

The background is an abstract painting by Claude Viallat. It features a grid of irregular, white and pink shapes, possibly representing letters or symbols, set against a dark brown, textured background. The shapes are arranged in a roughly rectangular pattern, with some overlapping. The overall effect is a complex, layered composition that changes as the viewer's perspective shifts.

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FINE ART

CLAUDE VIALLAT

Repeat to see



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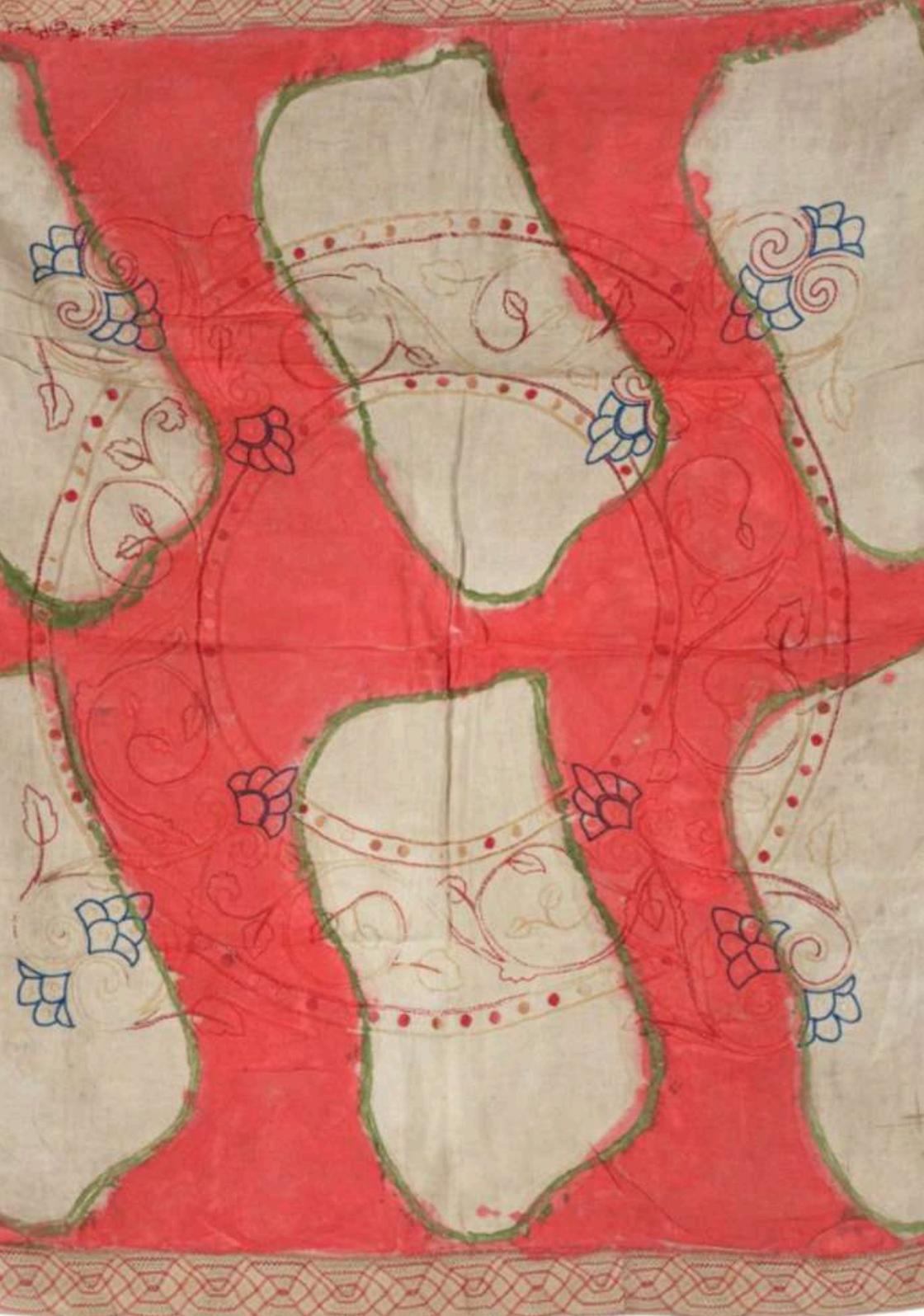
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At the origins of the gesture



A key figure of the Supports/Surfaces movement, Claude Viallat was born in Nîmes in 1936.

It is in this sun-drenched southern city that his studio is still located, where he continues to work. The light of the South and the colors of his surroundings have always nourished his artistic practice.

When he was younger, Viallat was unable to obtain his baccalauréat. His father, wishing for him to continue despite a nervous breakdown, directed him toward engineering studies, where he discovered a hands-on, experimental approach.

Following a competitive exam, he enrolled at the Montpellier School of Fine Arts in 1955, initially focusing on figurative art. In 1959, his studies were interrupted by military service, and Viallat was sent to Algeria until 1961. Upon his return, he resumed his studies at the Paris School of Fine Arts, continuing until 1963. This period allowed him to discover the Parisian gallery scene, where major American artists revealed themselves to him—Robert Rauschenberg being one notable example.

Viallat became fascinated with the use of new mediums, already introduced in France by the Nouveau Réalisme movement, but even more so by monumental formats on a transatlantic urban scale. The bold, saturated colors of American art contrasted sharply with the muted abstraction of the French school.



From 1964 to 1967, Viallat reconnected with his Mediterranean roots and settled in Nice. At the time, the local art scene was thriving. He met Ben Vautier, Arman, and, most notably, Henri Matisse.

