

# BERTRAND LAVIER

April 18 - May 25, 2019

Bertrand Lavier is an 'augmenter', to borrow the term from Raymond Hains, who borrowed it from Roger Caillois. Since 1980, when he first covered a portable radio in paint so as to imitate the object itself (Solid State), Bertrand Lavier has been representing all kinds of objects by painting directly onto them. This extreme squeezing together of the model and its representation makes it impossible to distinguish the one from the other. At once the same and another, aesthetic illusion only exists at a proper distance.

For his new "*chantier*" [worksite], to be premiered at the galerie kamel men-nour, Bertrand Lavier has reevaluated this distance and 'entered into his Fauvist period'. He has created a new interface in which painting has been freed from its function in imitating the object, has asserted itself, and partially loosened its ties with reality. The effect is vertiginous, because these new painted objects take in all the modern movements that have constituted them until now and at the same time escape them. Here we are indeed dealing with a Lavier: a Lavier on a Lavier, a Lavier in his Fauvist period. If the eighteenth-century blue dresser of his piece *Camondo* caused some surprise when it was shown in 2015, the paint that Lavier used was nonetheless homochromatic, redoubling the 'Martin varnish' of the time. This time the act of covering over is different. With his famous 'Van Gough touch', the artist, with a certain amusement, has covered the objects, photographs, and paintings that have made his name with bold new colours, indicating the primary colour of the object, staging a dischromism, a total transvaluation of the act of painting.

Extending Duchamp's notion that a painter 'really makes a ready-made when he paints with a manufactured object called colours',<sup>1</sup> Bertrand Lavier has taken up the object again in such a way that it has become a sort of score for painting. But whereas he has followed its lines, he has entirely modified its colours. Putting the illusionist of these creations to one side, he now acts with the most total freedom and with a lot of amusement in applying the brightest colours. The new colour is not, however, the negative of the original. There are no rules: 'one thing follows another, and then after that, what happens happens.'

His choice of objects is also troubling. Lavier gives us an ultra-coloured, al-most Pop collection that basically resembles an anthology of his past work. Bertrand Lavier reinterpreted, repainted by Lavier. The collection

The exhibition « Bertrand Lavie » is accessible from Tuesday to Saturday from 11am to 7pm at 47 rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Paris 6.

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Duchamp, quoted in Thierry de Duve, *Résonances du readymade*, Nîmes, Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, 1989

includes his painted piano, his cibachromes, his cultural- and tourist-site road signs... Apart from all having been interpreted by this artist before, what these objects also have in common is that they are constituted by identifiable, coded, even regulated colours. In this way, the village of Vezelay becomes picturesque once more, abandoning the monochrome maroon legislated by Jean Widmer for its roadside signs so as to be decked out in shimmering colours chosen by Bertrand Lavier. The black and white keys of the Erard piano have become red and pink. The fire extinguisher is green.

These chromatic tensions and effects of slippage produce a shock in the viewer come to contemplate these icons of Bertrand Lavier's work, which he has now submitted to a new, colourful scrambling. The colours are arbitrary, they no longer obey the chromatic circle, or the colours of reality, they have almost lost their names. Indeed, the vertigo one feels in the exhibition becomes all the more acute with the neon lights in the last room. Technically, a neon light only emits one colour. But Bertrand Lavier has played with the Stroop effect to create a new interference. Two colours appear: one in the form of light, and another, different, which is named.

This feeling of vertigo, which *Bleu, jaune, vert* [Blue, yellow, green] creates, was explained by the psychologist John Ridley Stroop in 1935. Physiologically, reading takes place in the occipital-parietal zone of the brain, whereas the fact of naming colour makes use of the frontal lobe. The result is a certain reaction time, which is further accentuated by the visual impact of the neon lights.

Bertrand Lavier once declared that one of the most important and elementary principles for him was precisely not wanting to be the prisoner of any particular aesthetic. With this exhibition, it has to be admitted that he is not only not constrained to an aesthetic, but that he has fun with it.

Frédéric Legros

Born in 1949 in Châtillon-sur-Seine, BERTRAND LAVIER lives and works in Paris and Aignay-le-Duc, near Dijon (France).

His work has been part of numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world: at the Centre Pompidou, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Grand Palais, the Louvre Museum, the Musée d'Orsay, the Palais de Tokyo, the Monnaie de Paris, the Château de Versailles, the Fondation Vincent van Gogh in Arles, the Consortium in Dijon, the Tate Gallery and the Serpentine Gallery in London, the Villa Sauber in Monaco, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, the Haus der Kunst in Munich, the Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel, the Frankfurter Kunstverein in Frankfurt am Main, the MAMCO in Geneva, the Kunsthalle in Berne, the Punta della Dogana-Pinault Collection in Venice, the Macro-Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma and the Villa Medici in Rome, the mumok-museum moderner kunst stiftung ludwig wien in Vienna, the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, the MoMA PS1 and the Swiss Institute in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, the Maison Hermès Dosan Park in Seoul, the Hong Kong Museum of Art, as well as part of the Venice Biennale.

Bertrand Lavier's work was recently exhibited at the Couvent des Jacobins in Rennes - as part of the exhibition "Debout !" presenting works from the Pinault Collection -, as well as at the Espace Louis Vuitton Tokyo, and at the Middelheim Museum in Antwerp.

The artist is presenting, until November 20th, 2019, in the garden of the Hotel Le Bristol Paris, a group of sculptures from the series *Walt Disney Productions*.