

**BERNARD FRIZE
A Labor of Love**

2 SEP – 18 OCT 2025

Opening: Tuesday, 2 September 2025, 7 p.m.

Introduction at 7.30 p.m. by Luisa Ziaja, Chief Curator, Belvedere Vienna

Bernard Frize's works express a radical distrust of authorship in the traditional sense, as well as a continuous questioning of painterly intention. Frize does not act as an expressive authority, but rather as a co-ordinator of processes which, to a certain extent, occur outside of subjective control. Painterly decisions are deliberately delegated to systemic, procedural, or even technical parameters. In their appearance and genesis, his paintings elude any finalistic gesture. Instead, they stand for a practice of inconclusive propositions, of openness to chance and disruption, but also of calculated repetition. It is this tension between the mechanistic and the imponderable, between structure and contingency, that charges Bernard Frize's paintings with their distinctive energy. His work cannot be reduced to a single 'style'; rather, it is a continuous experimentation with the question of what painting – as an activity and a pictorial form – is still able to be, without recourse to expressive authenticity.

Central to this is the concept of 'matter matters', which refers both to the material as such and to the material conditionality of all meaning. In Frize's work, colour is not a carrier of symbolic meaning; instead, it is an agent acting autonomously, as it were. It flows, overlays, runs dry, reaches limits – often channelled by the form of a grid or machine-like repetition. The visual consequence is an aesthetic of non-decision which, in formal terms, appears highly precise nonetheless. The relationship between the image and the viewer is not structured by the offer of a narrative or iconic reading, but by the physical experience of rhythm, density, and repetition within the colour field.

His most recent works are characterised by a more pronounced incorporation of structured colour gradients created by the systematic overlaying of horizontal and vertical brushstrokes. The painted surface is neatly segmented while the individual fields engage in a visual tension through the vibrancy of their colours, the translucence and the directional orientation. The repeated movement of the brush does not create mere reproduction, but a calculated difference – a principle that reflects the oscillation between control and coincidence. In technical terms, Bernard Frize remains true to his practice of combining acrylic paints with synthetic resin. It is a technique that not only yields a particularly smooth and reflective surface, but also enhances the materiality of the paint itself. While the application of that paint appears mechanically precise, it is never completely free of irregularities – a tension that runs through Frize's entire body of work as a conceptual leitmotif. The production process is therefore not obscured, but exposed, with the role of the artist being more that of an operator than of an expressive creator.

Indeed, Frize's recent works also address questions of perception. They call for an active reception on the part of the viewer, a closer and more precise scrutiny, an engagement with subtle differences. On prolonged viewing, the supposed rigour of the compositions dissolves into vibrant colour modulations and rhythmic structures. Thus, in repetition, the Other unfolds – a poetic dimension that does not preclude an analytical approach; rather, it deepens it.

Bernard Frize's oeuvre therefore elicits a way of thinking beyond the binary oppositions of content and form, subject and process, meaning and material. It remains a work in progress – open, porous, and recalcitrant. In the formal coolness lies the very possibility of a new way of thinking about the potential of painting in times of algorithmic control and visual supersaturation. In a sense, Frize anticipated early on the transformation of images in the age of the digital revolution and has consistently incorporated it into his work. His paintings are created on the basis of rules, not intuition, under conditions that evoke operation rather than expression. His methods might be described as 'operational aesthetics', a term now increasingly important in the context of post-digital art production. In this respect, the aesthetics of Bernard Frize's works are algorithmic – but in a conceptual sense, rather than a digital one.

Luisa Ziaja

Bernard Frize, born 1949 in St. Mandé, France, lives and works in Berlin and Paris. He was awarded the Fred-Thieler-Preis in 2011 and the Käthe-Kollwitz-Preis in 2015.

Frize participated in the Venice Biennale (1990, 2005), the Biennale of Sydney (1998), and the Shanghai Biennale (2000).

Solo exhibitions (selection): *Shadows, Spirits and Clouds*, Marian Goodman Gallery, Los Angeles (CA/USA) (2024); *Les choses que j'ai vues*, Galerie Perrotin, Paris (F) (2023); *Sans Repentir*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (F) (2019); *Bernard Frize – Günter Umberg*, Fondation Fernet-Branca, St. Louis (F) (2015); *This is a Bridge*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon (PT) (2015); *Fred-Thieler-Preis für Malerei*, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (D) (2011); *And How and Where and When*, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen (D) (2010); *Fat Paintings*, Kunsthallen Brandts, Odense (DK) (2007); *Hands on*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (GB) (2003); *Aplat*, Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (F) (2003); S.M.A.K., Ghent (BE) (2002); Gemeentemuseum, The Hague (NL) (2002); Carré d'art, Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes (F); Museum moderner Kunst, Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna (AT); Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, St. Gallen (CH); Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster (D) (1999–2000).

Collections (selection): Tate Gallery, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; MUKHA, Antwerp; SMAK, Ghent; Fondation LVMH, Shanghai, China; The Chaptel Collection, Hangzhou, China; Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt/Main; Städel Museum, Frankfurt/Main; Kunstmuseum Basel; Museum für Gegenwartskunst - Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung, Basel; Kunstmuseum Stuttgart; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen; Kunsthaus Zürich; mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien; Central Museum, Utrecht; De PONT stichting voor hedendaagse kunst, Tilburg; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; Carré d'art Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes; Musée de Grenoble; Musée d'Art Moderne, St. Etienne; National Museum of Art Osaka; Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.