In 1966, he confronted the seemingly effortless way the master used color. The excessive accumulation, heightened contrasts, and unchecked layering of hues created a voluptuousness in Matisse's work that could easily overwhelm. How did the artist manage to handle such an abundance of visual information with such ease, when so many others struggled? This clarity amidst extraordinary complexity induced in Viallat a sense of panic, even vertigo.

Surprisingly, at that time Claude Viallat was not comfortable with color. One of his earliest supports was a khaki military tarp—the color and material evoking the harsh memories of his military service. He then recalled Matisse's precept of approaching color as a source of pleasure. This was a revelation for him. The artist began to accept his environment, whatever it might be.

Under this influence, Viallat would regard the walls he shared with Matisse at Le Cateau-Cambrésis as a high point of his career, describing the exhibition as one of the most joyous experiences he ever had. Conceived more as an idea than a tribute, the exhibition aimed primarily to highlight the impact of Matisse's chromatic conception on Viallat's own work.

The pattern is an inseparable element of the artist's work.

Its origins lie in a technique used by painters in Mediterranean countries, who would dip a sponge into a bucket of blue lime and then stamp it onto kitchen walls. The artisan is never far away.

It was in the summer of 1966 that, while cleaning his sponge in bleach, the liquid accidentally altered it, giving rise to the emblematic motif. Around this motif, a true serial iconography was born—one that Viallat has explored relentlessly for over sixty years. From its Mediterranean roots to questions of ornamentation and repetition, and from humble materials to the role of chance, everything is present in his work.





THE GESTURE, ABOVE ALL ELSE

Viallat paints

This form offers neither narrative, focal point, nor composition in the classical sense. Applied with a stencil or brush, it creates a rhythm across the surface while allowing the viewer's eye to wander freely. The work does not assert itself as an image, but as an active surface—a tangible object where form, color, and material come together.

"If I enter a studio that is empty, my first instinct is to fill it. I am very uncomfortable with emptiness, and I believe it is this kind of fear of emptiness that drives me to create. I like to show work, a substantial amount of work."

Viallat represents the culmination of a career devoted to a single motif. He explains: "The notion of repetitions, series, or reiterations becomes a necessity in itself. [...] A single canvas—a single piece—is nothing; it is the process—the system—that matters."

Viallat's work should therefore be understood as a principle, a concept, uniformly applied across his entire material production. As an artisan of chance, he demystifies the sacred role of the artist and his creative genius. The support, the surface, are the primary elements of the painting, and the artist strives to make them speak.



"One form among others and one form for all others"

Claude Viallat.

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Supports/Surfaces

Journey of pictorial freedom

Supports/Surfaces. Two terms placed side by side, separated by a slash, in the plural, each starting with a capital letter. It was Vincent Bioulès who first coined the term, later adopted and popularized by Roland Barthes in 1970. Yet, the first exhibition organized under this label was presented in the singular, with a hyphen and without capital letters.

From September 23 to October 15, 1970, the exhibition brought together works by Vincent Bioulès, Marc Devade, Daniel Dezeuze, Patrick Saytour, André Valensi, and Claude Viallat.

All shared the same aim: to reduce painting to its most elemental components. Surface refers to the canvas of a painting, while support refers to the stretcher and its underlying structure. By questioning and testing the conventions and processes of painting, they sought to demystify form while developing content. The group's artists also challenged the art market, as well as certain rules regarding the dating and signing of works. The creative act was to be stripped of decorative trappings and returned to an "essential" practice.

"It wasn't for fun, it was a necessity. We weren't being exposed, so we exposed ourselves."

It is also important to note that, beyond their shared geographical roots, most of the founders of the movement were art teachers. This is no trivial detail: it gave their research a strong theoretical and analytical dimension. Their work was not limited to producing artistic objects; it was a form of experimental pedagogy—thinking about painting as it was being made, continuously questioning its conditions, tools, and purposes. Supports/Surfaces was therefore not only an aesthetic gesture, but also a critical and didactic one.





While the Nouveau Réalistes proclaimed “the death of painting,” the Supports/Surfaces artists, on the contrary, advocated a return to the origins of painting, reworking its codes. As Claude Viallat stated in *Fragments*:

“All contemporary painting is in Lascaux and in prehistory. I believe nothing has been invented. Everything was already there. Since then, we have only perfected techniques.”

This anchoring in prehistoric imagery reflects a search for authenticity and continuity with humanity’s earliest creative gestures. For Viallat, prehistory is not a bygone past, but a reservoir of self-evident truths and necessities. From the very beginning, what matters is not the perfection of the object, but the artistic practice itself: the gesture, the formal act of creation.

In Viallat’s work, this return is particularly evident in the repeated imprint of his modulated form—a motif without origin or end, resonating like a primitive, archaic mark, existing beyond time. A parallel can be drawn with Rémi Labrusse’s exhibition at the Centre Pompidou (*Prehistory, a Modern Enigma*, 2019), which demonstrated how modernity and contemporary art draw from a prehistoric imagination, raw, primal, and universal. Viallat thus participates in this quest: to rediscover in art the timeless essence of the gesture, a poetry of making even before any representation.

Viallat, Grand, Saytour, Dolla, and Valensi each reclaimed their independence in the summer of 1971, just months before the remaining artists formally established the Supports/Surfaces association in August. This late attempt at structuring was rendered largely meaningless by the absence of a key figure like Viallat. Supports/Surfaces should therefore be understood more as an effective label than as an organized movement.



"I like to take the materials I have on hand and work simultaneously with fabrics and colors that, at first, don't pose too many technical challenges. In general, there has to be a sensual harmony between the support and me. It's a matter of pleasure. Then there must be a certain material compatibility between the paint and the canvas."

