



# Abstraction & Architecture

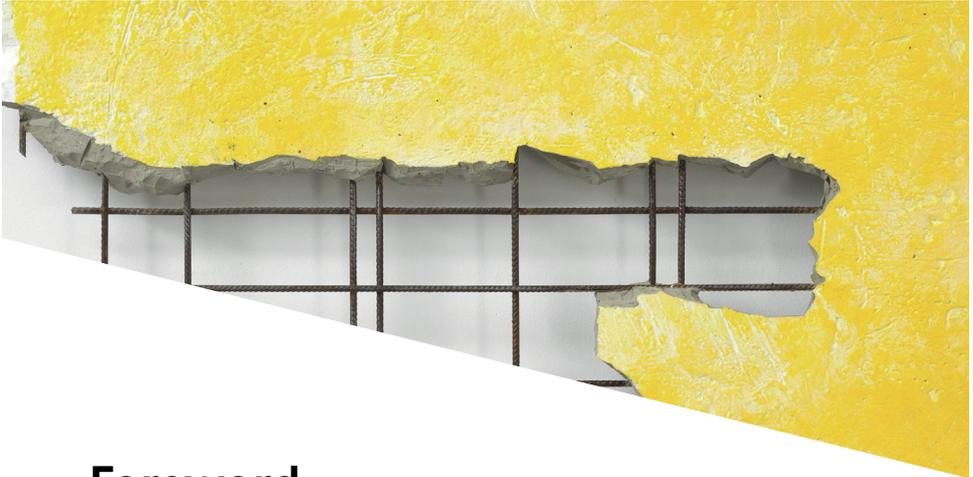
An Abstract Room Project

Frédéric Caillard  
Lucie Le Boudier  
Christine Liebich  
Markus Linnenbrink  
Vincent Mauger  
Evan Robarts  
Benjamin Sabatier  
Umut Yasat

ABSTRACT  
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## Foreword

By Anne-Valérie Kirmann, Abstract Room General Manager

Abstract Room is very proud to present *Abstraction & Architecture*, a new multi-faceted project that explores the fruitful relationship between Contemporary Abstraction and Architecture.

The project offers four engaging curatorial angles:

- *Symbolism* showcases works that reflect on the symbolic dimension of architecture.
- *Tools & Materials* examines the use of tools and materials that come from the architectural and construction world.
- *Topography* is dedicated to the conversion of architectural elements into artworks, according to the literal meaning of the word abstraction (an extraction from reality).
- *Mutations* presents artworks that are directly performed on or with architectural elements.

This catalog covers the *Symbolism* and *Tools & Materials* sections, which constitute the first leg of the project that opens in Strasbourg in the Fall 2018. It features some essays and some artist interviews & quotes, prepared by the Abstract Room team to enhance your contemporary art experience.

This project would not have been possible without our local partners, the University of Strasbourg and the Days of Architecture, and without the creativity and the enthusiasm of the participating artists, whom we warmly thank.

*Abstraction & Architecture* is now starting its main journey in the eyes, minds and memories of our visitors, readers and followers. We hope you will carry it a long way.

# Inhabiting Abstraction

The Abstract Room curatorial team & guest contributor Elise Allemand present the first leg of the **Abstraction & Architecture** project.

## Abstraction & Architecture: Space and Human Factor

Architecture is by essence a three-dimensional practice, while Abstraction has a long history of association with the flatness of the canvas. With no surprise, the questions of space and planarity are central for contemporary artists who navigate between Abstraction and Architecture. Among the participants to the Abstract Room project, Evan Robarts takes no sides. He treats as equals the volume of his scaffold and the flatness of the Color Field wall painting that lies behind. Frédéric Caillard chooses to flatten the volumes of the Sydney Opera House into a purely emblematic silhouette, a sort of brand that has nothing left to do with space. Lucie Le Boudier takes the other direction with her two-dimensional cutter drawings. By superposing flat planes found in

architectural blueprints, she creates a sense of volume. Christine Liebich, who works with welded steel rods, has also recently gone 3D. The center piece of her triptych - *Dark Knight (11)* - looks like a robot deploying its arms, breaking the two-dimensional constraints that hold the left and right pieces together. *Dark Knight (11)* is a very cinematic work, a sort of hapax in Christine Liebich production. Her pieces are typically carefully composed and balanced, but *Dark Knight (11)* does not so much look like a finished piece, but rather like an intermediate state, providing an interesting account of architecture as a passage, as the transformation of a two-dimensional idea into a three-dimensional construction. Another approach of space is proposed by Markus Linnenbrink and Umut Yasat with their works mounted on wheels, which speak of mobility as a possibility to recompose space.



Christine Liebich, *Dark Knight (10)*, *Dark Knight (11)*, *Dark Knight (12)*, 2018 / structural steel, lacquer / 120 x 80 cm. Courtesy Christine Liebich.



**Evan Roberts**, Installation view of *Run of the Mill* at The Hole, New York City, 2015.  
Courtesy Evan Roberts.

It is quite common to stumble upon artworks that have a form related to their subject matter, but it is less frequent to encounter parallels between work processes and subject matter. It is thus striking to see that a vast majority of the *Abstraction & Architecture* artists use work processes that are based on the accumulation of elemental components and that recall construction processes such as bricklaying. Umut Yasat accumulates personal objects, Markus Linnenbrink color remnants, Lucie Le Boudier lines and floor plans, Frédéric Caillard acrylic paint layers, Christine Liebich steel rods and Vincent Mauger bricks, PVC pipes or bottle cases. This practice highlights the importance of time, materiality and craftsmanship in the production of the works.

Another unexpected common ground that links the works shown in *Abstraction & Architecture* is what could be called their *human factor*. Architecture is about structures, specifications of materials and arrangement of space to

enhance “functionality”. It is a product of science and technics. But in fine, all this technicity provides the framework in which our lives develop, an aspect that is often overlooked when discussing architecture. This *human factor* is captured by Lucie Le Boudier when she hand-traces her cutter lines. The lines are very well aligned but we are not in a cold and standardized mechanical reproduction. The depth and the angles of the cuts slightly vary, randomly peeling the paper coating off and providing a delicate organic feel to the otherwise very geometric aspect of the work. This appropriation of the architectures by the artist (and more generally by building users and inhabitants) also speaks to the practice of Umut Yasat. Umut Yasat builds his sculptures, called *Der Stapel (The Stack)*, with personal archives and objects. Even though all the *Stacks* have the same dimensions (A4), Umut Yasat makes these pre-formatted constructions his own, filling them with private material and stopping their erection at his own height.



**Markus Linnenbrink, *FIVEYEARS*, 2005 – 2010 / epoxy resin, pigments, objects / 46 x 210 x 15 cm.**  
 Courtesy taubert contemporary, Berlin.

Markus Linnenbrink sculptures - which are made of resin recovered from his drip paintings, poured around everyday objects - bear in their flesh the memory of his studio and of his artistic practice. Evan Robarts human factor is less intimate and more social. Robarts uses material from building maintenance activities, referencing blue collar workers and their hard labor, decrying boundaries between social classes. The question of labor is also at the foundation of Benjamin Sabatier's practice, who sees it as necessary to acquire personal and artistic autonomy. The works of Benjamin Sabatier, Evan Robarts and Frédéric Caillard also develop political messages, from the denunciation of Donald Trump positions (Robarts) to charges against capitalism (Sabatier, Caillard). These different approaches, whether intimate, personal, social or political, confirm that contemporary abstraction is today more than ever connected to the real world, and that the days where abstraction was autonomous and remote are now long gone.

### **Symbolism: towards eternity**

One of the curatorial entry-point of ***Abstraction & Architecture*** is symbolism. The tower-like constructions of Markus Linnenbrink and Umut Yasat are obviously visually reminiscent of high-rises, even though they were not intentionally meant to speak of architecture. Despite disparate appearances, they are very similar on a conceptual level. Both artists are actually directly *building an archeology*, an approach which is in itself full of

contradictions. In its movement, archeology is related to digging, not to building. Moreover, archeology typically happens long after the *useful phase* of a construction. Archeology cannot be built, it needs to be discovered. But Umut Yasat and Markus Linnenbrink are not interested in the *usefulness* of their creation. Like archeological artefacts, their sculptures are here to render the essence of things: the memory of his artistic activity for Markus Linnenbrink, and his life history for Umut Yasat. The same paradox has produced some of the greatest landmarks in the history of architecture, from Plaza de España in Sevilla to the Eiffel Tower or the Statue of Liberty. These monuments were built with no functional goal in mind and they ended up capturing the soul of a city.

***The Stacks*** of Umut Yasat and the ***Linear Sculptures*** of Markus Linnenbrink can also be described as clones. They have the same DNA but slightly differ visually, like identical twins who would have different life experiences, or like those monuments which underwent restoration according to the Venice Charter of 1964. The Charter stipulated that "the replacement of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence". The renovation of the Neues Museum in Berlin by David Chipperfield is a prime example of project which rehabilitated the memory and the spirit of the original building according to the Venice Charter



Exterior of the Neues Museum, Berlin.  
Photo Gryffindor. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

principles. Chipperfield duplicated the layout of the openings of the old wing but refused to copy the elements that were specific to 19th century architecture, like the moldings. Other recent instances include the Unterlinden Museum of Colmar, where Herzog & de Meuron copied the volume of the old gothic convent and the Basel Kunstmuseum, with the horizontal lines of the old façade being echoed by the offset of the stone bricks of the new building. The sculptures of Umut Yasat and Markus Linnenbrink, which can at times take years to make, relate to these monuments: each piece of their series is in sync with its own time - its *raison d'être* is even to represent its own time - but they all bear the same atemporal spirit.

The cutting process is well represented among the **Abstraction & Architecture** artists. Lucie Le Boudier draws with cutters, Umut Yasat cuts all his personal objects and documents to the standard A4 size and Frédéric Caillard shapes his monuments by cutting wood panels. In the **Tools & Materials** section, cutting is also at the heart of Vincent Mauger's practice. Arman said in substance that cutting was in fine a desire to stop time<sup>1</sup>. The thought is delightful in regards to Umut Yasat practice, who purposely attempts to capture passing time in his work. But it is also very telling in the context of symbolism: time has little bearings on symbols, the emblematic silhouettes of Frédéric Caillard monuments do not require maintenance and have no use for Evan Robarts scaffolds.

Desire to stop time, atemporal spirit or willingness to *build an archeology*, the **Symbolism** section of **Abstraction & Architecture** is thematically very strongly leaning towards eternity...

#### **Tools & Materials: everything is in the gap**

The largest piece in the **Tools & Material** section is a compelling scaffold installation by Evan Robarts. The work is multi-faceted, spelling out contemporary social issues and echoing some of the key debates of art history<sup>2</sup>. The other pieces - by Christine Liebich, Vincent Mauger and Benjamin Sabatier - make up a sort of trilogy. The three artists are using construction materials (in this project, steel, bricks and concrete), but they are not importing these materials from reality as *found abstraction*. Each one of them is using his or her material as a full-fledged fine art media, using its inherent characteristics to develop an innovative and unconventional artistic expression in the field of abstraction. Of course, the referential potential of each material cannot be expunged, and the works are enriched by the many connections that form with the construction world, but those works primarily stand out as being animated by a force of their own, disconnected from their source material. This impression is probably reinforced by the tendency of several artists to intentionally divert the common images associated with their material: Benjamin Sabatier stages his concrete as light and flexible while Vincent Mauger have his bricks lose their orthogonality and turn organic<sup>3</sup>.

But despite a similar treatment of construction materials, the underlying approach of each artist is quite singular. Christine Liebich has a way with balance and composition. These classical skills, combined with her interest for duality, result in an elegant aesthetics that culminates in the dialogs between her pieces - often presented as diptychs and triptychs.

Vincent Mauger's sculptures and installations look like three-dimensional topographic projections, but they are based on a deep and unsettling contradiction. On one side, they are carved in familiar low-grade materials (bricks, PVC pipes) and deliver a reassuring signal: we are in charted territories and there should be no surprise. On the other side, the very essence of topography (which is at the crossroads of nature and cutting-edge technology) is negated by the choice of ordinary fabricated materials. These conflicting indications (that could be summarized by Frank Stella as "What you see is not what you see") abolish our normal set of references and make Vincent Mauger's work stand-out as ungraspable and peculiar.

