ALMINE RECH

Lineup

Oct 30 — Dec 14, 2019 | New York, Upper East Side

Almine Rech New York is pleased to present LINEUP, curated by Alex Bacon.

Stripes, which is to say a sequence of elongated linear marks, have been a central device of avant-garde art since the advent of Modernism in the late 19th century. Present for centuries in architectural forms and the patterning of interior furnishings like carpets and upholstery, their specific role in art history has not yet been systematically analyzed.

The stripe emerged as an autonomous device in the first two decades of the 20th century alongside other classic modes of abstraction, such as the grid, the monochrome and chance, as one of the ways for an artist to avoid actively composing their work. The stripe is perhaps the non-compositional device with the longest prehistory, given its prominence as a decorative structure. It was also a logical early addition to the lexicon of abstraction, given its ability to circumvent the hierarchy inherent in the figure/ground relationship. This dehierarchizing potency led to the proliferation of stripes throughout high Modernist art, from that of figurative artists like Picasso and Matisse, to the radical innovations of the Russian Suprematists, to those of the Constructivist artists working internationally in Europe and Latin America from the 1920s on.

A different aspect of the stripe emerged in the years following World War II. We can see an increasing emphasis on its function as a self-reflexive device that echoes the rectilinear structure of the canvas itself. In late Modernist art, the stripe declares its presence, activating the viewer, and not just serving as a part of a composition. This led logically to works that elaborate the potential literalism of the stripe, its declarative function, which served a new generation of artists starting in the late 1960s, from Minimalist artists like Frank Stella and Agnes Martin to radical French artists like Michel Parmentier and Daniel Buren.

By the end of the 1970s a younger generation recognized both the achievements of the high Modernists, and their critiques by the minimal and conceptual artists who followed, finding the stripe to be a malleable sign and symbol of abstraction itself, and especially its imbrication in a larger politics, which underpins the critical work of artists active in the 1980s and 90s like Peter Halley, and Jac Leirner. At this time a new generation of painters like Mary Heilmann also embraced the stripe for different reasons: because it was amenable to a new looser, more playful brand of abstraction with bold, graphic overtones.

- Alex Bacon

List of exhibited artists:

Pierre Bonnard
André Cadere
Jackie Ferrara
Günther Förg
Peter Halley
Mary Heilmann
Jac Leirner
Sol LeWitt
Kazimir Malevich
Agnes Martin
Henri Matisse
Barnett Newman
Kenneth Noland
Michel Parmentier
Pablo Picasso
Liubov Popova
David Reed
Konstantin Rozhdestvensky
Mira Schendel
Sean Scully
Loló Soldevilla
Frank Stella
Anne Truitt
Dan Walsh

List of contemporary artists responding to the history of linear repetition in art:

Justin Adian
John M Armleder
Farah Atassi
Genieve Figgis
Marcus Jahmal
Erik Lindman
Sam McKinniss
Vaughn Spann
Claire Tabouret
Chloe Wise