Claude Vialat



Claude Viallat's radicalism is therefore in perfect resonance with the spirit of Supports/Surfaces. His aim is to deconstruct the fundamental elements of painting, to free art from its symbolic and institutional framework. For Viallat, this deconstruction is not a manifesto, but a living experiment.

By rejecting overly dogmatic theoretical discourses, he thus distinguishes himself from other members of the group, such as Louis Cane or Daniel Dezeuze, who were more committed to a Marxist or structuralist reading of artistic practice





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Viallat

"Everything is always different, yet everything is always coherent. Since 1966, I have endlessly produced objects and canvases that each live their own life, yet are all connected and belong to the same world. Even if I juxtapose them—out of order or years apart—there is neither rupture nor collision."

Claude Viallat

Without a frame, without a story

The resonance footprint

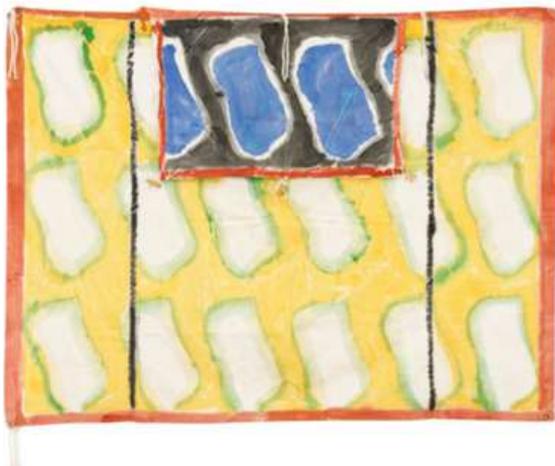
Viallat's involvement in the movement was therefore both foundational and contentious. He helped define the group's aesthetic through the strength of his visual proposals, but he soon distanced himself, officially leaving Supports/Surfaces in 1971. This departure did not signify a break with the movement's ideas, but rather an assertion of artistic autonomy, focused on practice rather than manifesto. Since then, Viallat has relentlessly pursued his research, repeating his motif across a variety of fabrics and formats, without ever repeating himself in intention or effect.

"These objects are a breeze to use; you couldn't imagine anything simpler."

The choice of support is never neutral for the artist: he paints on recycled sheets, industrial tarps, mattress canvases, and worn fabrics that already carry a history, a texture, sometimes a pattern. He does not seek a pristine surface, but a terrain that is already charged. These fabrics are sometimes sewn, patched, or assembled, and the work is also constructed through stitching, tension, and the trace of the gesture.

Without narrative or message, the work creates a visual rhythm, generated by the repetition of the motif itself, but also by the interstices, errors, and overflows. Viallat embraces accident, chance, and randomness.

The color, often bright and striking, is applied in flat planes or transparencies, depending on the desired effect. The eye moves freely, without hierarchy: no top, no bottom, no focal point. The entire surface becomes a field of paint, a living weave, neither ornamental nor illustrative.



Viallat's rejection of the frame extends beyond the stretcher. The artist also dismisses the idea of a single format or a fixed spatial arrangement. Some works are suspended, others placed on the floor, some stapled directly to the wall, or even presented in volume, as flexible structures. The painting overflows its traditional boundaries.

It becomes space, material, presence. It exists for what it is, not for what it might represent.

In this sense, Viallat's painting is both minimalist and profoundly sensual. It rejects all illusion, yet never abandons color, the energy of gesture, or the vitality of the gaze. It is a painting that does not seek to charm, but to assert itself as self-evident, without external justification.

His production, based on a logic of series, iteration, and variation, constitutes an open work, constantly evolving. It questions the relationships between painting and object, surface and volume, color and material, viewer and perception. In this, Viallat remains faithful to the deepest legacy of Supports/Surfaces: making painting not a space of representation, but a field of experience.





Painting as presence

In front of a Claude Viallat work, there is no story to read, no subject to recognize, no scene to interpret. The artist rejects all narration, psychology, and symbolism. It is not a question of understanding, but of seeing—seeing a painting that claims to say nothing other than what it is.

"I think in terms of punctuation, placing elements that will punctuate a given surface or space within that space."

The conditions under which Viallat creates his works generate a striking immediacy, reminiscent of Jackson Pollock.

Since 1979, the artist has been based in Nîmes, where he transformed a former coaching inn into his studio.

Alongside his wife Henriette, he devotes himself daily to his creative practice. Seven days a week, after mechanically finishing his coffee, he begins at 9:30 a.m., contorting among the variety of accumulated fabrics, sheets, and tarps. His production is dense; he allows himself to be guided by impulse, moving fluidly from one project to another.

This almost obsessive rigor, reinforced by an active, physical approach—sometimes bending, arching, or even working frenetically on the floor—produces colors that demand a certain speed of execution.

Yet physical constraint is not the only imperative. The materials themselves, not always ideal for painting and sometimes instantly absorbent, compel the artist to act with instinctive immediacy.



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Art in itself

But this conceptualization of the work does not make it cold or distant.

It is full, vibrant, colorful, embodied. The hues, often bold and contrasting, contribute to a silent joy in the act of looking. The fabric itself, through its texture, folds, and accidents, invites a tactile, almost carnal attention. Each work becomes a colored skin, a sensitive membrane, stretched between rigor and abandon.