Benjamin Sabatier is above all interested in the making of the works, in how the original idea is

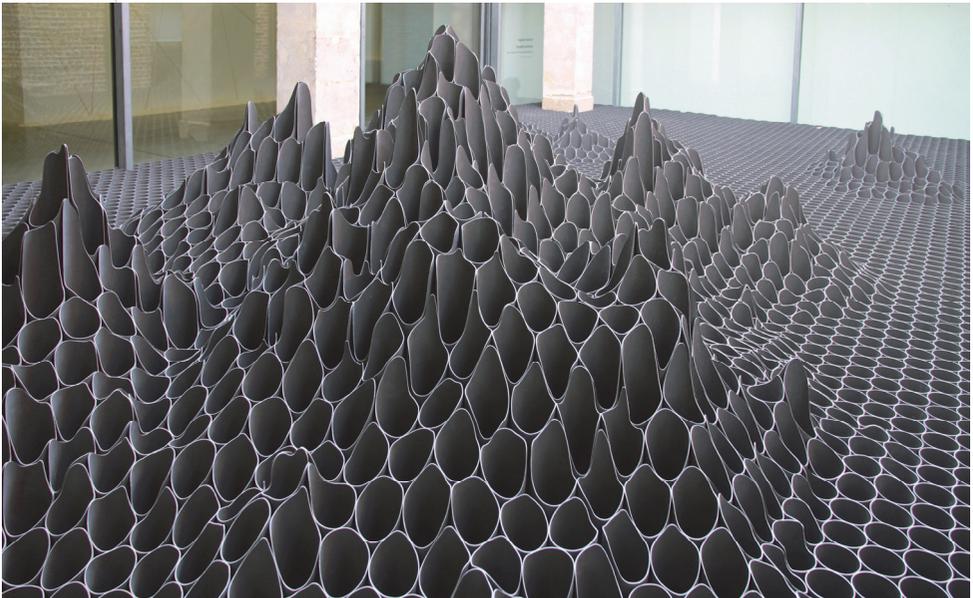
modified by the labor of the artist and the behavior of the materials. And this may be where the key difference between Abstraction and Architecture lies. In this *gap* between the idea and the final object. Architecture needs to eliminate this *gap*, which has always been so fertile in art. Research and mistakes are totally banished from the construction phase. There is no trial and errors, and creativity is limited by the need to guarantee feasibility on the first attempt. With such constraints, how can architecture continue to be innovative and break new grounds? Maybe by following Vincent Mauger's recipe: remain in charted territories (to ensure feasibility) but desynchronize your conventional components to create surprise, bewilderment or amazement. This is a good way for Abstraction and Architecture to build a future in common. ■

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> In Arman's 1964 Stedelijk Museum exhibition catalog: "I believe that [...] in the destruction, in the cut, there is a will to stop time".

<sup>2</sup> See the essay *Evan Roberts: Mondrian 3.0* page 34 of this catalog for a full analysis of the work.

<sup>3</sup> Those practices are similar to the one of Frédéric Caillard in the *Symbolism* section, who changes acrylic paint destination by converting it to a support.



Vincent Mauger, *Système adéquat*, 2013 / site-specific installation at maison rouge-Fondation Antoine de Galbert / height of pvc tubes 0,25 to 1,50 m, floor area ~60 m<sup>2</sup>.  
Courtesy les Amis de la maison rouge. Photo Vincent Mauger.

# symbolism



# Lucie Le Boudier

Interview by Lauriane Mevel, June 2018

## Where does your interest in architecture come from?

I think it started during my Space Design Degree and it grew during my studies at the Fine Arts School of Nantes. I was first interested in sculpture, then in installations and I finally understood that architecture was central in my

## “Space is like a medium, a work tool”

researches. Space is like a medium, a work tool. Some people use pencils, I use architectures, places, constructions.

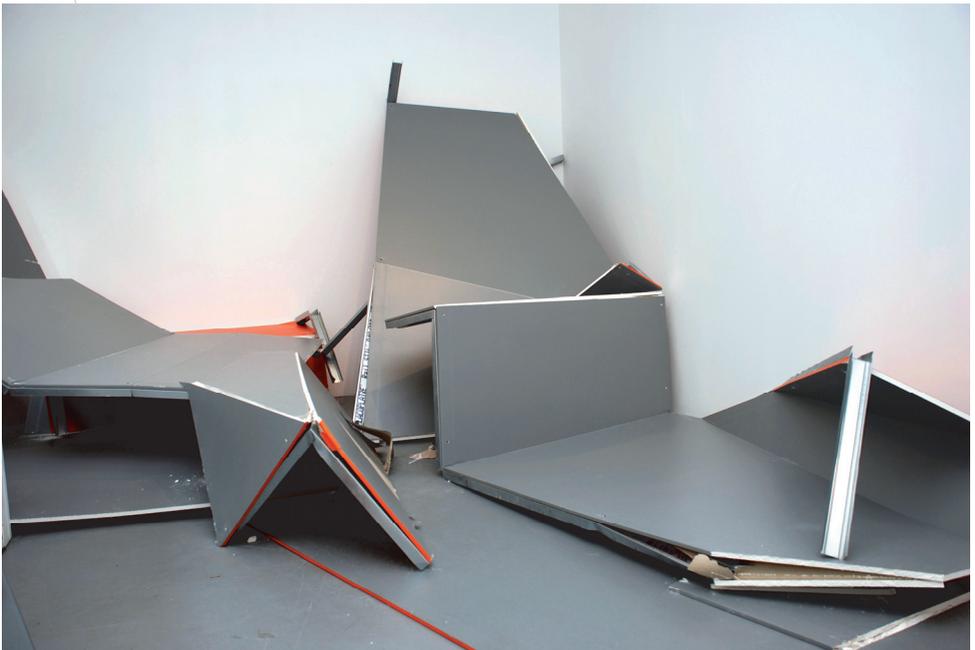
In the future I would love to integrate my work to a large scale architecture, do a monumental wall-painting or imagine a pattern for the facade of a building. Walls are very important in my work, I use plasterboards and other building materials, and I like to play with the reflection

of colored light between my sculptures and the walls...

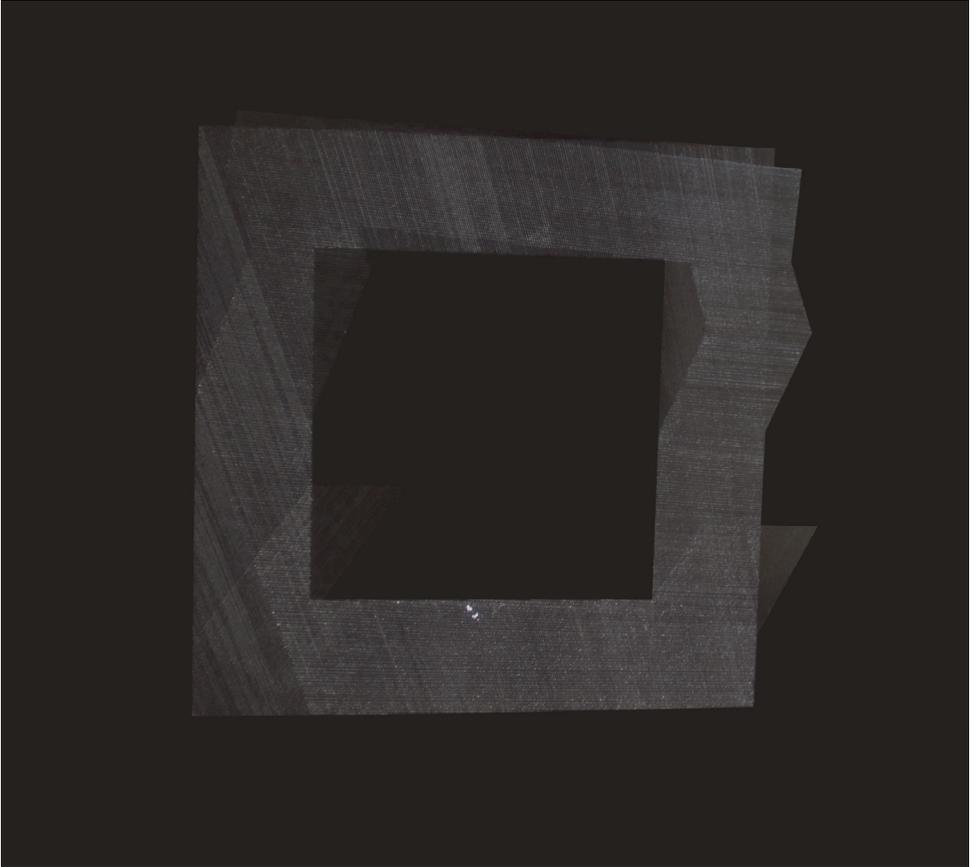
## There is another pivotal element in your practice: the dot. You said in a statement that the dot is invisible in your works but that you always start with dots.

That's right, you never see dots in my work. They are invisible, but they generate lines and surfaces. I made a series of wall paintings titled *wall*, during my residency at the Darling Foundry in Montreal and then for my solo show *Back Line* at 22,48m2 in Paris in 2014. I started with dots on a white wall, connected them with lines. I painted the resulting geometric forms in different shades of white.

The different fragments are barely perceptible but as the spectator makes his way around the gallery or the studio, it comes to life, you can see depth and cross movements...



Lucie Le Boudier, *Prudence*, 2011 / plasterboard, metallic rail, acrylic paint / site-specific installation for the solo exhibition *Fragments* at Gallery 22,48m2, Paris.  
Courtesy Lucie Le Boudier & 22,48m<sup>2</sup>.



**Lucie Le Boudier**, *Plan #12*, 2018 / cutter drawing on cast-coated paper / 48 x 57,2 cm.  
Courtesy Lucie Le Boudier & 22,48m<sup>2</sup>.

b. 1986. Based in Paris, France.  
Lucie Le Boudier studied in the *École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Nantes. Her interest in architecture led her to develop geometrical but delicate installations and drawings where points, lines and planes intertwine.

**You seem to like to show what is hidden in buildings and constructions?**

Yes, in one exhibition I decided to reverse the vision of a wall by showing the rail system which holds the plasterboards. I presented it on the floor, which was another reversal and contradiction. [...] I like to work with plasterboard because it's a "humble" material and it is very malleable. It gives a lot of creative possibilities and it is very common in the construction industry. Plasterboard can be broken, it can be painted... I've also used a water-repellent plasterboard. I soaked it in water during a long time and it eventually started to absorb the water and became soft. I like to play with materials and contradict them.

**You also use construction tools, like the cutter, in an unconventional way?**

In a way, yes. With the drawings, a lot of people do not imagine that I use a cutter. They have this image of a tool that is rough and dangerous, and the drawings are clean, regular and delicate. The paper is not even fully cut, there is only a little slot in the top coating of the paper sheet. I use scalpel cutters for my drawings, but I also use bigger cutters to work with plasterboards, with a gesture that is more destructive.



**Can you tell us about the cutter drawings you made for the *Abstraction & Architecture* project?**

This project came at the right time. I had been researching futurist and constructivist architecture and the exhibition opportunity triggered a new series of drawings. I used to focus mainly on architectural drawings, on floor plans and on their superposition. In this new series I am more interested in the architectural styles, in the actual buildings, where they are located and how they interact with their environments. For example, one of the drawings is inspired by a Cube House that was designed by Dutch architect Piet Blom in Rotterdam in the 70's. It is a type of tilted house that is built on the edge of another construction. To come back to our earlier discussion, the Cube Houses are also connected by a sort of point. [...] The drawings of the new series have a closer link with my installations and sculptures, because they all take up the notion of volume. I will show the first two drawings of the new series in the *Abstraction & Architecture* project.

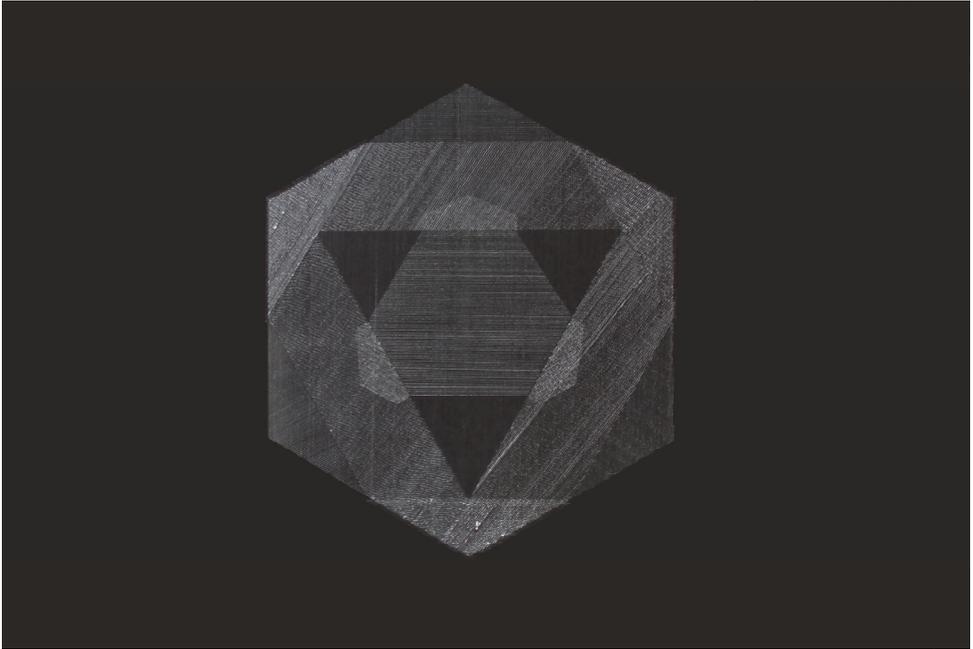
**What is the second drawing about?**

It comes from Rebstock Park in Frankfurt, by Peter Eisenman, which is based on the idea of folding and unfolding. I had worked on deconstructivism and on Eisenman's architecture for my Master Thesis, but I had not really thought about it for the next 8 years. Then I got a new studio in March and I found some old notebooks and pictures. And now I am using this material - which is actually at the very source of my current artistic practice - for my new works.

**Japan's architecture also inspired you for this series...**

... It is because Japan has a lot of futurist architecture, and a sort of "architectural craziness". Tokyo is incredible, there is some very daring architecture, with colors, shapes, materials you would never see in France. There are no restraints. But at the same time the style is very minimalist. This contrast is very compelling. ■

Source material for Plan #11: *The Cube Houses in Rotterdam, The Netherlands viewed from Blaak Subway Station* by Raul Ayres.  
Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.



