture Cuts, MAC, Marseille (2016), and *Le Salon Discret*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2017).

13. Glenn Ligon and Marie de Brugerolle, “Get the Picture,” in *Documents sur l’art*, no. 7 (1995): 26–29, reprinted in Glenn Ligon, *Yourself in the World*, ed. Scott Rothkopf (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 85–86. Ligon concluded our conversation like this: “There’s a lot of talk about painting being regressive, because it’s related to the history and the language of a certain class. I primarily consider myself a painter. No form is fixed as regressive or progressive. I’m interested in works that know their limitations. Painting is so much about beauty and seduction. That’s part of the aesthetics. It calls attention to itself in ways that other forms don’t. The most successful works understand that and use it to get messages across and get people to think.”
14. As Derrida puts it in his analysis of Plato’s medicine and poison in *La Dissémination* (2003): artificial color, make-up. In ancient Greece, *pharmakon* had three meanings: the medicine, the poison, and the scapegoat. Any technical object is pharmacology: both poison and cure. Rodzielski’s use of magazines points to the alienation potential of images today.
15. Stephen Prina, conversation with Steel Stillman, *Art in America*, April 26, 2013.
16. E-mail conversation with the author, 2018.
17. Michel Serres, *Le Tiers-Instruit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).
18. Conversation with the author, October 2018.
19. Jean Baudrillard, *Ecran Total* (Paris: Galilée, 1997), 112.