ALMINE RECH

In Different Ways
Group Show

Feb 3 — Mar 19, 2016 | London, Savile Row

Paintings by Justin Adian, John M Armleder, Will Boone, Joe Bradley, Günther Förg, Peter Halley, Simon Hantaï, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Erik Lindman, Ernst Wilhelm Nay, Richard Prince, Julian Schnabel, Blair Thurman, Christopher Wool.

The exhibition focuses on how artists have developed unique techniques—at times diverse within their own oeuvres—using a brush, airbrush, spray paint, silkscreen and even pouring paint, collaging a range of materials, questioning canvas and wood support structures, or a combination of these processes. Each work is representative of a unique, formal language, rooted in paintings' extensive history while also looking towards new possibilities and interpretations for the medium in the twenty-first century.

Justin Adian

The fine line between painting and sculpture is especially blurred in the work of Justin Adian, who produces abstract wall reliefs in vibrant palettes that oscillate between and borrow from the two artistic languages. Adian stretches painted canvas over ester foam, which is often mounted to a wooden support. The result is a puffy, geometric composition, often composed of multiple such forms. The works' formal opacity is tempered by his use of industrial materials and unpretentious titles, which often reference his Texan upbringing.

John M Armleder

John M Armleder is a polymorphic artist whose work twists and turns and displays a highly inventive sensibility. For instance, the same year he produced Capri (2008), a painting made through various, chance-laden techniques and accumulative processes, he also produced a series of mechanically produced, airbrushed designs on aluminum. The layers, evidence of gravity, and "junk-like" material have little in common with the designed patterns on slick surfaces. Capri bears traces of multiple layers of paint applied in splashes and pours, covered in seashells and starfish, bringing to mind various amorphous emotions conjured on an island refuge.

Will Boone

Will Boone uses unconventional materials to render various symbols as seemingly abstract compositional elements. Following those like Jasper Johns, who sought a language that vibrated between figuration and abstraction, Boone uses language as image to achieve this multi-layered form of communication. His works often reference Americana, such as the symbolic markings left by vagabonds as they travelled through the country during the Depression. Boone works typically on large canvases, anticipating moments of slippage between his designs and the finished product.

Joe Bradley

"The early paintings were minimal and reductive but there was always something slightly subversive about the way a given piece was painted or stretched.(...)
It's art pushing the notion of acceptable taste in relation to what paint on canvas could be."(Kenny Schachter on Joe Bradley).
The raw, primal and impulsive canvases that characterise Bradley's work is the result of a working process in which the artist needs long periods of observation and reflection in order to create.

Günther Förg

Günther Förg's early works were black monochromatic paintings (1973-1976). He continued to explore modernist themes from a postmodern perspective. Förg avoided pitfalls of cynical commentary or irony, especially in his later works, such as Untitled (2004), acrylic paintings that appear to be zoomed-in interpretations of compositions from earlier modernist masterpieces; they bear resemblance to watercolors by Paul Klee, the color fields of Mark Rothko, or the scratchy marks of Cy Twombly. Förg appropriates older strategies of picture making yet presents them anew.

Peter Halley

In the 1980s, Peter Halley began his series of "Prison Paintings": abstract compositions centered around a divided quadrangle. Inspired by New York City's gridded urban plan and by his own isolation within it, he imagined the abstract shape as a barred prison cell connected to the outside world through electronic communication. As the subject only gains relevance over time, he updates his content through changes in color, material, and composition. For instance, industrial and quotidian materials such as Roll-A-Tex® create a textured surface that appeals to visual and tactile parts of the brain.

Simon Hantaï

Simon Hantaï produced Etude (1971) through pliage, a technique he invented in the early 1960s. Pliage involves folding the canvas and applying paint, then unfurling abstract shapes and compositions produced through the paint's interplay with the canvas's white ground. The technique privileges the canvas as a textile versus invisible support, and activates it in the work. Following Jackson Pollock, he sought a way of working that repeated neither traditional imagery nor methods. An episode of temporary blindness as a child led to the creation of this tactile approach that privileged feeling over seeing.

Damien Hirst

Hirst's "Dot Paintings" began in 1988 and include thirteen sub-series. Phe-Val (2005), from the 'Pharmaceutical' sub-series is titled after a chain of amino acids found in a random corporate catalog. Nine dots are arranged in a grid, with each outer dot touching the edge of the picture plane. Hirst has conceived every composition, using each color only once. His assistants draw each dot with a compass and remove all traces of the human hand in the process, leaving only a precise array of colors that play with the viewer's perception of the work's two dimensional space.