**Lucie Le Boudier, *Plan #11*, 2018 / cutter drawing on cast-coated paper / 48 x 67 cm.**  
Courtesy Lucie Le Boudier & 22,48m<sup>2</sup>.

**Selected recent exhibitions**

- Geometria*, La Galerie (Paris-habitat), Paris, France, 2018
- Session #6*, group show, Galerie Paris-Beijing, Paris, France, 2017
- Point barre*, Galerie 22,48 m<sup>2</sup>, Paris, France, 2016
- Solo show*, Drawing Now - Galerie 22,48 m<sup>2</sup>, Paris, France, 2015
- Back Line*, Galerie 22,48 m<sup>2</sup>, Paris, France, 2014
- Fragments*, Galerie 22,48 m<sup>2</sup>, Paris, France, 2011

# Umut Yasat

Interview by Anne-Valérie Kirmann, June 2018

## Can you introduce us to your artistic practice and to the concept of *Der Stapel* (The Stack)?

I started my work on *Der Stapel* in 2014. I tied all my works together into a stack and began putting all the other work that I made afterward on top of that and tied it again. *Der Stapel* is a way to visualize time. I use the A4 size, I cut or fold my bigger works to fit. In 2017, I began to tie, not only my drawings, paintings and other works on paper into stacks, but also meaningful objects, sheets of paper from my analog and digital mailbox, or screenshots and snapshots. I see *Der Stapel* as one unique artwork, but for practical reasons I need to split it in small units that are called *Der Stapel 1*, *Der Stapel 2*... I work on each unit until it reaches my own height, including the handles and wheels, and then all parts are tightly bound together.

## "I will go on with this project until I die"

### When did you decide to dedicate yourself to *Der Stapel*? How did the idea form in your mind?

I decided to start my work on *Der Stapel* after my diploma exhibition at *Kunstakademie Karlsruhe* in 2014. I showed a series of drawings with which I tried to visualize time. After removing the frames and drawings from the walls I stacked the paperworks to ship them back to my studio. When they arrived, I opened the package and I had one of these "that moment". I felt that all I did until then was insignificant. My interests and working practices

b. 1988. Based in Karlsruhe, Germany.  
Umut Yasat studied in the *Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste* in Karlsruhe. His practice consists in binding personal objects and documents in pre-formatted stacks until they reach his own height.

Umut Yasat, *Der Stapel 4*, 2017 / aluminum, cotton, filler, foam, glue, leather, oil, ink, plastic, stainless steel, steel, wood / 176 x 45 x 44 cm.  
Courtesy Umut Yasat.



were to try to visualize time and I understood that I would not be able to solve these questions with paintings and drawings. I started to think about what kind of visual language I could use for my process and developed *Der Stapel*. Anything that I do becomes a layer of my work and I will go on with this project until I die.

**“Sitting in this cage gives me a freedom of creation and the necessary discipline to focus on my ideas”**

**Don't you feel insecure to have paved your way through your full existence?**

Well, I don't think that I paved my way through my existence, I just developed a structure for myself to handle all the different things that happened and will happen in life. I do not feel any insecurity in my working practice with *Der Stapel*, I am going through this journey knowing I am a human being with drives and emotions. Sitting in this cage gives me a freedom of creation and the necessary discipline to focus on my ideas.



Umut Yasat, *Der Stapel 13* (detail), 2018.  
Courtesy Umut Yasat.

**How do you choose the items you put in *Der Stapel*?**

The first two parts of *Der Stapel* included only works on paper and on canvas like drawings, paintings and prints. I covered all my works with materials like wood, textiles... The intent was not to hide them from the viewer, but to underline my process, which is not interested in the single work itself, but in the idea that

anything I do is just a layer of the whole thing. As a logical consequence I started to stack and bound anything that touches my life into *Der Stapel*, except decaying and moldy stuff, but I hope to manage that soon, too.



Umut Yasat, *Der Stapel 13* (detail), 2018.  
Courtesy Umut Yasat.

**In the context of our Abstraction & Architecture project, *Der Stapel* will be compared with tower buildings. *Der Stapel* can be seen as a series of constructions made of personal objects, but they differ from architectural constructions in their relationship with time. In a building, all the material used for the construction comes from the same period, even when some extensions or retrofits are made, you can always see a clear boundary between time periods. In *Der Stapel*, different periods of time are being mixed together, like in life where the past always interact with the present through our memories and experiences...**

I have been working on *Der Stapel* since 2014, so we're talking about a time period of 4 years. The first two years I only worked on *Der Stapel 1*. The production was very slow, because I had

to manage a lot of questions that developed through my working practice. At this time all the materials came from one time period, I think. With *Der Stapel 3* I started to live a very minimal life, anything that I needed to live fitted into my rucksack. I became very consequent in putting all my stuff into my artworks. You can see different time periods for example in *Der Stapel 5* when I also started to bind materials that I would typically have kept in a box, like clothes that I used to wear when I was a kid, photographs from my past, letters from friends, small objects that have a special meaning... I mixed them with everyday stuff, with drawings, paintings and prints from the present. That was one idea that accelerated the production of *Der Stapel*. I still have nostalgic items that are stored in my studio and waiting to become a layer in my work. I am looking forward to finish this process, to become synchronized again with the time period I live in, probably in two or three *Der Stapel*. I don't know if different time periods will be in one *Der Stapel* again, but I know that Humanity develops. Humanity stops the production of some items by law and starts the production of new stuff instead. As an example we can use the plastic fork. The EU will forbid them one day. When I am out and fill my stomach with Fast Food I use them. And I keep them for *Der Stapel*. When the plastic fork will be forbidden

and replaced by another fork, I know that I will eat my lunch with a new fork, keep it again and put it as a layer into *Der Stapel*. The *Der Stapel* that will contain both the plastic fork and the new one will show the viewer different time periods. [...] The difference in the building of *Der Stapel* and an architectural construction is that I do not sketch a *Der Stapel*, I do not build it with the materials determined by my thinking process. I live my life and take what life gives me.

**This fork story is quite interesting because it shows how the personal and the universal are bound together. It makes me think about Brie Ruais who uses her body as a starting point to go towards the universal. She puts her exact weight of clay in each of her work and each one of your *Der Stapel* piece has your own height! Do you relate to her practice?**

I love the idea in her working process, but I see differences in our practices. While she uses the variable weight of her body to form beautiful pieces of clay, I use my height to build up A4 stacks on wheels which contain items that are part of my life. I am more a chronicler than a maker. An artist who inspires me a lot is the franco-polish painter Roman Opalka who started his series *1965/1-∞* and counted numbers on canvas until he died in 2011. ■

#### Selected recent exhibitions

- Go Go*, 25m2 Gallery & Project Space, 's-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands, 2018
- Offene*, PrimaKunst, Kiel, Germany, 2017
- Vom Tragen und Stützen*, group show, Projektraum M54, Basel, Switzerland, 2016
- Was Tun mit der Zeit*, group show, Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany, 2016
- Hängung #3*, group show, Gerson Hoeger Galerie, Hamburg, Germany, 2016
- Kunstpreis Junger Westen*, group show, Kunsthalle, Recklinghausen, Germany, 2015



**Umut Yasat, *Der Stapel 13*, 2018** / aluminum, ballpoint-pen, cardboard, cotton, plaster, hemp, jute, felt-tip pen, leather, glass, paper, plastic, steel, stainless steel, air, lacquer, ink, glue, pencil, acrylic, wood, plexiglass, plush, felt, coffee, tea, milk, tobacco / 175 x 55 x 70 cm.  
Courtesy Umut Yasat.

# Frédéric Caillard

**For Abstract Room, Frédéric Caillard delves into his own practice and reflects on...**

## ...his *Monuments* series

"The works of this series have the shapes of famous monuments and architectural landmarks, which makes them very pop. Classical pop art was typically quite "cold", it was referencing industrial and mechanical production processes and had solid bright colors. The idea with the *Monuments* was to do something visually much warmer, using my technique that is derived from lyrical abstraction and that looks more organic."

## ...consumerism

"It is now common to justify consumer activities with an "authenticity" or "cultural" label. The famous monuments are at the forefront of this new type of cultural marketing. I think my *Monuments* series speaks to that. There is this layer of thick, rich and elaborate paint, which in some way represents the cultural and artistic

b. 1975. Based in Strasbourg, France.

Frédéric Caillard is an artist, curator and art critic. Intermediality is a central theme in his practice, which is also dedicated to the development of new forms of concrete abstraction.

aspects, and which cover a monument that is reduced to its emblematic two-dimensional silhouette, to its commercial brand."

## ...hybridization

"Hybridization has always been at the core of my practice. I like to pair different artistic categories with painting: architecture in the *Monuments*, music in the *Guitars* and the *Vinyls*, cinema in the *Screens* and the *Celluloids*, comics in the *Speech Bubbles*. The idea is to create unexpected visual languages by bringing together different sets of references which typically remain separate. I also like to combine artistic practices, mixing Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism or working on my oil paintings like if they were etching plates: I cover a dried paint layer with another color that I wipe. The new color remains in the holes and cracks, the underlying colors are polished, the contrasts are increased and the visual outcome looks halfway between an etching and a Richter-type painting. Surprisingly, this hybridization allows to get a better understanding of what paint is. You do not see the effects and the illusions that the paint typically produce but you see the paint itself.



Frédéric Caillard, *Sydney Opera II* (detail), 2018 / oil on acrylic / 17 x 36 cm. Courtesy Frédéric Caillard.



Frédéric Caillard, *Sydney Opera III*, 2018 / oil on acrylic / 17 x 36 cm.  
 Courtesy Frédéric Caillard.

The matter of the paint is revealed, its surface looks petrified and all the details that customarily remain unseen are exposed, like the small craters, the crevices..."

#### ...supportless paintings

"In the last few years, I have been doing a lot of research about the notion of *support* in contemporary painting. *Support* typically has three acceptations: it can be a structural support, a substrate or a communication vehicle. In classical painting, the structural support is the stretcher, the substrate is the canvas and the communication vehicle is the paint itself. I find the idea of supportless painting very interesting and I started to introduce it in my practice. I developed small *Screens* and *Speech Bubbles* only made of paint, around the ideas of substrate and of communication vehicle. They are fun pieces:

they represent communication supports but have no support. They may be seen as pure content or simply as supports with no content at all. They reflect on the confusion between the object and its representation, in reference to René Magritte's *La Trahison des images* ("Ceci n'est pas une pipe") or to Jasper John's work... When the *Abstraction & Architecture* project was developed, it made sense to start referring to the first acceptation of the word support. I made a few supportless *Monuments* to play with the idea of a building without an underlying structure. In representing the Sydney Opera House in a flat and supportless way, the walls and the utilitarian aspects of the building are abolished and the symbolic dimension of the monument is highlighted. It is another way to expose the prevalence of the brand in the architecture of monuments ." ■

#### Selected recent exhibitions

- Mur de Bulles*, Lieu d'Europe, Strasbourg, France, 2016
- /contours /détours*, Château de Bourgogne, Estaimpuis, Belgium, 2015
- Etats Seconds*, Etappenstall, Erstein, France, 2014
- Cinémas*, Pavé d'Orsay, Paris, France, 2014
- Europe – USA*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, 2013
- abstractions concrètes*, Gallery Gisela Muser, Kehl, Germany, 2011

# Monumental Memories

Essay by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

## Los Angeles - based art critic Hunter D.-Philp discusses Frédéric Caillard's *Monuments* and *Celluloids* series.

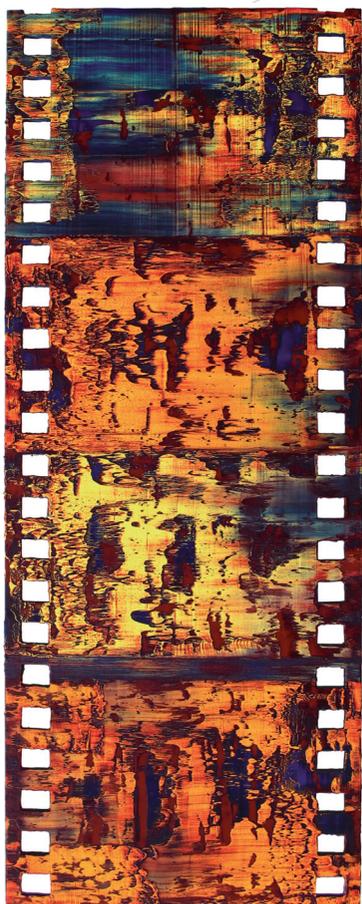
Three years after painting his 2008 series *Territories* — outlines of countries, islands, even individual states in America — Frédéric Caillard took on the topic of *Monuments*. *Strasbourg Cathedral*, *Sagrada Familia*, *Eiffel Tower*, his paintings of such monuments had been represented by many artists in previous centuries who depicted them realistically, rendered with the illusion of three dimensions

on a two-dimensional surface, usually a canvas. Caillard cast away such illusions in his art, making us question the illusion of purpose in monuments themselves. He reduces monuments to two-dimensional outlines, like pieces of a puzzle. He further flattens any literal significance by applying layers of paint, dragging each color across the surfaces of the wooden panels. The identifiable shapes become supports for broad luscious spreads of color.

