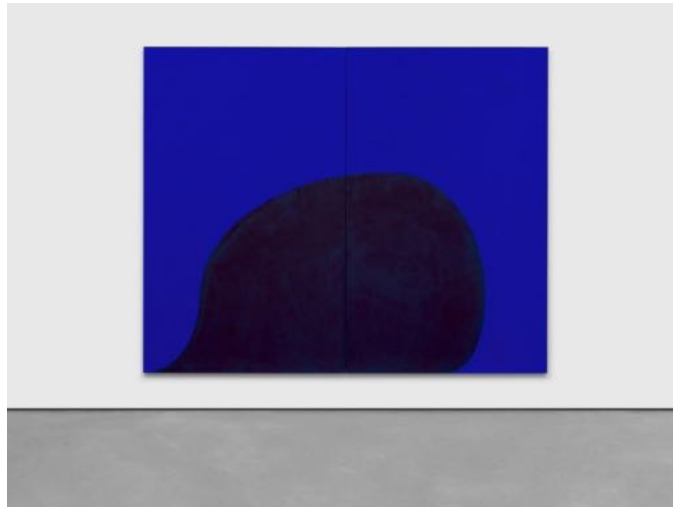


Suzan Frecon
The Light Factory

August 30–October 4, 2025
108, rue Vieille du Temple, 75003 Paris



Suzan Frecon, *two blues 1*, 2024

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David Zwirner is pleased to present new work by American artist Suzan Frecon (b. 1941) at the gallery's Paris location, marking her ninth solo exhibition with the gallery. This will be the first one-person presentation of Frecon's work in Paris since 1999. On view will be recent canvases that elaborate on the artist's enduring investigation of large-scale oil paintings, as well as richly textured paintings on paper.

Frecon is known for abstract oil paintings and works on paper that—as she notes—“speak for themselves.” Made over long stretches of time, her work invites the viewer's sustained attention: these, she says, “are not pictures that you look at. They are paintings that you experience.”¹

The Light Factory attests to the artist's engagement with the possibilities of her medium, and the exhibition's title gestures to the ways in which light functions as a component of her paintings. Frecon's works are characterized by asymmetrically balanced forms in precise spatial and proportional relationships; for the artist, composition serves as her foundational structure, holding color, material, and light. She mixes and applies pigments and oils to differing effects, heightening the visual experience of her work with an almost tactile use of color and contrasting matte and shiny surfaces, which in turn vary in terms of density and reflectivity, frequently shifting between dark and light. Figure can become ground and ground can become figure in, as the artist defines it, a back-and-forth of full and empty space.

As art historian Richard Shiff describes: “Within a fantasia of color, Frecon suspends the force of her structure. Offsetting the unseen mathematical foundation, her visible surface is organic and irregular, as if she were working against herself.... Her paint, especially along ellipsoidal contours, develops an uneven appearance due to the distribution of the pigment and its oil binder as she works the material against the resist of the linen. Add to this the transient effects of ambient light from which Frecon’s surfaces are designed to benefit, and what began as a logical geometrical structure has become suspended in a web of living sensation.”²

The works on view elaborate on Frecon’s continued attention to the qualities and dimensions of each of her chosen pigments—an exploration that offers limitless combinations and effects. The exhibition includes works that explore juxtapositions of different tones and sheens of one color, such as *embodiment of red version 14* (2023), which employs a longstanding motif of the artist, in which she engages with combinations of four red earth pigments, in this case mars red, soforouge, venetian, and tuscan. Two paintings on view, the larger-scaled *bancha bamboo matcha* (2025) and its smaller counterpart *verona matcha* (2024), employ the same compositional structure of an ovoid form comprising four irregularly measured quadrants resting in the lower half of a single vertical panel, a new format for Frecon; each presents a unique combination of two distinct *terre verte*, or earth green, pigments. In *two blues 1* (2024), a central, darker blue made up of thin layers of indigo stretches across two panels and is surrounded by a luminous deep ultramarine; the same compositional structure achieves different effects in a smaller-scaled *two blues 3* (2025).

New manifestations of Frecon’s ongoing five-color compositions, or “cathedral” series (which began to evolve in the early 2000s), are featured in the exhibition. Related by their compositional structure, these works vary profoundly from painting to painting in terms of the effects of their individual color combinations, as well as their distinct degrees of complexity in luminosity, scale, and surface variation. *Cathedral for the mourning warbler* (2024) combines two panels which contain the base composition. From this bedrock structuring are built the relationships of color, paint, and light within and on the painting materials. In the upper panel, two vertically oriented forms (one a deep purple ochre, the other, a high-pitched cadmium-orange) carry an earth green; below, an arced matte indigo blue interacts with a lustrous greenish-yellow mars earth pigment.