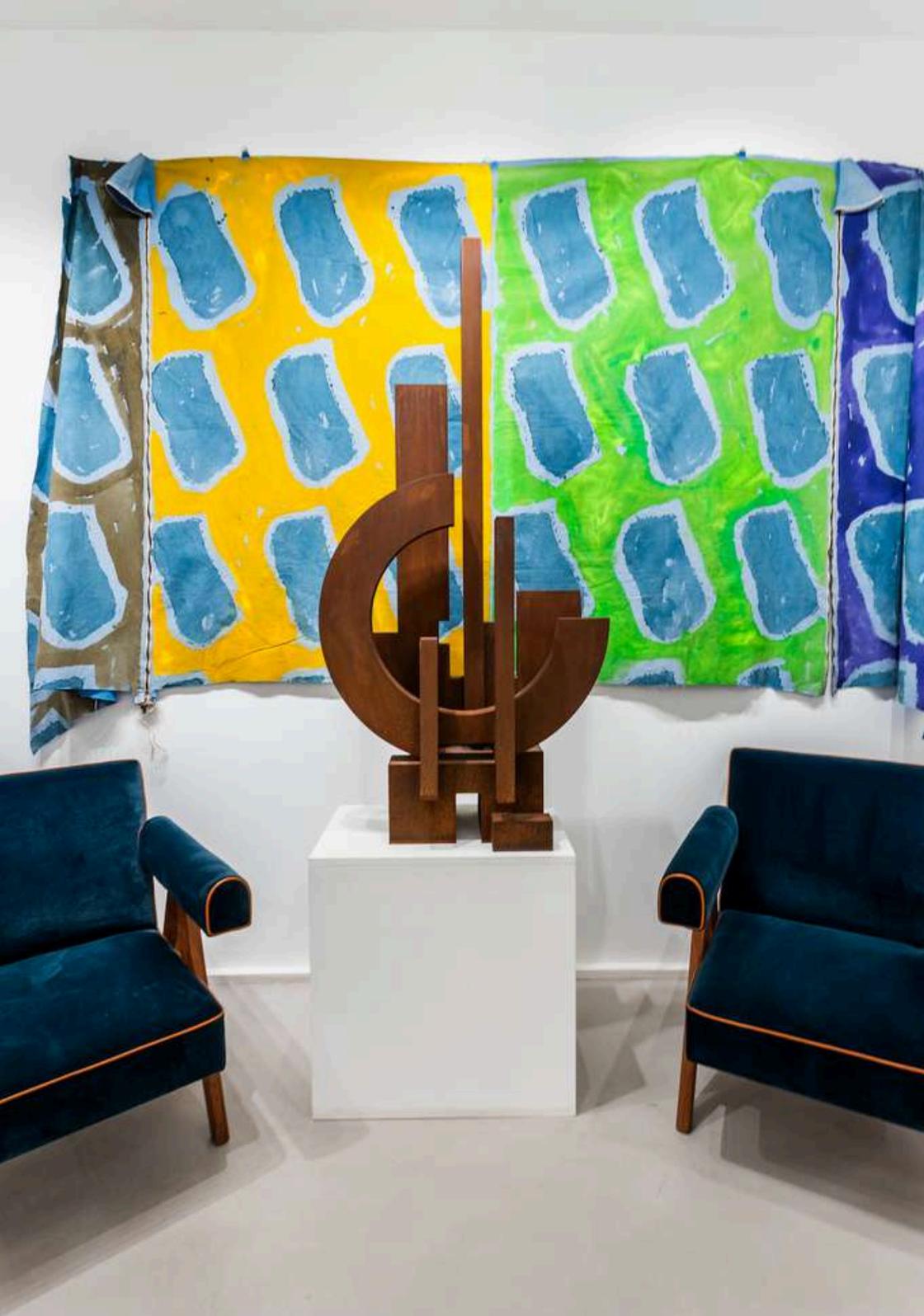
By rejecting illusion, Viallat offers the intensity of the real. He represents nothing, yet shows what painting can be when it is asked for nothing more than to exist. It is not an art of commentary, emotion, or symbol. It is an art of bare presence, grounded in the certainty that painting needs nothing beyond itself.

For more than six decades, Claude Viallat has built a body of work of remarkable coherence, never succumbing to sterile repetition or the temptation of spectacular evolution. What some have called obsession, he embraces as a form of fidelity to a founding intuition: painting with complete freedom, liberating painting from its historical constraints, and exploring the infinite possibilities of a single gesture, a single motif, on endlessly renewed supports.

Although his work emerged from the tumult of the 1960s, it continues today to assert its radicalism. By rejecting spectacle, subverting norms, and making visible what is usually relegated to the background, Viallat invites a different way of seeing. He offers neither narrative nor promise—only the presence of a painted object, frontal and immediate. And it is precisely here that its power lies.

In front of his works, the viewer is called to suspend expectations, to forget habitual modes of reading, and to let themselves be affected by the simplicity of a painted fabric stretched in space. It is an art without dogma, without message, yet of inexhaustible perceptive force. A work that, far from image, representation, or discourse, continues relentlessly to affirm what painting is: an act, a form, a color.





Public collection

Musée national d'art moderne - centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Musée d'art contemporain, Marseille, France
Musée d'Art moderne et d'Art contemporain de Nice, France
Carré d'Art, Nîmes, France
Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, France
Les Abattoirs, Toulouse, France
Frac Picardie, Amiens, France
Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Saint-Etienne, France
Musée Picasso, Antibes, France
Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Strasbourg, France
Frac Normandie, Caen, France
Musée de Grenoble, France
Musée d'art de Nantes, France
Musée d'art contemporain du Val-de-Marne, Vitry-sur-Seine, France
CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, France
Frac Provence-Alpes- Côtes d'Azur, Marseille, France
Frac Bretagne, Rennes, France
Musée d'art moderne de Céret, France
Musée-Château d'Annecy, France
Collection départementale de la Seine-Saint-Denis
Fonds d'art contemporain - Paris Collection, France
Frac Normandie, Caen, France
Frac Normandie, Rouen, France
Frac Occitanie, Montpellier, France
Frac Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France
Collections du musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France
Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, France
Musée Cantini, Marseille, France
Musée de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix, Les Sables d'Olonne, France
Musée d'Art de Toulon, Toulon, France
Fondation Cartier, Paris, France
ADAC, Saint-Priest, France
École des Beaux-Arts d'Annecy, France
Musée Sara Hilden, Tampere, Finlande
Musée de Bâle, Suisse
SMAK, Gand, Belgique
Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Belgique
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, Canada
MOMA, New-York, États-Unis
The Sezon Fondation, Tokyo, Japon
The National Museum of Art, Kitakyushu, Japon
Fukuyama Museum of Art, Fukuyama, Japon
Setagaya Art Museum, Setagaya, Japon
Collection Société Générale, Paris, France
Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France
Collection départementale d'art contemporain du Var, Châteauvert, France