When it came to Los Angeles, Caillard chose the Hollywood sign, a city monument that was already reduced to two-dimensions yet was as iconic a symbol as any edifice of brick or steel. In this decision, Caillard points to a shift from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a shift from solidity to immateriality, from concrete ideals to relative beliefs. The Hollywood sign, once advertising a real estate development, then becoming synonymous with the movie business, is itself a series of cut-out letters. Caillard's letters are covered in his unique paint technique. It connects to the Pop-era art of Ed Ruscha, one of the artists most associated with L.A. However, Caillard enlarges the word Hollywood to a scale and substance closer in keeping with the original.

Thinking of Hollywood's history may have led to Caillard's recent *Celluloid* paintings, elongated rectangular panels with sprocket holes along the sides emulating film strips. Film, that miraculous medium of 20<sup>th</sup> century dreams, is barely in use any more, an artifact of the past as much as monuments.

These facts are large for Caillard, who has worked as a film critic. In layering colors, wiping and adjusting his paint in grand strokes, Caillard is utilizing a technique that embraces both planning and spontaneity. The surfaces may be entirely abstract but meanings are conferred by the suggestive shapes. Caillard is bringing his own content to forms that are being emptied by passing time, appealing to both our nostalgic yearning for history and our search for sustenance in the present and future.



Frédéric Caillard, *Celluloid III*, 2013 / oil on shaped wood panel / 138 x 55 cm. Courtesy Frédéric Caillard.



Frédéric Caillard, *Statue of Liberty II*, 2014  
/ oil on shaped wood panel / 195 x 65 cm.  
Courtesy Frédéric Caillard.



Frédéric Caillard, *Empire State Building*, 2014  
/ oil on shaped wood panel / 205 x 60 cm.  
Courtesy Frédéric Caillard.

# Markus Linnenbrink

Interview by Frédéric Caillard, November 2017

## Can you tell us about the cuts, those thick layered paintings into which you literally dig trenches?

Yes, the *cuts* make up the latest body of work that I introduced in the last two years. They are similar to my *drill* pieces; it is the same procedure, the same process. The resin gets layered on a wooden support, and when the piece seems to be thick enough to do something with it, I think about the last color which is going to be the top layer. The layering gets built up to a thickness of about 3 cm, so a painting can become quite heavy, it gets almost sculptural.

About 10 years ago I had already done a group of pieces that were cut with a hand router, but at that point my focus shifted to another process. I also went outside the studio to use CNC machines (editor's note: Computer Numerical Control) to cut paintings, but I was not totally satisfied with the outcome, I had to work by hand and push a little further from what came out of the machines. I liked the end-result but I did not like the CNC process so much because I had to involve people to program and to run the machines, all very time consuming. On top of that, there was no way to interact with the piece once it was being processed by the machine as the predetermined program just runs through.

As I was thinking about how to use the router without a CNC machine, one of the carpenters I work with [...] told me he had this table with a router that gets pushed by compressed air. He offered to set it up for me in the studio with a compressor, two joysticks for directions and a foot pedal for up and down, and we tried it out. I have had it for about 2 years now and it is a very unique instrument to shape paintings.

It is industrial in a way but it is also a stone-age routing technique because the air does not give you the same kind of smooth cut as a CNC machine. It is a little bit like riding a bucking donkey. So you have things that can happen like the pressure of the air that pushes the router too far or too fast or in a direction that you did not anticipate, so you have to deal with the accident that the machinery provides and I find that very interesting. The process is in a sense like drawing with joysticks.

I like to explore the tools I have, their possibilities. The first group of cuts had a more organic drawing layout and lately I did a group with zigzag patterns. For the zigzags, it's like setting up a system and then the router/compressor has its own mind and adds mistakes and these fails become part of the piece that I have to react to in the rest of the process. I am now working on a few little pieces where the last layer is in different colors. I set the cuts where the colors meet and it gets really confusing because it is hard to identify where the top layer and where the cuts are. It becomes an exercise of precise viewing of the object that is in front of you.

## The cuts echo geology and archeology, with the visible strata of resin...

...Yes, layers and strata are things that pop up in life everywhere. Archeology is layers of lived lives and passed time on top of it. Which is what I create with my paintings. I put all these layers together and then I forget about them. One layer is reacting to the layer underneath, but ten layers before that is almost forgotten. In the end I create something that is also surprising me, even though I am the creator. [...]



Markus Linnenbrink, *WHOISGOINGTOSAVEMYSOUL*, 2017 / epoxy resin on wood / 46,44 x 247,68 cm.  
Courtesy Markus Linnenbrink.



Markus Linnenbrink,  
*BLACKWATER*, 2017 /  
epoxy resin on wood /  
30,96 x 30,96 cm.  
Courtesy Markus  
Linnenbrink.

**Is there any intended reference to art history in these paintings, because you are literally excavating paint?**

I don't know, the painting processes have always been about adding and subtracting, either with a brush, by scrapping paint off or by taking a rag and wiping it off. The *cuts* are an amplified version of these painting processes.

**We also find strata in your sculptures...**

...Yes, I work with epoxy resin and if you accumulate it, it gets so three-dimensional that you can actually make sculptures out of it. I have different groups of sculptures. Right now I am working on a sculpture where I use a soft translucent vinyl as a mold so I can see what the sculpture looks like while I am building it. It is like a soft bowl where I pour layers in and I will eventually take the vinyl away and get the pure resin sculpture. It is very interesting to see how it grows and expands into its final shape. The form is not predetermined but part of the layering process.

**In some of your sculptures, you also use resin that is recovered from your paintings?**

[...] I built those long containers that would catch what falls off on the bottom edge of the drip paintings. These sculptures are very close to the process of the drip paintings. They grow over two to five years in the studio and they become very heavy and, in a way, they represent the color memory of a certain period in my studio. The remnants create something that is very unique, that you can't create another way. These long skinny sculptures sit for years under the rotating paintings to catch the drips, if you would try to create them in a different way you would go crazy pouring mini amounts of resin over and over... That's not the way I work. I like to set-up a process where things are in motion - for example where gravity plays a role - and I just look at it, let it go and step away a little bit. It is questioning this form of genius authorship. Especially in painting, with "the unique and genius brushstroke"...

I also created another body of work with remnants. The drip paintings create things like puddles, so I was thinking that I could use those puddles as layers for paintings that I would later drill in or cut into. So I built armatures on the walls so drip paintings are not like before painted hanging right on the wall. This leaves enough space underneath to have another painting laid on a dolly and rolled around to recover the drips. In these paintings, I change the way I layer, I create blobs and pour into blobs and all kinds of stuff and in the end each layer has several colors, not only one color...

### **"I like to create visual overload"**

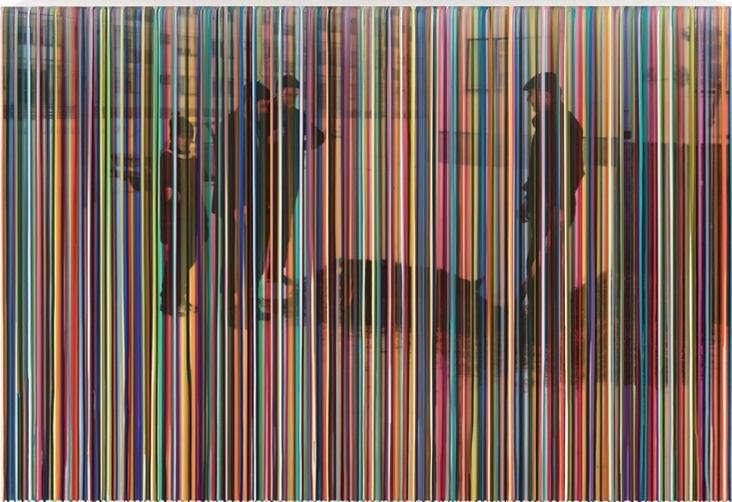
In the drill pieces, every drilled circle is a little painting on its own. I like to create visual overload, I like the idea that when you are confronted with something you have to carefully explore to really understand.

### **This recovery technique links all your paintings together...**

...Yes, I do a lot of different things, but there are a lot of connections. I develop them by paying attention at what is happening in the studio. Is there a next step available in the works themselves? Is something new disclosing itself? I have been painting for thirty years now, and it always needs to be interesting and exciting for me too. It is the same for the people who follow my work, so we all don't see the same thing over and over again. [...]

### **The memory of the past is very present in your work. Is your artistic practice nostalgic?**

I wouldn't say it is nostalgic at all but the aspect of time is very important. Time is crucial in our lives, the way we change over the years, what age means, and all of that... You cannot live without thinking and reflecting about it. Some of the best art in every genre is related to that. I had a body of work where I used actual little printed photos, before everything turned digital. I would look at the piles of printed photos that people used to have, younger people don't even remember that anymore. It was piles of personal history and memory. So I just started to take mine and assembled them, collaged them together and painted on top of them. When I got my studio here in New York, I met Anthony Accardi from Green Rhino who was able to do big prints from slides. He did photography for artists, back in the days he did a lot of photos for famous artists, he had a very flourishing business. The business is gone now because everybody has its own equipment. Anyway he started to make C-prints from little slides from my Dad's archives. My dad was traveling a lot, taking a lot of photos. So I took up a different way of painting on top of photos. All my larger pieces with images are from photos that my Dad took. And the time aspect popped up again. You would look at an image that was taken in Pakistan in the eighties, and how a personal work-related travel image becomes political over the 40 years of its existence.



**Markus Linnenbrink,**  
*PLEASE DON'T SAVE ME FROM THIS ONE,* 2014 / epoxy resin, c-print, and pigments on wood / 152,4 x 228,6 cm.  
Courtesy of Markus Linnenbrink.

Markus Linnenbrink,  
*HOLDME DOWN AFTER DAWN*,  
2016 / epoxy resin and pigments  
on wood / 121,9 x 121,9 cm.  
Courtesy Markus Linnenbrink.



There is a lot of ambiguity between the personal and the political, they are very connected, hard to distinguish. The drips running over these pieces create like the curtain of time that has passed since my dad pushed the trigger of his camera.

**Using the example of the Pakistan picture, how do you chose the color of the paint that is going to drip over it?**

It is a delicate process, how much you basically paint away and cover and how much you keep visible. How you accumulate a certain group of color. It is almost like creating a sound that goes with the slide. For those pieces I usually turn down the amount of pigment that I add to the resin to get more translucent lines running over the photo.

b. 1961 in Dortmund, Germany. Based in Brooklyn, New York.  
Markus Linnenbrink studied at the *Academy of Fine Arts* in Berlin. He uses colorful assortments of resins in his paintings, sculptures and immersive installations. He is represented in many private and public collections, including the SF MOMA, the Hammer museum and the Lobby of the Rockefeller Center.

**Do you try to be half-way between abstraction and representation?**

I don't think the division between representational and abstract is the most important way to analyze painting today, it's more about the handmade or mechanically created vs the digital image. How far handmade it is, how many hands are in it, the questions of authorship that are raised and so on.

**Let's also go back in the past of your artistic practice. You went to art school in Germany in the 1980s. Why did you decide to go to art school?**

I was fifteen and I had this very romantic idea of being an artist, and I had an art teacher who was supporting me a little bit. But the art schools I wanted to go to first did not want me. I was told I should become a decorator or an illustrator for children books, and I was like f\*\* you. I ended up in Kassel, they accepted me in the art school there. It was very little and not that great. It was close to the border with East Germany, so traffic and everything only goes in one direction. It was kind of boring for me. The only thing that saves Kassel is the documenta, every five years, but when I got there the documenta was just over... So after two or three years I changed to Berlin, but it was not a great art school back then either...



Markus Linnenbrink, *OTHERSIDE OF THE GAME*, 2012 / epoxy resin on wood / 61 x 152,4 cm.  
Courtesy Markus Linnenbrink.

**Tell us about your early work. What were you concerned by at the time?**

It was always material driven in a way. By the end, in Berlin, I made my own oil paint out of pigment, with a glass grinder on a piece of safety glass I found. The materiality of what I work with is a constant throughout my work. But it took me a while to get to the work I have been doing in the last 20 years. Art school is good to meet people, like-minded people, get connections, but it really gets interesting when you are on your own again. It is important to find out what is your own art making process, how it is connected to your life, how you can make it work, how you are going to pay the bills.

**How and when did your work crystallize into something significant? Were the drips your first major body of work?**

There have been other bodies of work before, I did a large group of oil paintings. I also worked a lot with bees wax, which is a beautiful material. I want to go back into this material as it has such a different surface quality. Now in my new studio I finally have the space for that.

**So when did you start to make your drip paintings?**

If I remember correctly it was in the early 90s. It is funny how things happen by accident. I had this gallerist that I did one show with, and her husband was a real estate developer. He knew a fabricator of epoxy resin and it was a relatively new type of material. He was wondering what

would happen if an artist worked with the resin. He was thinking it could develop into some kind of product. So for one summer I went in the laboratory of a company that manufactures resin, and I worked with people who had been working with this material forever. So we tried things, tested how much pigment we could add... The end result was a giant floor painting in the basement of the building. So I took this material to the studio to see what I could do with it. And then I did the first poured paintings, I had a lot of paint on the canvas and I added more and I just let the process define the final outcome of the painting. It was a nice liberation to create these very open pieces where the artists hand is involved but also taken back.

***“You take something very simple, you do it over and over and something very complex gradually develops”***

**Were Gene Davis or Morris Louis an inspiration of yours?**

I did not know Gene Davis before I had my first show in the US. He was not well known in Europe, he was not part of the books and museum canons. For Morris Louis, I knew the work, I thought the minimal abstraction movement was very cool, so there's definitely some influence. And also Sol Lewitt, especially for what I do when I work directly on walls. Sol Lewitt has a big impact as a groundbreaking artist here.