Jeff Koons

"They're about the idea of metaphysics, the right-here-right-now, the eternal. In science, we know that in a short period of time you can change your genes, your DNA, through ideas. I know my genes are different since coming across Manet. I'm head-to-toe a different person."
- Jeff Koons (Excerpt of a 2015 interview of Jeff Koons by Bill Powers about the Gazing Ball Paintings).
The scale of each painting differs from the original, each work is painted on canvas in such a way that the surface is very smooth, and the introduction of a blue glass-blown "gazing ball"—balanced on a shelf that blends into the background—affixed on the canvas allows a simultaneous augmented view of the paintings, the viewer, the room.

Erik Lindman

Erik Lindman eschews traditional easel-style painting, which enables the artist to step back and consider his work from the future spectator's point of view as he works through a composition. Using tabletops instead, the paintings are seen up close as surfaces, and Lindman begins by incorporating traces of other earlier compositions or found materials, working them into the paintings such that, ultimately, they are subsumed into a seamless layer. The result is a psychological, eidetic experience, similar to how Freud imagined memory as many traces upon a Wunderblock: markings never fully erased, always permanently etched below the surface.

Ernst Wilhelm Nay

An interest in synesthesia, the association of rhythms and sound with visual imagery, brought Ernst Wilhelm Nay's work into the realm of abstraction in the 1950s. He continued to incorporate recognizable imagery in the 1960s, where ocular shapes stand in for human figures. Seeking out universal modes of communication free of personal references, as time went on, he further restricted his color palette and simplified forms. Yet he employed a painterly style, believing that something human, new and unknown, comes through the act of painting in excess of any intention.

Richard Prince

Interview excerpt with Kim Gordon, 2012.
PRINCE: Well, the backstory is that they date back to these abstract images I made in 1977. I wanted to update those abstractions (in 2012). My daughter had braces at the time, and I would find these tiny little rubber bands that were always popping out of her mouth. So that gave me an idea. I used the bands to make the letter O. Then I started to write the word "asshole" around that letter, and I decided to call them "the asshole paintings." That's how it started. (...) And then one day I decided to work with a larger rubber band. (...) I stretched the rubber band I was using and I wanted to make the shape stay, and I realized I couldn't stick it on with paint, that wouldn't hold it, so I just picked up my staple gun and stapled it. The two gestures were married that afternoon. It was kind of a lightbulb moment. And somehow the blackness of the band created a line that didn't look like a rubber band anymore. It became part of the surface. And yes, you're right about the randomness of the shape. It's just whatever.
GORDON: Because you know, the last time we met, we were talking about Damien Hirst's dot paintings, and how there are some that are more interesting paintings than others—which sort of defeated his purpose. In a funny way to me, the band paintings are kind of all the same. And they're different.

Julian Schnabel

Julian Schnabel's painting process like spray paint, for instance, since the 1980s entails innovative approaches to the painting's surface as departure point in his large-scale, mixed media explorations. His most recent work began with photographs transferred onto polyester using inkjet printing, a technique that imbricates image and fabric as a foundation for large, expressive brushstrokes and abstract, spray-painted marks. These materials also sink intentionally into the fabric, instead of resting traditionally on its surface, so much so that the artist turns over the polyester in the process and often continues the composition backward, to ultimately present the paintings inside out from where they began.

Blair Thurman

Blair Thurman's "Supermodels" series explores the racecar through shaped paintings in neon colors that resemble a car's front grill. Thurman's work is inspired by contemporary culture and tied to earlier modernist tropes and associations in such a way that a neon sign at a sports bar invokes minimalist works by artists such as Bruce Nauman and Dan Flavin. The shaped canvases at once refer to classical interrogations of a painting's wood and canvas support while at the same time draw out a macho painterly approach to an extreme, producing something new, conflated with so-called "low brow" culture.

Christopher Wool

Christopher Wool employs a paired-down palette, most often reduced to black and white, or one additional color. The chromatic simplicity shifts emphasis to his laborious process: in Untitled (P584) (2009), the composition is produced through hand-drawn, spray-painted lines and brushstrokes that have been cancelled and erased through layers of wash. He produces a flat surface that bears trace of its production, which is, ultimately, the work's content. The composition is translated into four silkscreened images tiled together onto one canvas, leaving further trace of its making in the subtle shift in tone and the visible hard edges of the silkscreens.