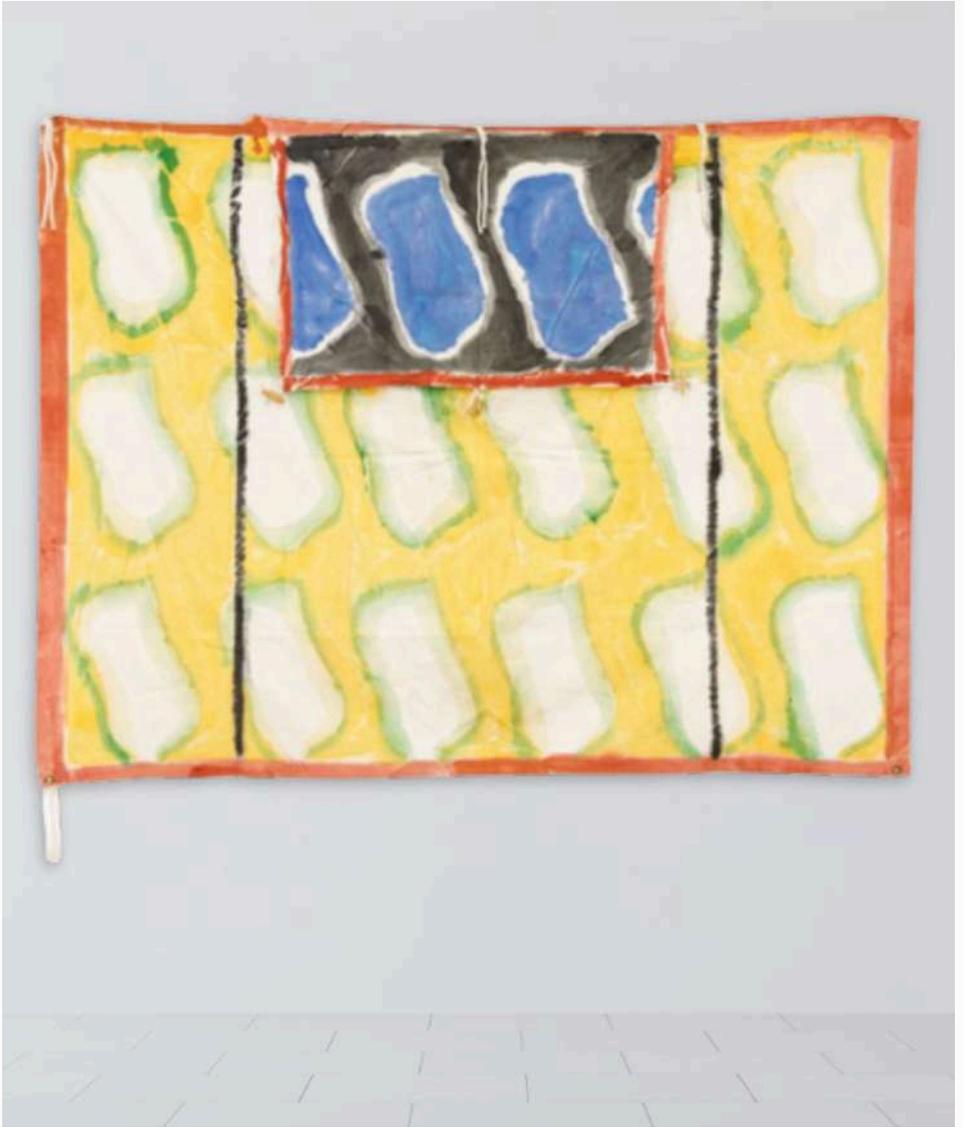
Paintings Catalog

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for any inquiries





2009/362

2009
Acrylic on fabric
145 x 192 cm | 57.09 x 75.59 in



2018/223

2018