But I am not interested in patterns. The stripe paintings were a liberation from thought out compositions, the way they accumulate is more intuitive. I don't want to think about composition, I like to have something almost natural, I like to create something out of that simplicity. The way I started my signature wall paintings was basically utilizing the most basic gesture in painting, take a brush, very liquid paint and just make a horizontal mark, drips run down if the brush is saturated. So you have the horizontal and the vertical at the same time, it is almost like weaving. You take something very simple, you do it over and over and something very complex gradually develops through this repetition.

**Complexity from simplicity!**

Yes totally, if you have some patience.

**There has been many people producing strip artwork recently. You can find strip paintings in every art fair, from stars like Gerhard Richter to obscure artists. That was not the case 20 years ago. What do you think about that?**

We have a huge amount of young people that push into the art, more than ever. In the sixties,

in New York, everybody knew each other in the art scene. Today in Bushwick, Brooklyn where my studio is, you can throw a stone and hit an artist! The way the system works is that if you can pay the art school you can get an art education, and schools are run as a private businesses, they do not care how many artists they produce. But then most of these people end up in some jobs somewhere. I can only guess but with everything being so easily available, people pick up things that are kind of easy, they find the mark making process cool and want to make it their own. But to truly make something your own takes some work and time and not just a copy and paste.

**Your work can be seen as an accumulation of color drips, of colored layers, or of colored drills. You are doing visual accumulations without objects...**

...The goal is that you cannot decipher the work at first glance. I like to think about it as an offer or opportunity for the human eye to be mesmerized but also to be challenged. People can live with it for a long time without letting go or being bored. The dialogue of color is what drives my work. [...]



Markus Linnenbrink, *THEREAIN'TNOEASYWAYOUT*, 2017 / wall painting at Maurizio Caldirola Arte Contemporanea, Monza, Italy. Courtesy Markus Linnenbrink.

If you go back in history the painters that do it the best are the most fascinating. You could argue that it is too much and that I give too much information, but the energy of color translates into something that is physical – I saw it again in Italy at the opening of my *wallpainting* installation and many times before. People go to galleries and museums knowing they are not allowed to touch. But the work creates an impulse, the hand needs to verify what the eye is seeing. That impulse is initially stronger than the thought process. And that is a very interesting moment: it is when art works, when it lifts you up, when your eyes widen... And then you can come down from that sensation and use your intellect and ask yourself: what did just happened? Then you analyze, rethink and enjoy again. [...]

**You also accumulate letters in your titles, which are phrases with no space between words. Can you tell us why the words are attached and how you come up with these titles?**

Yes, it is an analogy of what I try to do in my paintings, you have to find the sense in it. To give a title makes the pieces more personal, versus giving them numbers. Lots of these titles come from music, what I listen to while I make the painting, and I combine these titles from songs but also things I pick up on the subway... The sound analogy to what I do is pretty obvious too. In a way you have a certain sound when the work comes together, it is very similar to music. You have to keep looking at the painting, you have to keep listening to the music, one single chord is not the song. [...] I see the work that I do as an offer. You can walk away, that's fine, or you can start thinking about lots of

things and the title might push you in a direction and open some kind of imagery in your own head that might be different from mine. And that's where the Abstract Room idea comes in, what the viewer gets out from my work depends on how far he wants to go in.

**In your titles and in your paintings there are no real voids, no blanks. Sometimes you can see behind the top layer, but there is another layer of work. You seem to hate voids?**

Yes, that's true, you can say it like that! Every square centimeter carries information, there is no part of the painting that is not important, but I would not overestimate it either. I did this wall painting in Italy last week, and the gallerist witnessed the process and he had an idea: basically even in a big room like that, you can take a frame the size of a regular letter and move it across the wall, you always have a complete painting. Every little aspect of it makes sense.

**And you made some works on paper out of this experience, which confirms that your works often have a strong link between them... One last question: in which direction are you working right now?**

I like to allow myself to walk spirals up and down, so revisiting things of my personal history of painting is always an option. Right now I think there is more potential in the cut pieces, and as I told you I would like to go back to encaustic/bees wax. I also got myself a kiln in my new space, and I am doing ceramics, and that's something I wanted to do for a long time. I am working on free standing ceramics and wall pieces for my next shows. ■

#### Selected recent exhibitions

*THEREAINO EASYWAYOUT*, Maurizio Caldirola Gallery, Monza, Italy, 2017  
*SUNANDWATER*, Patricia Sweetow Gallery, Oakland, CA, 2017  
*HOWCANISLEEPWITHROCKSINMYBED*, Ameringer McEnery Yohe Gallery, New York, NY, 2016  
*THEFIRSTONEISCRAZYANDTHESECONDONEISNUTS*, Wasserman Projects, Detroit, MI, 2015  
*WHENTHEPASTWASPRESENTSOWILLBENOW*, taubert contemporary, Berlin, Germany, 2015  
*THEGRASSISALWAYS GREENER*, Galleria Max Estrella, Madrid, Spain, 2015



# tools & materials

# Evan Roberts

Interview by Frédéric Caillard, June 2018

## How did you get to work with material related to building maintenance?

I used to work for an independent contractor in New York City doing demolition and renovation work. Around 2009, I transitioned into a job as a superintendent where I was doing a lot of building maintenance for a dilapidated apartment in a gentrifying neighborhood. The landscape, neighborhood community & history and my own labor— painting, mopping twice a week, working on scaffolding, working with hoses, maintaining a backyard and a sidewalk— all came to fascinate me. Those materials and movements remained like memories in my muscles and started coming out in my practice.

## There is an interesting contradiction in your Mop paintings. Mops are supposed to clean, but in your work they leave some traces, some marks.

In the making of these works I'm walking over tiles and re-enacting the performance of janitorial work: scrubbing, pushing, and dragging a mop in a vain attempt at sterilizing

something that can't be cleaned. These works speak to menial labor, frustration and social failure, but in another sense they are a celebration of the formal quality of brushstrokes.



Evan Roberts, *Untitled, Tenant*, 2017 / hydrocal plaster, vinyl tile on wood panel / 152,4 x 121,9 x 4,1 cm. Photo Tim Schutsky.



Evan Roberts, *Untitled, Tenant*, 2016 / hydrocal plaster, vinyl tile on wood panel / 152,4 x 121,9 x 4,1 cm. Photo Tim Schutsky.

**And the failure is rendered visually by the surface looking dirtier after it was mopped! [...] The Mop paintings are made on tiled panels. There is a global image continuity over the tiles, but yet the tile separations can be seen. It seems to imply that continuity is not natural...**

That's correct: the gridded substrate reinforces the notion of equality and order, all of which is compromised when a brush stroke is applied blurring those divisions. The separations between each tile may at certain points disrupt the gesture, catching debris, cracking, creating bubbles and pools of plaster. The continuity of the brushstroke doesn't always result in a seamless movement; it may bead, disintegrate, or get stepped on. Continuity is not natural, it's an illusion, an ideal of perfection that lacks personality.

The idea of compartments is present in your *Mop* paintings but also in your *Scaffold* series and *Chain Links* works.

Compartmentalized space can be played with, broken or respected, which has obvious political undertones. [...] The chain link is a utilitarian boundary. It restricts someone from going from one space to another and calls into question property and social control. The balls connote youth, a point in most people lives where they are free to believe in anything, move freely and take chances. The final product is a filter of sorts, catching the artifacts of youth, reminding us of the reality of growing up, how dreams die, and the pressure of conforming to social norms.



Evan Roberts, *Recess no.2*, 2013 / found balls in chain link gate / 152,4 x 96,5 x 10,2 cm. Photo Richie Talboy.

In another body of work, you have basketballs literally imprisoned in a metal structure.

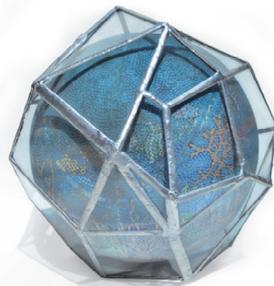
Much of my earlier work focused on the restriction of movement and mobility, particularly with youth and nostalgia. These particular sculptures were a starting point for

me. I collected discarded basketballs, stuffed them with foam and encased them in glass by soldering a shell around the ball. The result looked like a molecule of sorts. It was also the first time I had worked with glass, which has stayed with me.

**“...being bound to an idea stifles exploration and vulnerability”**

In your *Water Hoses* series, hoses are paired with sheets of glass. The hoses appear to be free floating at first sight but they are actually constrained, with anchor points and fixed passages. It is unusual to put the idea of constraint in perspective with the concept of transparency.

I have a way of playing with contradictions, like the mop that cleans but the outcome is dirty. I work with qualities which are at opposite ends of the spectrum: in the glass-and-hose-works, one is an elastic material and one very fragile. The history of that body of work comes from the relationship I had with tenants in the building I cared for as a superintendent. Conversations between us were generally uncomfortable, and the only times we ever spoke was when they needed something to be fixed. The glass personifies an invisible boundary that prevented me from connecting with them as a friend or equal. In a utilitarian sense, the hose is a vessel for the transition of water and a penetrating force that carries information from one side to the other. It is the ability to communicate and it is language, malleable and slippery. In these works, I wanted to give shape to the conversations we had and the underlying tensions that were there as a segue to the topic of gentrification unfolding in that neighborhood.



Evan Roberts, *Hoop Dreams*, 2012 / found Basketball, glass, solder / 27,9 cm round. Photo Peter Vahan.

**You have described the hoses as drawing lines. There are also clear expressionist brushstrokes references in your Mop paintings. What is the relationship of your work to art history?**

Art history is a cornerstone for me. Abstract Expressionism, Modernism, Arte Povera, Earth Art, Performance Art all push and pull me. In this sense it's also been my biggest hurdle. Much of my practice is my trying to break away from where art history has left me and my inevitable failure trying to reinvent this wheel. Referencing my personal history has become a starting point in this process, which has led to more successful moments of formal invention and ingenuity. To be fair, the *Mop* paintings are the least successful in this sense as I have uncovered many Eastern artists whose brush and calligraphic work predate particular movements I employ. That being said, what sets the *Mop* paintings apart is the context. The act of mopping is rooted in the performance of

labor and speaks to a particular socioeconomic demographic. The final product is ultimately an artifact of that ritual.

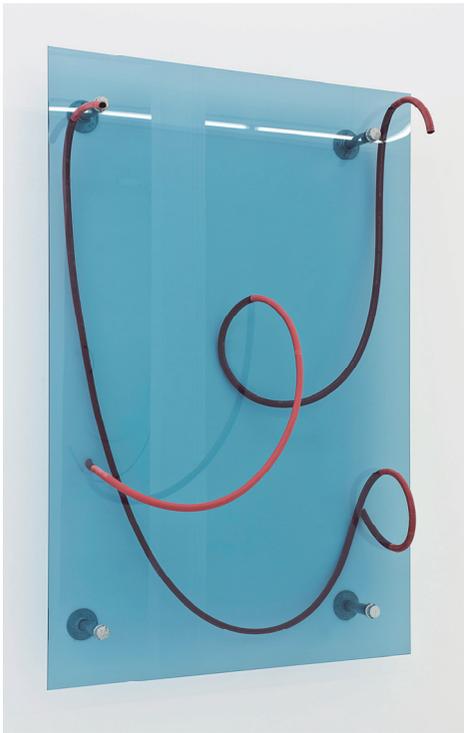
**I was wondering how your creative process is sequenced. Do you have an idea first and you try to shape it visually, or does the material come first and the ideas and messages are grafted on top?**

I have overarching ideas for my work, like memory, youth, nostalgia, labor, urban ephemera, broader socio-economic issues that are unfolding here in the US, but there isn't a methodology or equation for me. Sometimes there's an idea, but it is very subtle and malleable. Other times the idea is hidden, and I need to search for it by physically tumbling creative energy around in the studio. Then there are times where ideas come like a download: I see the work completed in my mind and I need to figure out what the work means to me, which can be complicated but also profound. On the other end of the spectrum, it's very healthy and challenging to commit to a solid idea and develop a pointed critique of sorts. Working from your left to right brain seems to be an industry standard, but I caution artists who only embrace this approach. In my experience, being bound to an idea stifles exploration and vulnerability. Because my work is material driven, I tend to lean on intuition, chance, mistakes, and failure as a vehicle that drives the art. It's a process of letting go and remembering, allowing yourself to forget your idea and then come back to it in a new meaningful way.

***"...there is a part of my practice that needs to exist in the unknown so I can find it"***

A lot of your works is based on material that comes from building maintenance. By definition, maintenance activities try to fight the effect of time but time ends-up winning in the long-term, maintenance is always behind.

Yes, it is a losing battle; there's no building I know of ahead of that curve — it all seems to be a failed attempt at catching up. The repetition of building maintenance chronicles the passing of time and speaks to a broader conversation of life and death. There is beauty in that failure, very human, it resonates in me in a very fundamental way.



**Evan Roberts, *Release*, 2015 / hose, glass, steel hardware / 182,9 x 121,9 x 38,1 cm.**  
Photo The Hole Gallery.

**Do you see your work as being about passing time and decay?**

Decay, entropy, death come up as a way to explore time and the ephemeral. I have a strong desire to revisit my childhood and hold onto particular moments. I am fascinated by the way history molds us and how memories stick around long after the experience ends. That desire epitomizes my research into youth.