In Frecon’s paintings on paper, the structures are often determined by engaging the relationship between paint and support. Each sheet of paper used has its own innate character, properties, and irregular shape; any creases, holes, blemishes, and scale become an integral component of the watercolor. Yet, within Frecon’s practice, all works are considered part of the same unity, and one painting leads to another.

Frecon lives and works in New York, and has maintained a long-standing connection to Paris since the 1960s. After receiving a degree in fine arts from Pennsylvania State University in 1963, Frecon spent three years enrolled at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, where she painted and immersed herself in the study of paintings and architecture in museums and throughout the city, France, and Europe. The work and exhibitions she encountered in France at the Musée de Cluny (Musée National du Moyen Âge); the Musée de l’Homme; and the Musée du Louvre became deeply formative to her practice and connect to a broader interest in how artists across time periods and cultures have used and sought to express light—or illumination—in their work. During her continued travels in France and Europe, Frecon observed work ranging from the paleolithic cave paintings of the Dordogne region

to frescoes and paintings by pre-Renaissance artists such as Coppo di Marcovaldo (1225–1276), Cimabue (1240–1302), and Duccio di Buoninsegna (c. 1255–c. 1319). Frecon also learned from Diego Velázquez's (1599–1660) mastery of oil, and from the eternal reality in the works of Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), including his sustained series of paintings using the motif of Mont Sainte-Victoire in Provence. Frecon also was inspired by the way light is marshalled and foregrounded in the cathedrals of Chartres and Amiens, among other Romanesque and Medieval architecture throughout France. For Frecon, art, when it succeeds, is illuminating, and her work is bound to this timeless pursuit.

Frecon's works remain resolutely nonreferential. The play of natural light on the paint materials heightens a visual experience that does not convey any pictorial subject but is instead a direct interaction with and manifestation of the reality of the painting itself. "Composition works with color, with surface, and with light to create an abstract visual reality that I wish to exist solely on its strength as art," notes the artist.³

The exhibition takes its title from the poem "The Light Factory" by Marcella Durand, published in the forthcoming book of the same title which pairs poems by Durand with reproductions of paintings on paper by Frecon (Insurance Editions, 2025). The book marks the first collaboration between Frecon and Durand, who are mother and daughter, and a continuing connection to France, as Durand is a dual citizen and translator. A selection of Frecon's works on paper which feature in the publication will be included as part of the exhibition. These "brushwork" pieces include small-scale experiments by Frecon with brush strokes and haematite pigments.

Suzan Frecon (b. 1941 in Mexico, Pennsylvania) has exhibited widely in the United States and internationally. In 2008, her work was the subject of a major solo exhibition, *form, color, illumination: Suzan Frecon painting*, at The Menil Collection in Houston, Texas, which traveled to the Kunstmuseum Bern in Switzerland. She has participated in a number of group exhibitions such as the 2000 and 2010 Whitney Biennials.

In June of 2025, Frecon was awarded the Alexej-von-Jawlensky-Preis der Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden; her work will be featured in a solo exhibition at the Museum Wiesbaden in 2027. She was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2022, and in 2016, Frecon received the Artist Award from the Artists' Legacy Foundation in Oakland, California.

The artist's work has been represented by David Zwirner since 2008. Previous solo shows with the gallery include *recent painting* (New York, 2010); *paper* (New York, 2013); *oil paintings and sun* (New York, 2015); *watercolors and small oil paintings* (London, 2017); *recent oil paintings* (New York, 2017); and *Suzan Frecon* (Hong Kong, 2018), which marked her first solo exhibition in Asia. In 2020, the solo exhibition *oil paintings* was on view at the gallery's New York location, and *recent paintings, oil and water* was presented at David Zwirner London in 2022. The artist's work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions at the gallery, most recently *Giving Shape to Space: Frecon, Sandback, Taylor* (March–April 2025) at David Zwirner New York and *Studio Conversations*, curated by Anaël Pigeat (April–May 2025), at David Zwirner Paris.

Public institutions that hold works by the artist include the Art Institute of Chicago; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, California; Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland; The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of

Art, Washington, DC; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Frecon lives and works in New York.

Notes

1. Suzan Frecon, "text and related work," in *Suzan Frecon: oil paintings and sun*. Exh. cat. (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2015), p. 63.
2. Richard Schiff, "Suspension," in *Suzan Frecon: painting*. Exh. cat. (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2017), p. 67.
3. Frecon, "text and related work," p. 65.

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