Acrylic on fabric
102 x 102 cm | 40.16 x 40.16 in



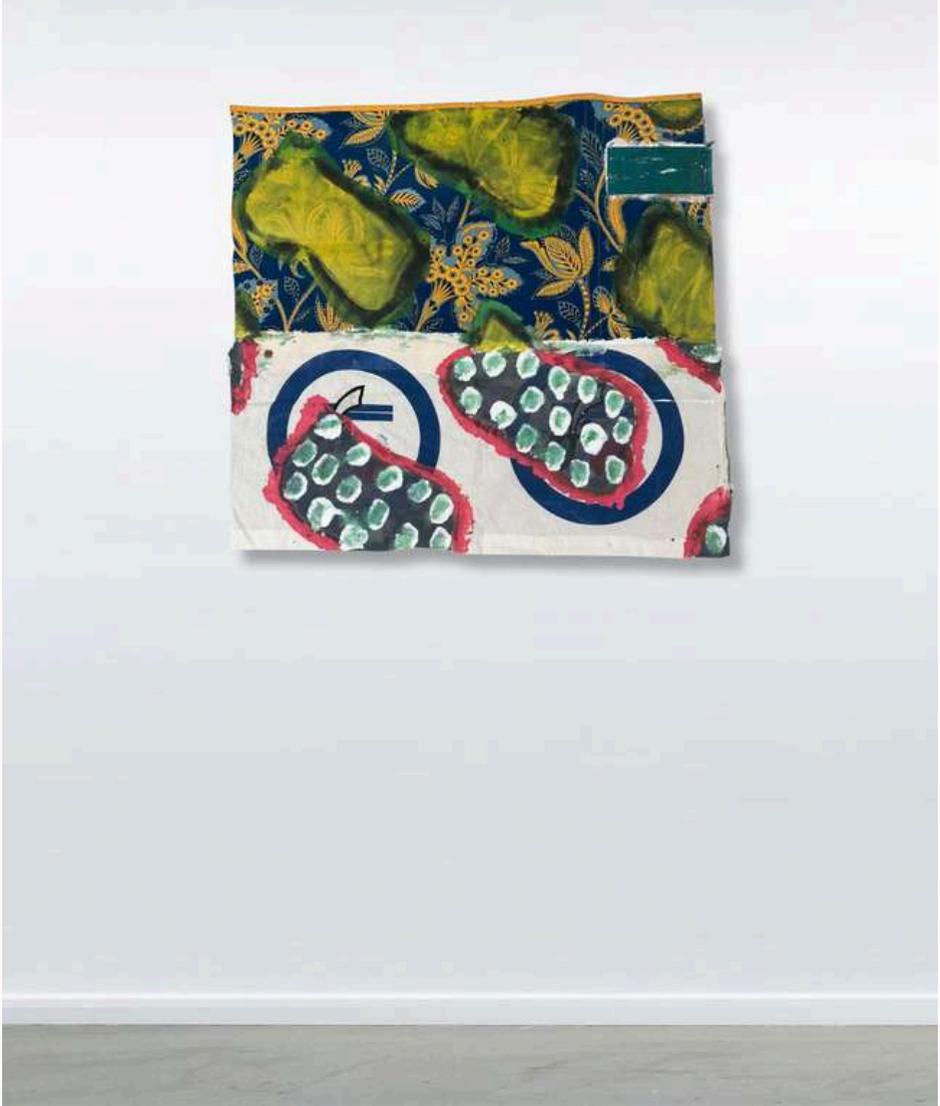
2020/114

2020
Acrylic on fabric
135 x 206 cm | 53.15 x 81.1 in



1990/237

1990
Acrylic on fabric
130 x 148 cm | 51.18 x 58.27 in



1994/050