Perhaps somebody speaking about my work in the future might be able to use passing time as an umbrella theme but I see time as a dimension I am caught in, like in a web. And in the end, I think I don't want to know my grander motive. If I were to know, my work wouldn't be what it is. I think that there is a part of my practice that needs to exist in the unknown so I can find it for myself. ■



**Evan Robarts**, Installation View of *Super Reliable* at Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery, 2016.  
Photo Tim Schutsky.

**Selected recent exhibitions**

- See The Moon?*, group show, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn NY, 2017
- Setting*, Curated by *Auto Body*, Post-Morrow Foundation, Brookhaven NY, 2017
- A bright cold day in April*, Berthold Pott, Cologne DE, 2017
- Super Reliable*, Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery, New York NY, 2016
- Overtime*, Galerie Jeanroch Dard, Brussels BE, 2015
- Run of the Mill*, The Hole, New York NY, 2015

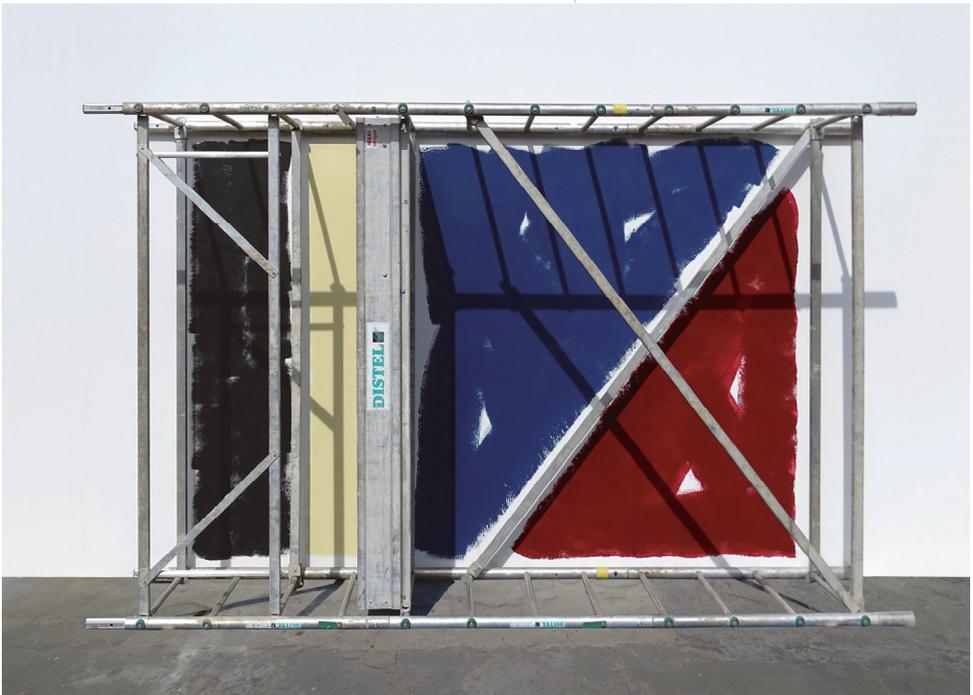
# Evan Roberts: Mondrian 3.0

Essay by Frédéric Caillard, August 2018

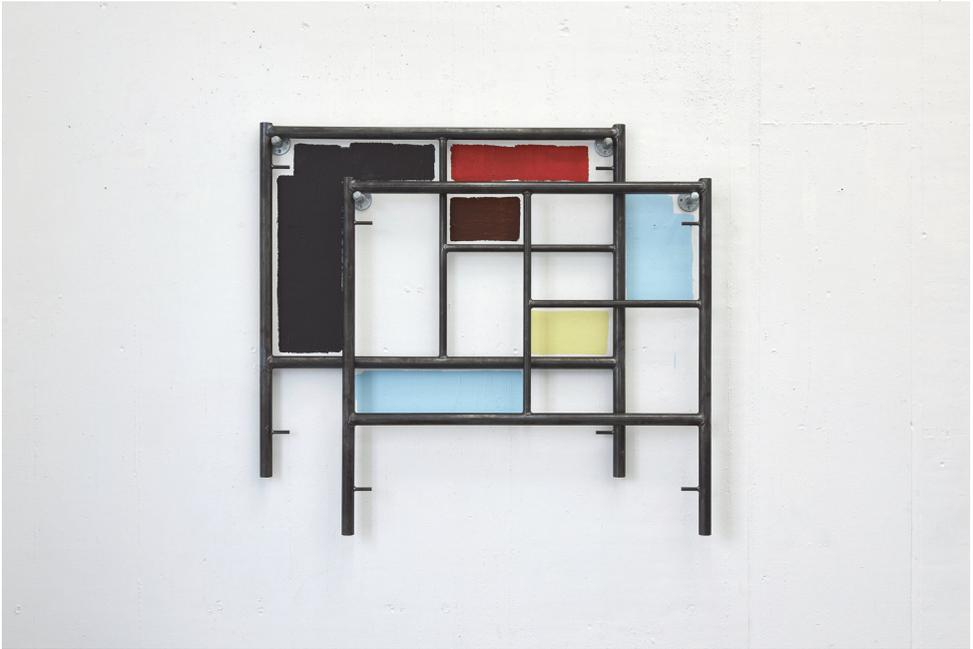
**Frédéric Caillard examines the ins and outs of Evan Roberts signature Scaffold works.**

Towards the end of his career, Mondrian's abstractions became more rigid and started to reference New York City's architecture. 75 years later, Evan Roberts, who lives and works in the Big Apple, is probably interested in what happened to those magnificent buildings that inspired Mondrian. It is not their geometric silhouettes nor their grid layouts that must retain Evan Roberts' attention, but rather their long route into decay, the efforts they need to be maintained - for example by scaffolding them up and refreshing their paint. This is why under Roberts, Mondrian's lines turn into scaffold poles and platforms. The poles and platforms are not placed on a canvas, but in front of an actual wall. They delimit wall sections, which are - like in Mondrian's canvases - painted or left blank, with a fuzzy or solid edge.

The artistic idea is not a mere update of Mondrian's practice, it is full of wit. Already long before his New York time, Mondrian drew his abstract compositions from real life elements, such as trees or building façades<sup>1</sup>. With his scaffold works, Roberts retrieves Mondrian's paintings from the abstract sphere and brings them back into three dimensional reality. It also transforms what is typically a painting tool (the scaffold) into a full-blown artistic media. The tool becomes embedded into the artwork, it dialogs with the underlying mural paint and provides a comprehensive visual package that encompasses both the making of the work and the finished work. The juxtaposition of the scaffold and the wall painting also questions the widely debated oppositions between artistic & commercial painting. The scaffolds can be



**Evan Roberts, 927 Lincoln Road, 2018 / scaffold and wall painting / ~200 x 300 cm.**  
Courtesy Evan Roberts.



**Evan Robarts**, Installation view of *A bright cold day in April* at Berthold Pott Gallery, Cologne, 2017. Courtesy Berthold Pott Gallery, Cologne, 2017. Photo Mareike Tocha.

seen as the overarching commercial forces that not only shape today's art (by imposing the wall painting structure), but also stand between the art and the viewer, filtering the reception of the artworks. Another much discussed opposition - between handmade and industrial production - is addressed in the making of the *Scaffold* works. Robarts now and then applies the wall colors himself, but also happens to delegate the painting job, brilliantly blurring the line between the two production modes.

But one of the most important aspect of the *Scaffold* series is its social underlying. The used scaffolds, which bear impact marks and stains, obviously carry the history of renovated neighborhoods and of workers who sweated on them. When Robarts chooses to place his scaffold in front of a white gallery wall, he stages a confrontation of social classes: the working class vs. the upper class, the construction workers who built the luxurious high-rises that inspired Mondrian vs. their rich inhabitants who collect art. Can abstract art be disconnected from reality? Robarts answer is quite clear: there is no such thing as *pure* art. The people and their memory are here to haunt any attempt to put them aside. Even Mondrian's iconic position cannot hold. ■

bb. 1982 in Miami Beach, Florida. Based in New York City.

Evan Robarts holds a BFA in Sculpture from *Pratt Institute*. He references labor, social issues and art history in his pieces that are often inspired by building maintenance activities.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that one of the title of a 1914 Mondrian painting - as found in the French edition of the Phaidon monography by John Milner - directly references scaffolds: *Composition n°9 (échafaudage)*.

# Benjamin Sabatier

Interview by Dorothée Deyries-Henry, June 2018

**When we last met, you showed me a very early work of yours - an abstract painting from 2003. The work is made of 2000 pins and includes instructions for the collector to assemble them on his wall in a *Do It Yourself* way. In its form and in its title (*Collection Pointillisme Abstrait*), the work is thought in relationship to abstract painting and art history. It also originates in the interest you had at the time for the economic and commercial aspects of art objects. Is your shift towards materials and materiality a way to leave abstraction behind (as well as the commercial, even decorative function that is often associated with abstract painting) or a way to redefine the notion of abstraction?**

I believe the main force of Abstraction is that it shifted focus from the *subject* towards the *means of execution*. Figuration is mainly about the subject (what to paint?), whereas Abstraction focuses on materials and processes (how to paint?). If we think about it, what we call "abstract" today should be called "concrete". There's nothing more concrete than traces of tools in materials ... even if forms are non-figurative...

Regarding my work on kit pieces, it is also interesting to come back to the original meaning of *Abstraction* which implies a certain distance from reality. In philosophy, *Abstraction* is an operation where the mind isolates a quality from a concrete object to form a conceptual representation. My kit pieces question the commercial dimension that is embedded in all artworks, in a critical and humorous way. There is nothing more abstract than money... I have started IBK (International Benjamin's Kit) in 2001. At first, I created an abstract picture with colorful pins on a studio wall. The pins were like Duchamp's Ready-Mades. And through their repetition and their juxtaposition, they became industrialized keys of color, a kind of pointillism in the manner of George Seurat: post-modern pointillism. Being an in-situ piece, the work had to be reproduced to be moved. Referencing Ikea, I proposed the work in a kit and I created multilingual editing systems and tools to assemble it easily. Very quickly, the reproduction system appeared way more interesting to me than the object itself.

## Selected recent exhibitions

*Access to tools / Work in progress*, Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris, France, 2018

*Wandlung*, The Grass Is Greener Gallery, Leipzig, Germany, 2017

*Mode d'emploi*, Galerie Catherine Issert, Saint Paul de Vence, France, 2016

*FORMWORK*, snap.projects, Lyon, France, 2015

*Storage*, Galerie Jousse Entreprise, Paris, France, 2014

*Hard Work*, Galerie Jérôme de Noirmont, Paris, France, 2012



**Benjamin Sabatier, *Untitled*, 2018 / concrete and metal bolts / 51 x 51 x 12 cm.**  
Courtesy Benjamin Sabatier & Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris.

The kits propose several models. It shows that the works are interchangeable and points out their value as a merchandise. More than a brand, IBK is an artwork in itself, a concept that can be understood as a cynical vision of the work of art in the age of globalized economy. It asks the questions "What's an artist?" and "What's a work of art?" in a society controlled by a liberal economy. Moreover, the pictorial forms come as much from the history of abstract art as from the logos of companies and multinationals. The visual vocabulary I use in IBK integrates and plays with the principles of geometric abstraction, corporate design and interior decoration. It also creates a continuity - with the cold appearance of the keys, the garish colors - between Mondrian, Neoplasticism, the Bauhaus aesthetics and Op Art.

**One of the works you will show in the Abstraction & Architecture exhibition is a cement bag screwed on a wall. The materiality of this work is connected to construction materials and thus to architecture. Where does your interest in architecture come from?**

My relationship to architecture goes back to my family history, and it is linked to questions of autonomy and education. In the 1980s, my parents (who were former students of Claude Viallat at the *Beaux Arts* of Marseille in the late 1960s) bought an abandoned farmhouse in Haute-Loire. With my family, we spent almost all of our vacations renovating it. For more than fifteen years we were improvised carpenters, roofers, bricklayers, plasterers, welders, electricians... Sometimes even lumberjacks. The most difficult thing was to carry stones and pieces of rocks, which we piled up and interlocked the best we could to build dry stone walls. We drew a form of satisfaction and even sometimes some pleasure from the physical work. We acquired a lot of knowledge.

b. 1977 in Le Mans, France. Based in Paris, France.

Benjamin Sabatier studied Visual Arts in the *University of Rennes*. He works with construction materials and tools and is currently a teacher in *The Panthéon - Sorbonne University* in Paris.

We were not far from Ivan Illich theories on education: to gain autonomy and independence through the acquisition of practical knowledge. We learned from materials, we discovered the limits and possibilities of materials, which are a great starting point for creative imagination. In Homer's world, Paris and Ulysses work to build their home. "This is the autonomy of the Homeric hero, his independence, the free supremacy of his person," wrote Hannah Arendt. This is all related to a concrete utopia: the appropriation and the transformation of the world around us with our hands. *Self-construction* - the practice of building one's own home - liberates people from multiple subordinations created by the consumer society. By substituting himself to building professionals, the self-builder responds to the ideal of autonomy conveyed by the counter-cultural society.



**Benjamin Sabatier, *Untitled*, 2017 / concrete and metal / 66 x 40 x 6 cm.**

Courtesy Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris.

On a similar level, today's artists must gain their independence from the growing influence of capitalist values. There is a need to reconsider the dichotomy between thinking and doing and to put back the artist's (and the work's) autonomy at the center of the debate.



