

BORTOLAMI

Morgan Fisher

New Paintings

The Upstairs

9 September – 29 October 2022

Bortolami is pleased to present *New Paintings*, Morgan Fisher's sixth exhibition at the gallery.

The exhibition presents two groups of paintings. Despite how they look, the paintings in both groups were made according to impersonal procedures, and both groups propose that likeness is deeper than mere appearance. And the titles of the paintings play an unaccustomed part, although differently in each group.

Fisher made the paintings in both groups by putting the paint on straight from the tube using a palette knife like a slingshot. This required the canvases to be vertical. The colors were necessarily put on separately, one after the other, as colors are printed one after the other in the graphic arts.

The model for putting on each color was the allover, an array without emphases. Fisher says, "I could control where the paint went only roughly. I could not control the precise locations and shapes of the skeins and blotches of paint. These were a matter of chance. Every result was a surprise." Where the paint landed is where it stayed, untouched.

In the group of three paintings all of the titles begin with *Three Gray Paintings*, which the paintings themselves, each a seeming farrago of colors, at first glance contradict. But the second part of each title, for example (*yellow/violet, red/green, blue/orange*), tell us that each painting consists of three pairs of complementary colors. So, the title tells us, if we don't already know, that pairs of complementary colors make gray. Each painting consists of three such pairs that together make three gray paintings, one on top of another. Further, the three gray paintings in each painting are, despite the differences in the colors that make them, identical. So, the three paintings that each contain three identical gray paintings are themselves identical.

The titles of these three paintings do more than perform the routine function of identifying the paintings. They tell viewers to do the work of conceptualizing and visualizing the paintings as something other than what they first see and to maintain that understanding even as the paintings themselves make it difficult to do.

The second group of paintings, made in the same way, consists of six pairs of paintings that systematically present the permutations of four colors, blue, green, red, and yellow, that start with blue. The order of the colors in the permutations after blue follows the alphabet, a procedure Fisher says is so obvious that it can't be called a choice.

Each pair consists of the same four colors applied in the same way. The order of the colors in a pair is the same. In making the second painting in a pair Fisher didn't try to copy the first, which anyway was impossible, he simply made the second painting the same way he made the first. Despite the inevitable differences in their appearances, the paintings in a pair are identical, locating identity elsewhere than in the banality of exact superficial resemblance.

The paintings in a pair have different titles. The differences are systematic. The title of the first painting gives the colors in the order in which they were put on. In the second title the order of the colors is reversed. So, from first color to last, from last color to first. In the second title the prepositions that link the sequence of colors are accordingly different. They undo the reversal in the order of the colors, telling us that the colors in the second painting were put on in the same order as the colors in the first.

BORTOLAMI

Since the late '90s Morgan Fisher has worked mainly in painting, including painting installation. His work has been exhibited at, among other places, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Portikus, Museum Abteiberg, Raven Row, and the Generali Foundation. He showed a sculpture in the 2014 Whitney Biennial of American Art. He has also shown photographs and drawings. In addition to Bortolami, Fisher is represented by Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York, and Maureen Paley, London. His most recent exhibition was at Galerie Mitterrand in Paris. Fisher was born in Washington, D.C., in 1942. He attended Harvard College (1960–1964), receiving a B.A. in art history, then moved to Los Angeles to attend film school. He made films for many decades before extending his work to other media, and he continues to make films. His films have been shown at the major festivals in the US and abroad and in two Whitney Biennials. He lives and works in Los Angeles.