1994,
Acrylic on printed fabric collage
91 x 84 cm | 35.83 x 33.07 in



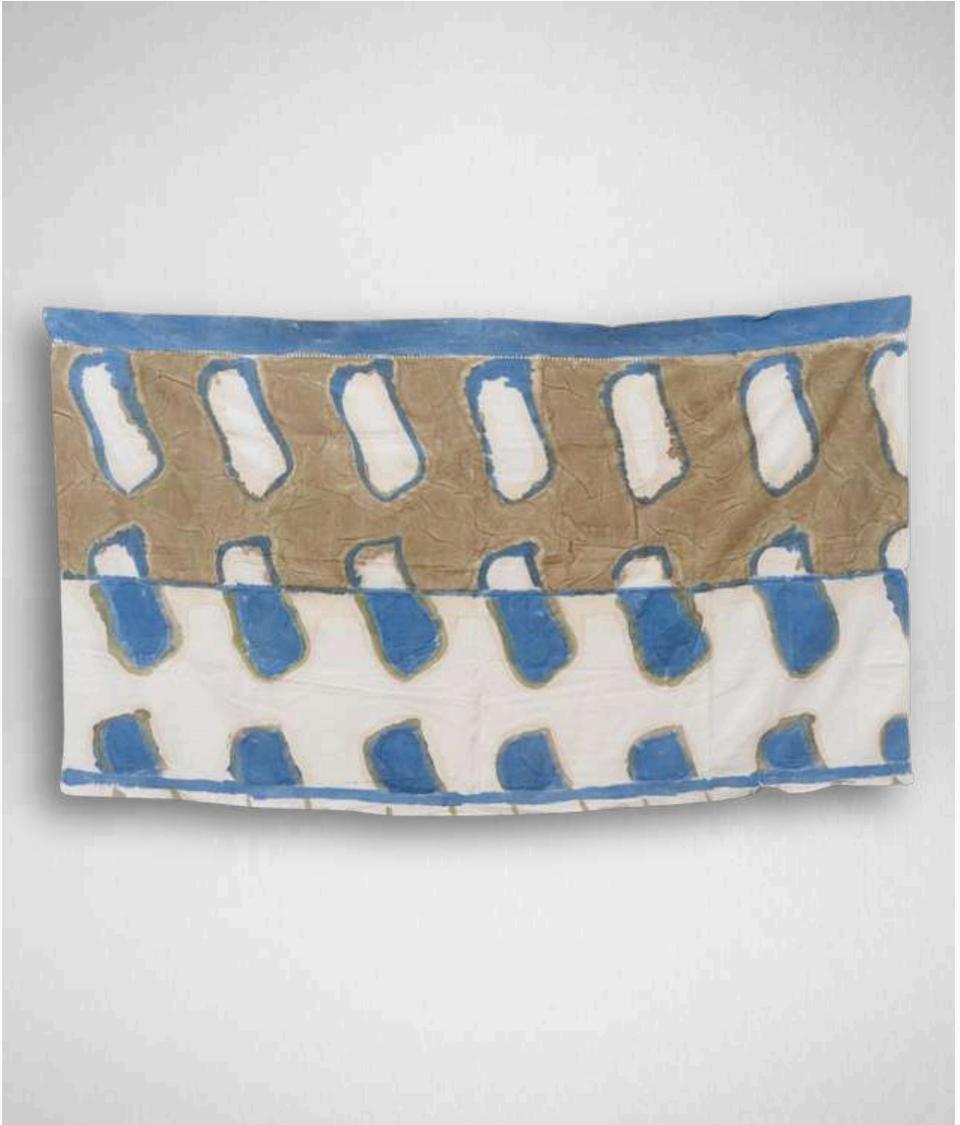
2008/275,

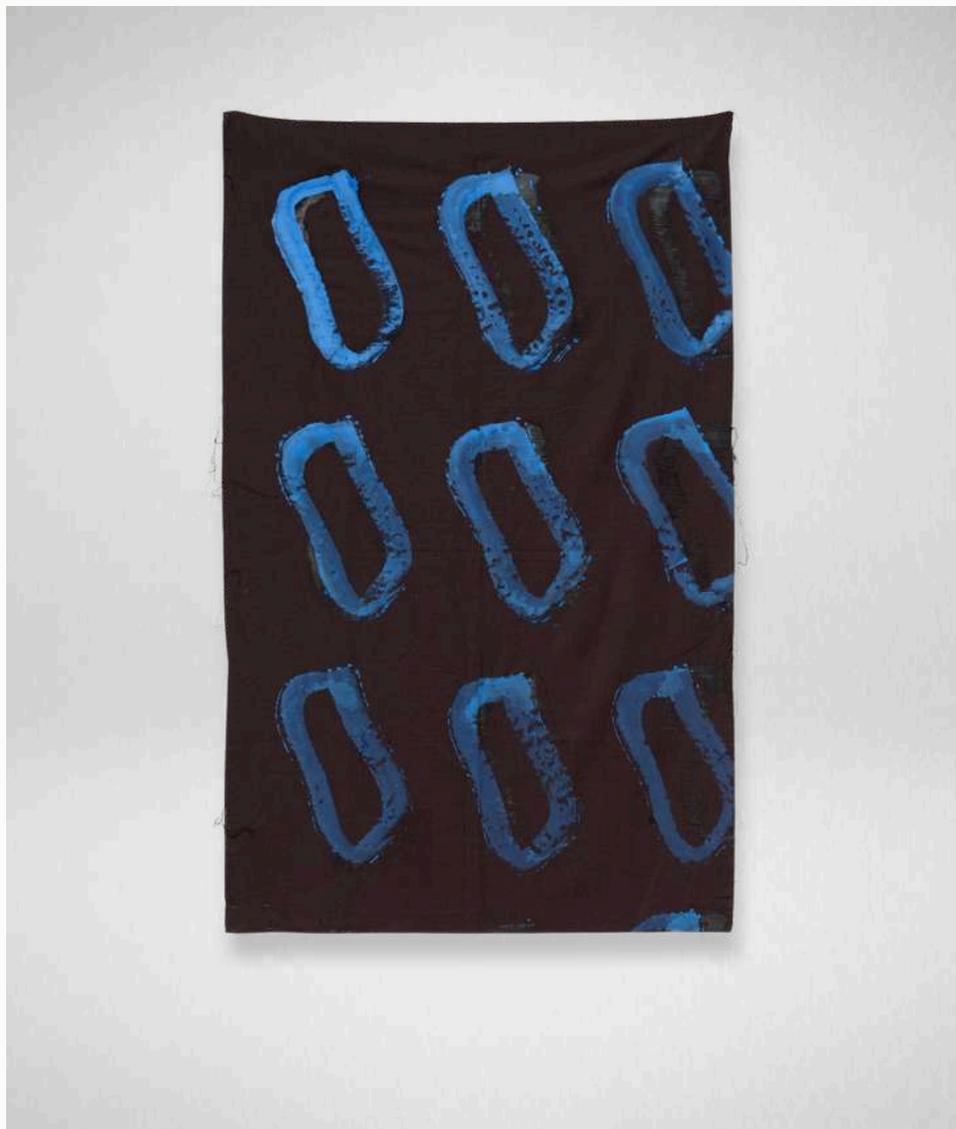
2008,
Acrylic on fabric
94 x 100 cm | 37.01 x 39.37 in