**Benjamin Sabatier, *Untitled*, 2018 / concrete and metal bolt / 54 x 54 x 12 cm.**  
Courtesy Benjamin Sabatier & Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris.

**The work looks like a pillow or even, according to you, an anthropomorphic form, which links the object to furniture, to the body and to ideas that the object can convey, as if thoughts materialized here in action and in a concrete form...**

...The dichotomy between the weight of the materials and the feeling of lightness is recurrent in my recent pieces. I play with materials using a container vs. contents approach. In this work, concrete keeps the

**“Creation today lies in [the] gap between the idea and the result”**

imprint of its disappeared container. It is its own weight and the force of attraction that shapes it. It gives an impression of lightness, the bag seems to have turned into a cushion and the perception is that it is held on the wall by stems. I like to use oppositions and to reverse the balance of power: heaviness vs. lightness, strength vs. fragility.

This artwork can rather be attributed to its materials than to its maker. My role was only to put the raw material at work - by simple games

of thrust, crush, and spill - on a supporting and deforming tool. The artist's gesture disappears in favor of tools and materials alone, playing on their plasticity, strength and their intrinsic weight.

The title of one of my exhibitions, *Reinforced Concrete*, reflects the articulation between materiality and the referential character of my works. It has a double meaning: *Reinforced Objectivity*, and, more literally, *Fortified Cement*. It bears the idea of a hard, raw art, where materials and processes are visible. At the same time, it critically refers to principles set out in the Manifesto of Concrete Art of 1930, where the work of art “had to be fully conceived and formed by the spirit before its execution and should receive nothing from nature’s or sensuality’s or sentimentality’s formal data”... For me, creation today precisely lies in this gap between the idea and the result, between the project and the object. That is to say that creation lies in working time. Whether work is effective, represented or symbolized by materials, gestures, forms or figures, my practice brings to light an “aesthetic of toil” and reinvests reality. ■



**Benjamin Sabatier, *Tréteaux I, II, III*, 2012 / wooden trestles and concrete / 103 x 59 x 59 cm (each).**  
Courtesy Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris.

# Vincent Mauger



Vincent Mauger, *Untitled*, 2016 / assembled polished bricks / variable dimensions.  
Courtesy Vincent Mauger & Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris.

## Selected recent exhibitions

*Monument Synthétique*, Caves de la Maison Ackerman, Saint Hilaire Saint Florent, France, 2016

*Les injonctions paradoxales*, Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris, France, 2016

*Présence stratégique*, Les Champs libres (40mcube), Rennes, France, 2014

*Résolution des forces en présence*, Le Voyage à Nantes, Nantes, France, 2014

*Système adéquat*, la maison rouge - Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Paris, France, 2013

*Super Asymmetry*, La Maréchalerie, Versailles, France, 2012

# The Architecture of the Mind

Essay by Léa Chauvel-Lévy, July 2018

## Art Critic and Artistic Residence Director Léa Chauvel-Lévy gets into Vincent Mauger's mind to decipher his practice.

The architected spaces of Vincent Mauger operate like projection grounds: his own ground - the alveolae acting as the cells of his mental space - but also other's, who can dive in and explore the human mind. It is a form of duality between architecture and biology that is exposed in his works, the embodiment of thoughts into actions. These metastructures reveal - with no filter - the journey of their creator. Metal, tiles, wood, glass, materials are diverted from their original purpose. It is the case of the bricks that typically constitute the foundations of buildings and that are then

symbolic aura from the strategic positioning of the work at its entry.

Vincent Mauger's monumental in situ installation in the Chapelle des Calvairiennes in Mayennes is in this regard typical of the contamination of space by imagination. The floor, covered with thousands of bricks, offers a new landscape. The bricks shape hills and mounts and invite to abstraction. But the main strength of this work is to introduce nature in a sacred place, to assert a chiasma between two ideas: the religious institution and the secular world. A second variation of the same piece was made for La Maréchalerie Art Center in Versailles. But the bricks were this time laid out so that they would open onto abysses. No more mounts nor hills, but craters, chasms and breaches. The status of the reenacted space is changing, the visitors standing insecure on unstable grounds. The architectures of the places taken over by Vincent Mauger are inevitably altered, and gain a new nature, every single time. Like these polystyrene elements which grow from a balcony. Or like these bottle cases which fully cover a ceiling.

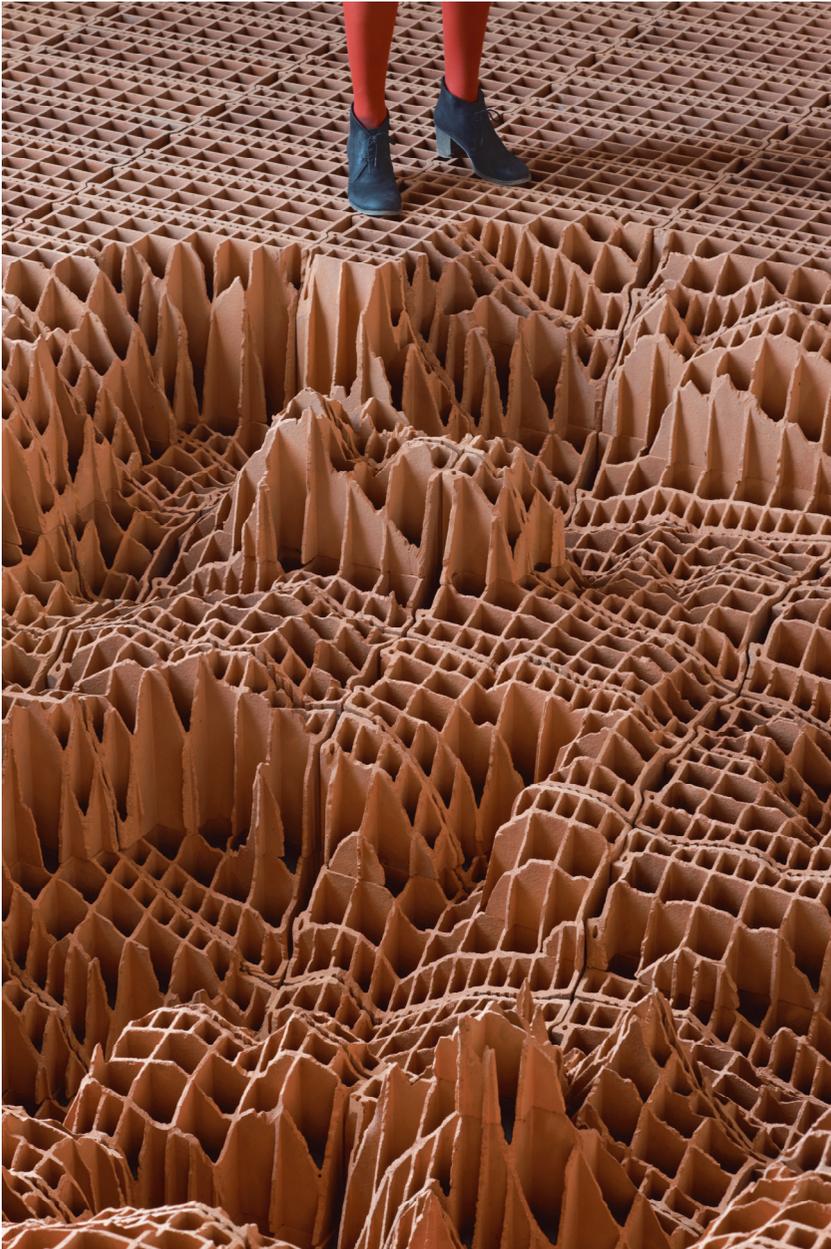
Vincent Mauger's works restructure spaces, contaminate them, like a swarm of bees that take on a chimney. They are organic extensions of architectures, but are fascinatingly made of materials associated with construction. The piece shown by Abstract Room wonderfully exemplifies this: it circumvents the linear edges typically associated with the bricks grammar and grants plasticity and flexibility to the notion of rigidity. It challenges architecture in order to bend it, twist it and play with it. Product of the human mind, architecture is here contemplated under its most conceptual angle. ■

### **"...the contamination of space by imagination"**

covered or overlaid. With Vincent Mauger, the bricks are *accentuated*, propelled on the front stage. They *are* the artwork, and at the same time they illustrate the train of thoughts of the artist as it develops. We can postulate to be facing an extension of the cerebral realm of the artist. Like these aluminum and stainless steel tubes and flakes, standing like soldiers before an entrance door and expressing the anxiety towards the unknown. What will we find behind this door? Thousands of questions come to mind before entering this space, that is at the same time closed and open and that earns a

b. 1977 in Rennes, France. Based in Nantes, France.

Vincent Mauger studied at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Angers and Paris. He uses low-grade materials to develop mental topographic landscapes in his sculptures and in-situ installations.



Vincent Mauger, *Sans titre*, 2012 / site-specific installation for the solo exhibition *Super Asymmetry* La Maréchalerie Art Center, Versailles / brick height 1,20 m, floor area ~120 m<sup>2</sup>.  
Courtesy Vincent Mauger & briqueterie Bouyer-Leroux (la Séguinière). Photo Aurélien Mole.

# Christine Liebich

Interview by Frédéric Caillard, November 2017

**I would like to start this interview by discussing your latest body of work, that is made of concrete and metal rebars. How and when did you start these works?**

I am actually a painter, I studied painting in Munich. I got a difficult hand surgery about 4 years ago, and I could not move my hands nor paint. So I started to think about painting in a different way. I tried out lots of materials, and in the end I found that concrete and metal were perfect for me. At the beginning I did not realize all the possibilities offered by these materials, but I discovered little by little that I could structure them and deal with them in many different ways. The first year I made a lot of prototypes, and then I started producing some actual concrete and metal works. It has been about 3 years.

I also tried out wood, clay and a lot of modeling materials, and I made a series out of burned canvases and wood. I actually started this series by painting pictures of bigger size, about 2 or 3 meters. It was easier for me to work with bigger brushes, but in the end I was not satisfied, something was missing and I was unable to close the gap with my older work. Then I introduced physical objects such as found wood to complete the works. In some way, I destroyed these works, loosening their structure and making them dirty. In some aspects I liked those paintings, but the possibilities weren't so interesting so I stopped working on them and focused on the concrete and metal works.

**Was there any reference to the loose canvases of Angela de la Cruz? She also suffered from an accident which impeded her ability to produce art.**

I don't think I specifically referenced her work. I have always been interested in artist biographies, I like to understand what they are dealing with, how they transfer their problems into their work, but I don't identify myself to a single artist or a single story.

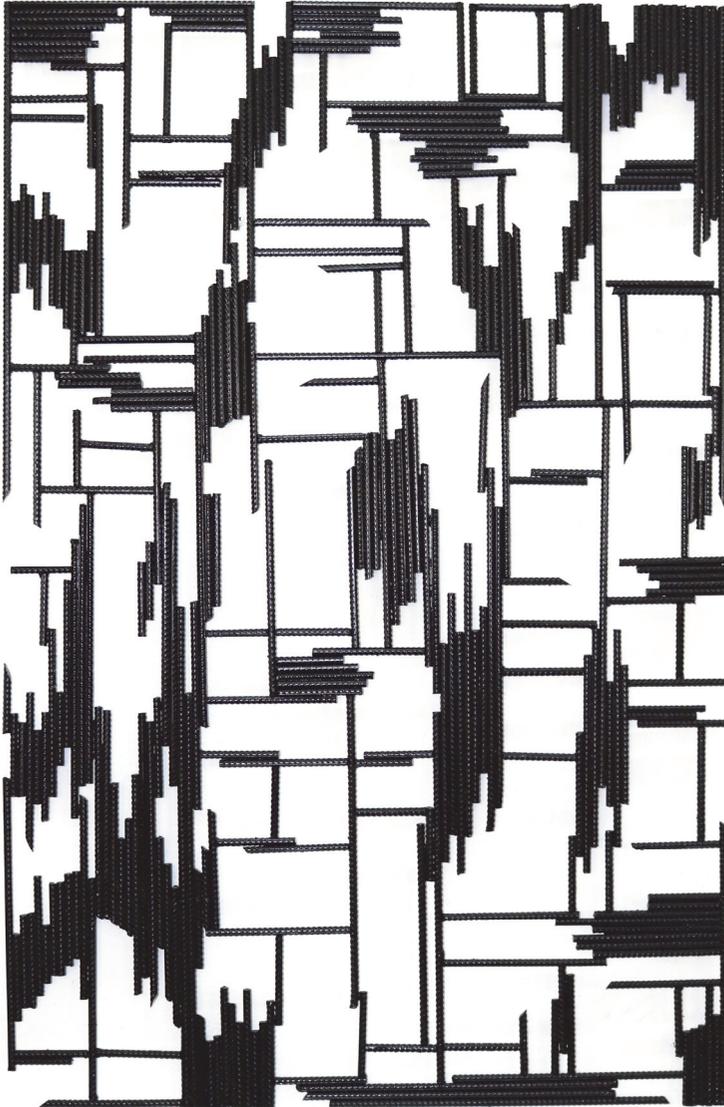
**What is striking with your concrete and metal works is that they are very varied in aspect. Can you tell us about the way you**

**use color? You seem to be steering away from flashy gradient colors towards more solid colors and recently also towards no color at all, leaving the material raw?**

I am very touched by the things I see, I am always exchanging with my direct surroundings. I had a period where I was moving a lot, seeing lots of different towns, so I got a lot of new impressions, especially with lights and dark cities. I tried to use those impressions in my work. The new works are without colors because I am more interested now by the shape and the surface of the work. I am working on a form that is reduced, that is more material. It is a new level in my work, you can do a lot with the material itself, the concrete, you can influence its consistency, with more water, less stone, more cement, less cement. It is like color mixing with the material itself. I do not need any color to make it colorful, to put a dynamic into it, because the material itself can make it.



