

Press Release

Bernard Piffaretti

Pick Up

May 4 – June 11, 2022

508 West 24th Street, New York

Bernard Piffaretti returns to New York for his fourth solo exhibition with Lisson Gallery, debuting a new body of work along with a revisitation of paintings from his past. The act of looking back is central to Piffaretti's method, whether it is immediately, as is the case with his mirrored, two-canvas foundations, or historically, with references to past artists and to his own previous bodies of work. Including sometimes subtle and sometimes overt references to motifs found in the paintings of French Modernism and 20th Century American Art, *Pick Up* presents a recurring situation that instructs the viewer to look for a second time.

For over 40 years, Bernard Piffaretti has been bisecting his canvas with a vertical line and attempting to duplicate on one half the abstract image he has previously painted on the other. The second side is an inexact mirrored image of the original gestures, disrupting the viewer's recognition of a reproduction. Central to this method is the perceived ambiguity of the original. Because we do not know which side of the canvas the artist painted first, we are unable to identify a 'right' or 'wrong' side, leaving a uniformly uneven double.

Pick Up is a term used by Piffaretti to describe not only his own unique painting system but the practice of many artists throughout history as well. Looking backward and forward at once, the artist's visual language incorporates references and themes from the annals of painting. *Pick Up* is less a critique of abstraction and more a commentary on the concept of originality. The Paris-based artist has been influenced by French painters, notably Matisse, Daniel Buren, the Supports-Surface group, and certainly by the sense of play and humour evidenced in Marcel Duchamp's conceptual practice. The works that make up his second exhibition at Lisson New York have been equally impacted by American painters, including Jasper Johns, Morris Louis, Barnett Newman and Andy Warhol.

While all the paintings in *Pick Up* are *Untitled*, a steady facet of Piffaretti's practice, many feature specific visual vocabularies containing playful references to notable oeuvres. The most definitive reference to a particular work is the artist's rendition of, and possible homage to, Jasper John's *Target with Four Faces* (1955), in which Piffaretti reproduces both the form and colors of the iconic work. In this version, Piffaretti's repetition transforms John's serious and static motif into a pair of cartoon, spiraling, hypnotizing, eyes.

A painting from 2021 references Morris Louis' signature 'Unfurled' series, made between 1960-61. Piffaretti inserts and mimics a section of Louis' cascading, multicolored ribbons amongst a grouping of clashing blocks of paint that recall French artist Nicolas de Staël. The vertical forms are mirrored in a tall and narrow 2005 work that address the 'zips' of Barnett Newman. Two paintings from 2021 and 2005 toy with Andy Warhol's late 'Rorschach' series. In what can be understood as his own *pick up* process, Warhol's inkblot works were achieved by painting one side of a canvas and folding it along the center to imprint on the other half. Piffaretti's canvases reference the ambiguous, organic, and above all, chance forms seen in these works. Bernard Piffaretti's exceedingly recognizable method provides a physical representation of the unyielding forces of repetition throughout history. The works are not copies nor are they tributes. As the artist has stated on multiple occasions: "I paint painting."

Work by Bernard Piffaretti will be included in the group exhibition “The Double: Identity and Difference in Art since 1900” at the National Gallery Washington DC, on view July 10 – October 31, 2022.

About the artist

French artist Bernard Piffaretti bases his practice on repetition while analysing the components of painting. After art studies at the school of Fine Arts in Saint-Etienne from 1973 to 1979, he began to elaborate his “Piffaretti system”, fixed in 1986. This protocol is at the origin of every work he produces: each is composed of two panels apparently identical, separated by a vertical strip; one of the two parts is an attempt to duplicate the other, made beforehand. Once both panels are finished, the distinction between the copy and the original tends to fade. As the artist admits himself, “the repetition, act by act, on the second half of the canvas, can only produce an imperfect image”: Piffaretti’s system aims at showing us this impossible reproduction of the artistic gesture. In some works, the second part is even left irremediably blank, because of the complexity of the shapes painted. Piffaretti also realizes Drawings after paintings, reversing the concept of preparatory sketches and using them to seize his own work.

Bernard Piffaretti was born in Saint-Etienne in 1955. He currently lives and works in Paris. He has had solo exhibitions at Lisson Gallery, Shanghai, China (2021); Surplus Space, Wuhan, China (2021); galerie frank elbaz, Paris, France (2020); Lisson Gallery, New York, NY (2019); Kate Macgarry, London, UK (2017); KLEMM’S gallery, Berlin, Germany (2016); Cherry and Martin, Los Angeles, CA (2015); Galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris France (2014); Musee d’art modern de Saint- Etienne, France (2009); Musée Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France (2008); and Cheim & Read, New York, NY (2002), among others. Major group exhibitions include Philip Martin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2018); Gordon Robichaux, New York, NY (2018); Kunstverein Schwäbisch Hall, Schwäbisch Hall DE (2017); Musée des Beaux Arts de Nantes, France (2015); MAMCO, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Geneva, Switzerland (2007); and Centre d’Art Contemporain, Kerguéhennec, France (2005).

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, three in New York City and East Hampton, and one in Shanghai. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer.

In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Hugh Hayden, Van Hanos, Cheyney Thompson, Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

For press enquiries, please contact

David Simantov, Communications Manager
+1 212 505 6431 (Office)
+1 917 243 9933 (Cell)
davids@lissongallery.com

i: @lisson_gallery
t: @Lisson_Gallery
fb: LissonGallery
lissongallery.com

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504 West 24th Street, New York 10011 | 508 West 24th Street, New York 10011 | +1 212 505 6431