2017/235

2017,
Acrylic on fabric
140 x 228 cm | 55.12 x 89.76 in





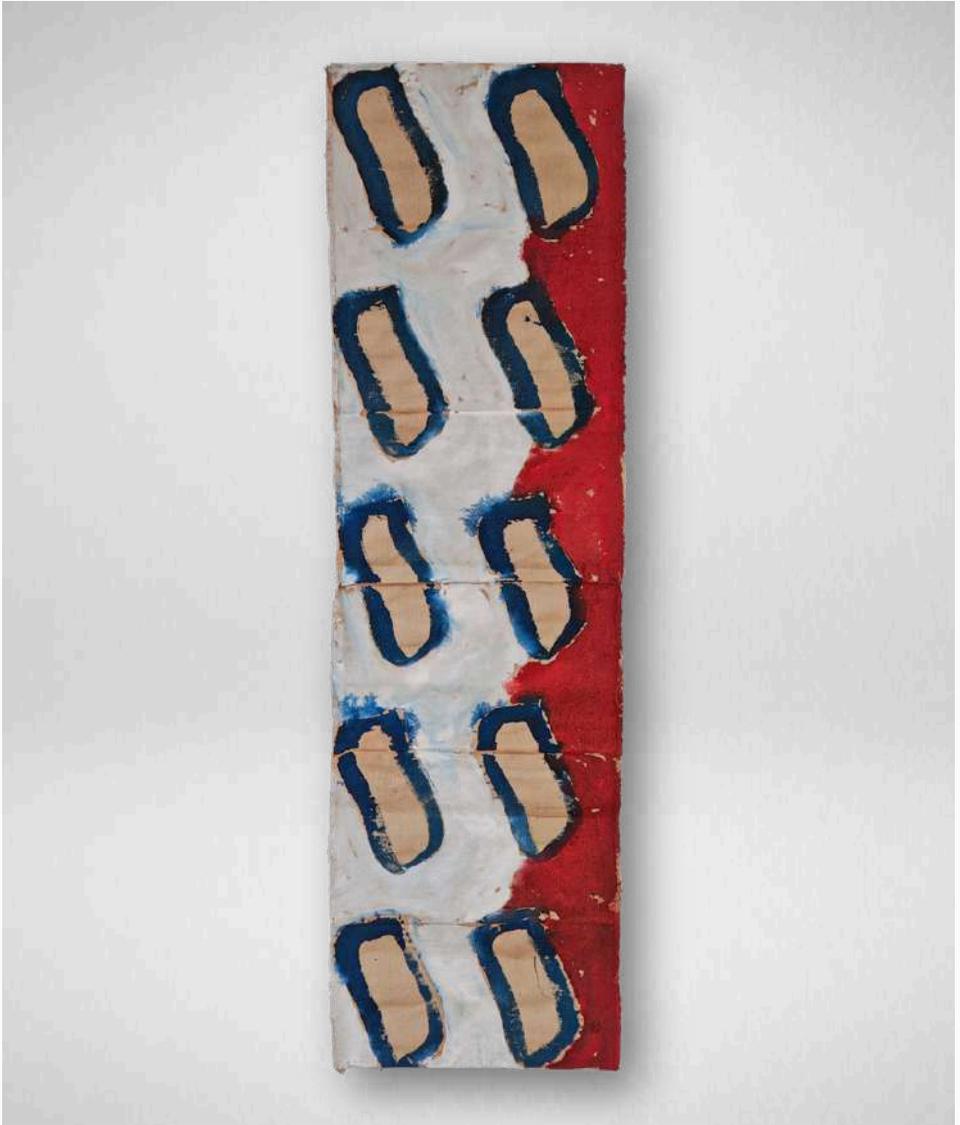








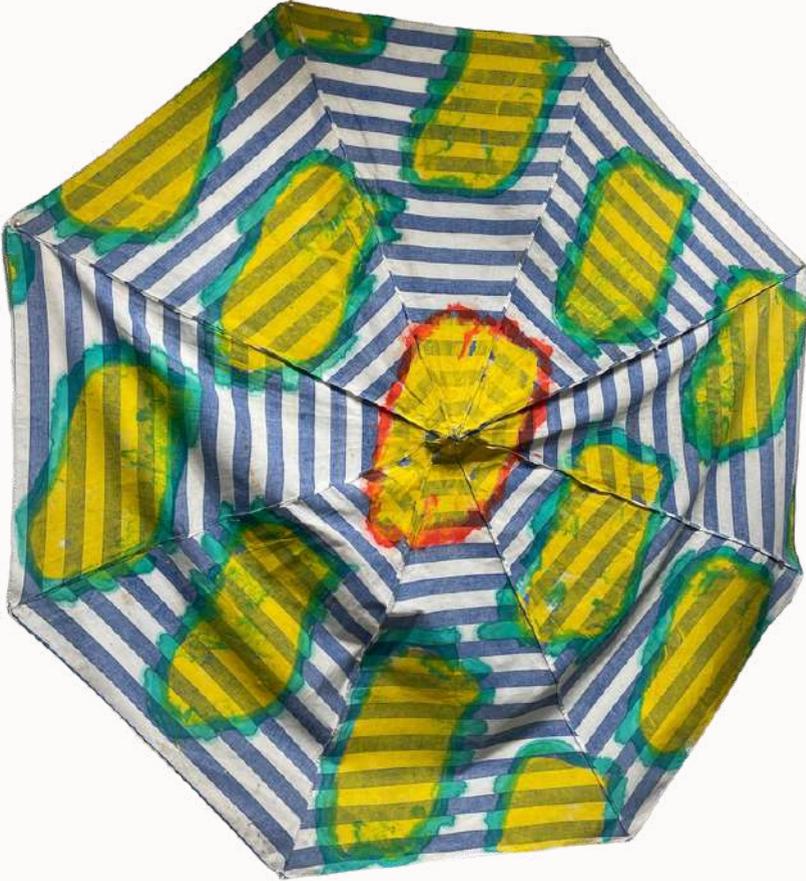






CE003,

1983,
Wooden circle, tarpaulin, and acrylic
155 x 92 cm | 61.02 x 36.22 in







2015/472

2015,
Acrylic on Fabric
156 x 395 cm | 61.42 x 155.51 in



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pre ss

Designed as warm and welcoming spaces, the galleries depart drastically from the conventional white-cube model. One guiding principle: to bring art back to its audience. Boundaries dissolve, and art and life merge into one. Design, digital art, visual and decorative arts all blend and intersect within a single space.

Entirely dedicated to creativity, the galleries serve as genuine meeting places for artists, newcomers, and seasoned collectors alike.

The galleries work closely with artists' families, foundations, and other institutions, as well as numerous private collectors and museums, enabling them to offer authentic and highly rare works.

Our team is committed to building lasting relationships with collectors, guiding them in their appreciation of art and helping them discover exceptional pieces that align with their aspirations. By ensuring that we surround ourselves only with trusted market professionals, we provide our clients with a bespoke service, delivered with complete discretion.

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