Christine Liebich, *Rem*, 2016 / cement steel laquer / 68 x 52 cm. Courtesy Christine Liebich.



Christine Liebich, *Dark Knight (10)*, 2018 / structural steel, lacquer / 120 x 80 cm.  
Courtesy Christine Liebich.

**The gradient and flashy colors are reminiscent of sci-fi environments.**

Sure there are. I am always interested in the structure of societies, how they are developing, about the fact that societies are stable and unstable at the same time. On one hand you have this heavy material – the concrete – that you can see anywhere you go, in every city around the world, and on the other hand you have this totally colorful surface that is just like a cosmos. The existence of both of these aspects at the same time is very interesting for me. At the same time it is there and it is not there, it is closed and it is opened. It is about dualism.

**Do you mean that those works are grounded in our times with the concrete and open into the future with the sci-fi colors?**

Yes, and the gaps where you can see the walls is another dimension. I wanted to create a dynamic that reflects that every time you state a fact or try to be accurate, you end up discovering that there is an anti-fact, nothing is absolute.

**Where do your titles come from?**

I am always inspired by figures and character from myths and mangas. Anything I read that has dualism. It is a topic that is very inspiring for me. Characters that are in some ways split inside.

**Are the names of your works driven by their colors, their shapes?**

Most of the time it develops while I am working. I am thinking about a specific story or a figure, it comes from the feeling I have when I am working.

**The other noticeable variable in this series is the amount of concrete used in each pieces. You have pieces fully covered with concrete, others with big openings, and recently you even have a group of very refined and minimalist pieces with no concrete at all.**

One of the work I am impressed about is the mercury fountain of Alexander Calder. It is a closed fountain behind glass. Mercury is running through it, it is very toxic. I am impressed by the beauty combined to the non-touchable aspect of the work. With my concrete works, I want to

**“There is always a fight between adding or deleting something”**

convey the same impression. Sometimes it is important for the works to have a lot of cement, to look heavy and dangerous, it is their “non-touchable” aspect. And then on some works I make holes to make them look more “touchable”. [...] With the steel works, I discovered that they can work without cement. They have the same strength and at the same time some fragility.

**For your works with holes, you start to pour concrete over the full surface and you then make your holes in a second step. Is artistic creation as much about subtraction as it is about addition of material?**

It is like in painting, there is always a fight between adding or deleting something. In my very early works I did not remove the cement, but something was missing. And then I started to take some material off, to see what was happening with the wall behind it, it created a new dimension. But I still see myself as a painter, and not as somebody who is making objects, and this process is just a method for me.

**Selected recent exhibitions**

*Heavy Metal*, group show, Galerie Jérôme Pauchant, Paris, France, 2018

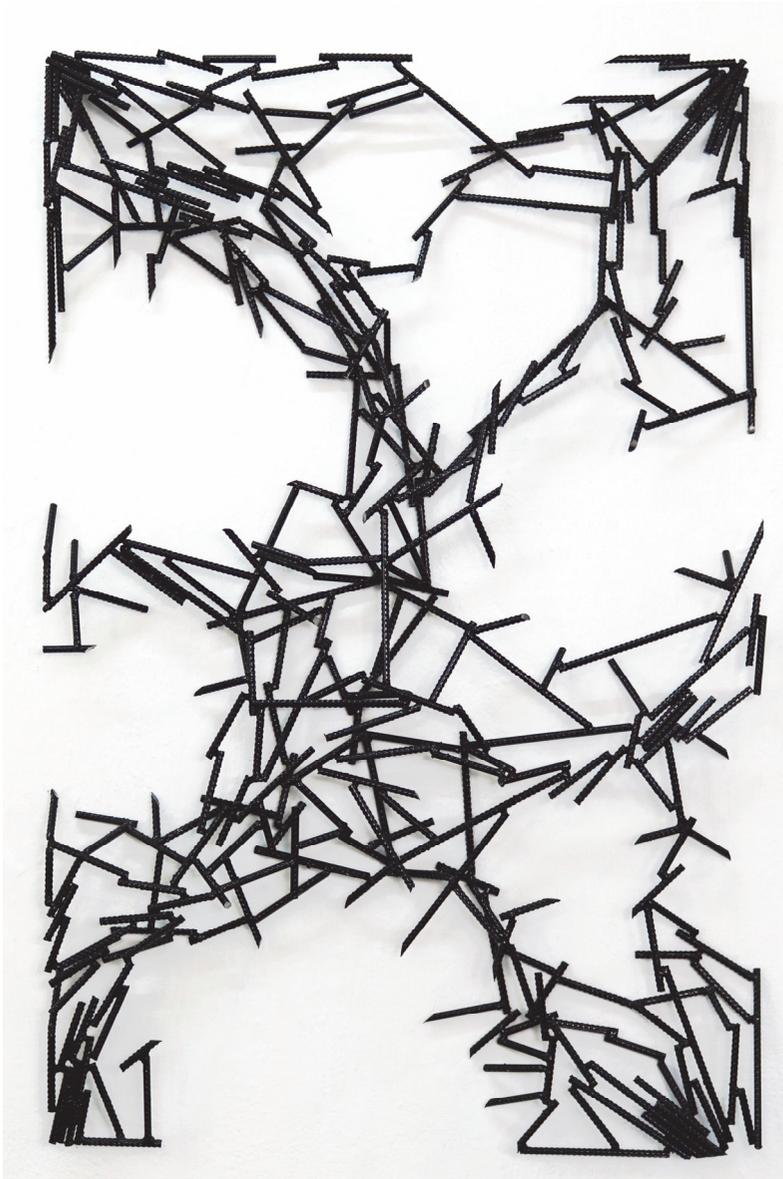
*Christine Liebich, Zweisieben*, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2018

*Frei nach Adorno*, Super+Centercourt, Munich, Germany, 2017

*Orbit*, Galerie Nicole Gnesa, Munich, Germany, 2017

*Instant Karma*, group show, Achenbach Hagemeier, Düsseldorf, Germany, 2017

*Coral North*, group show, Easyupstream, Munich, Germany, 2016



Christine Liebich, *Dark Knight (11)*, 2018 / structural steel, lacquer / 120 x 80 cm.  
Courtesy Christine Liebich.

**Most artists who use concrete or metal rebars have works that look like construction material or found abstraction. On the contrary, your work is extremely organic. It is born within the visual art sphere, it is not imported from the real world. Was this your intent or is it just a way to view it?**

I am making my works all by myself, from the first step to the last step. It is very important for me. I need a connection with my material. When I was a painter, it was quite the same, I never bought canvases, I made them myself, I primed them myself. I was never interested in getting material from an outer or industrial world and to paint on it. I am always trying to

have the closest contact that I can with my material. I made a lot of mistakes because I could not handle concrete all by myself, I did not know enough about it, I made a lot of errors. It is very important for me to be able to develop an individual way of working. I take a material and ignore its usual meaning, what people are doing with it in the outer world. I try to deal with it in the most naïve way possible, to give it a new function.

**Can you share with us some of the mistakes you made with concrete and that helped you make progress?**

First of all I was building forms, I was putting cement in them, and every object was breaking when taken out of the form. It was very frustrating because it was a lot of work, a lot of heavy work! Anything thinner than 7 cm was just breaking. So I did some research and saw that metal was needed to hold the form because cement cannot hold anything. It can only hold pressure from above but it cannot lift something. It was a lot of frustration for me.

**How did you get into art, how did you decide to go to art school?**

I grew up on a farm, with nothing around in a circle of 5 km, nothing else than woods and fields. In my childhood I had so many possibilities to play around. I was always inventing, building things up. Improvisation was very important at the farm: if something was broken, you could not drive away and buy some parts to repair it. You needed to fix it without buying anything. As a child it was very interesting to solve your problems with nothing, not like other people do. I am very thankful for this. I had my own space, my little room to make pictures, to build little models. It was very important for me to finish school but it had always been clear for me that I would do some art. There was no specific point where I decided to do art, I was not interested in any other job, there was no other option.

**Is your work currently taking any new direction?**

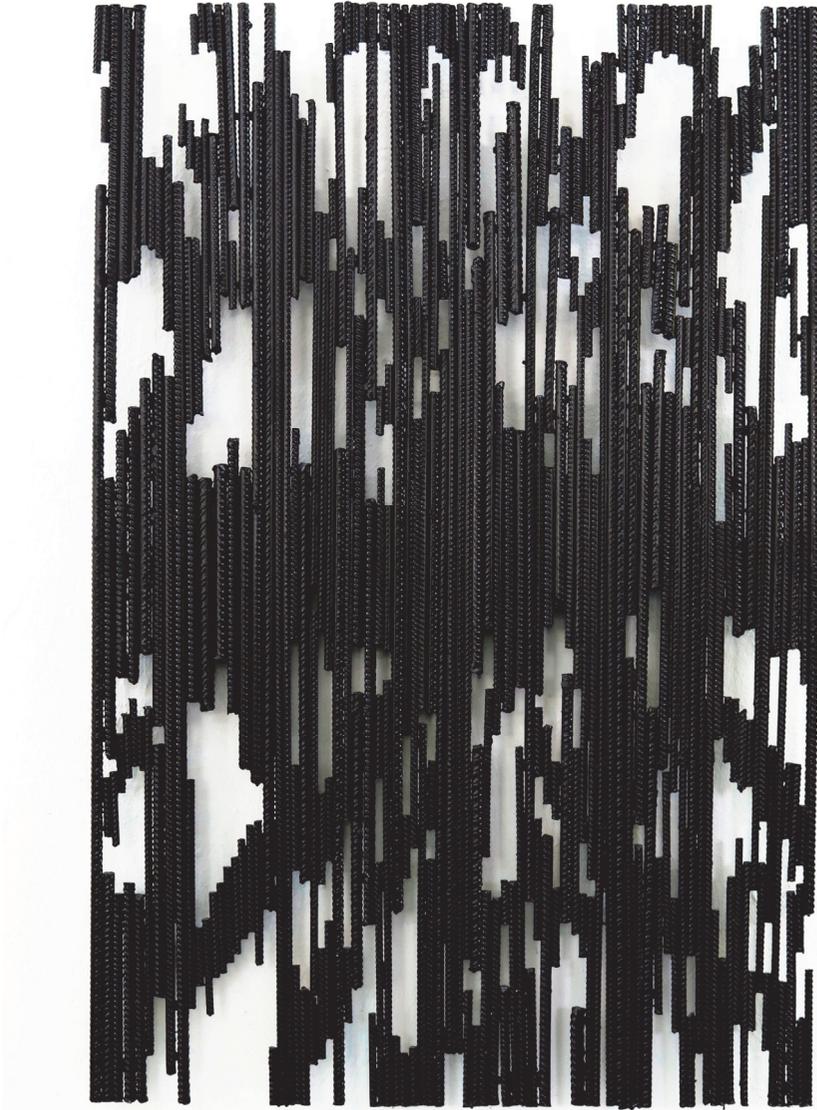
The new direction I will take in the next months is to go towards drawing. I want to make the cement thinner and have it look like a paper sheet. I am interested in the lines of the drawing, but I don't know if it is going to work out. I would like to make lines with cement and steel, but I am just starting to work on it. ■



**Christine Liebich, *Merlin*, 2017 / cement steel laquer / 150 x 90 cm. Courtesy Christine Liebich.**

b. 1987 in Landshut, Germany. Based near Munich, Germany.

Christine Liebich studied art at the *Akademie der Bildenden Künste* in Munich. She develops abstract compositions with steel bars and concrete, inspired by super-heroes and myths.



Christine Liebich, *Dark Knight (12)*, 2018 / structural steel, lacquer / 120 x 80 cm.  
Courtesy Christine Liebich.



Abstract Room Installation view. *Everyday Abstraction: Images at Work*, Paris, May 2017.

## Abstract Room

### Who we are

Abstract Room is an international project & label, founded in December 2015 and driven by a french non-profit organization. Abstract Room's goal is to identify & promote novel practices in contemporary art. Its main activity is to curate & organize exhibitions and to produce & publish critical material, with an educational approach. Abstract Room is using pop-up galleries, partnering with cultural institutions and developing its own mobile exhibition space. We bring art to the public and not the public to art.



Follow us on Instagram @\_abstract\_room\_

### Our exhibition format

Abstract Room exhibitions have no start-date, no end-date, but a theme and a curator. Exhibitions can be shown over several years, in several locations, with various durations. Exhibitions are allowed to evolve with time, to reflect new developments in their subject field. Critical material is developed for each exhibition, in different formats (printed booklets, e-material).



Benjamin Sabatier, *Untitled*, 2017 / burnt wood and concrete / 90 x 110 x 6 cm. Courtesy Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris.

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Project curated by Abstract Room

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**Picture front cover:** Benjamin Sabatier, *Untitled* (detail), 2017 / concrete and metal rod / 64 x 66 x 8 cm. Courtesy Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris.

**Picture page 3:** Christine Liebich, *Enel* (detail), 2017/ cement steel laquer / 150 x 90 cm. Courtesy Christine Liebich.

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