

why painting now ?

Biographies

Francis BAUDEVIN (Bulle, Switzerland, 1964, works in Lausanne)

Baudevin has developed a humorous and nostalgic reflection on painting, finding his compositions in advertising graphics, in particular the packaging that underpins commodification. His postmodern decrypting of the codes of simulacra and the simulacra of codes is clearly political: it restores a place for painting, renews the role of the picture and re-assigns to art that beautiful, thankless task of criticizing appearances by stylizing the shadows that they cast.

Mel BOCHNER (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1940, works in New York)

Active since the 1960s, Bochner is an American conceptual artist who rethinks the world, investigating the purpose of the work of art in the light of a logic born of math, grammar and philosophy. His works often take the form of figures and discrete sequences (*Counting: 0-10 (#6)*), calculations, spatial adjustments, words, rhetorical inventories, and philosophical quotations, these components enabling him to represent mental processes.

Alex BROWN (Des Moines, Iowa, 1966, works in Des Moines)

Brown's works never give up their secrets to the idle glance. Only after some instants of observation do the images appear within the relief of the canvas. The procedure used by Brown, particularly significant in *Local Music*, involves superposing several images to create a new one. For this the artist appropriates images from postcards, travel agency brochures, press cuttings, and photos found on the internet. This layering of image within image creates a space in which meaning is secondary and our primary focus is pure pleasure at the precision of the painter's work.

Daniel HESIDENCE (Akron, Ohio, 1975, works in Brooklyn, New York)

Hesidence approaches his practice as a philosophical totality. His works describe a means of sub-language communication, something primal and emotive that exceeds linguistic structure. A whirlwind of colors gives the impression of an almost Christ-like aura and at the same time of a bottomless abyss into which the spectator is plunged at the speed of light. Wrought with a poet's sensitivity, his compositions play on the antithesis attraction/repulsion. Penetratingly intimate and sensual, they are deeply disturbing in their visual intensity.

Mamie HOLST (Gainesville, Florida, 1961, works in Fort Myers, Florida)

For years Holst has worked as if in slow motion on a series of paintings all entitled *Landscape before Dying*, to each of which she adds a subtitle in parenthesis. Entirely composed of black, white and gray, her works describe the labyrinths of an unremittingly physiological topology that is nevertheless detached from this world. Though Holst returns again and again to the same schematic abstract forms and uses only colors washed clean of their nuances, her landscapes differ one from another, sometimes in the most radical fashion.

Martin KIPPENBERGER (Dortmund 1953 – Vienne 1997)

Kippenberger's artistic career—based in his native Germany but encompassing such far-flung locations as Florence, Madrid, Vienna, New York, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, Syros, and the Yukon—was a twenty-year commitment to unrestrained excess. It began in the late 1970s, at a moment when the greatness of modern art seemed suddenly distant—a century-long celebration whose door was now closed to newcomers. Kippenberger's response was to create his own party and cast himself as an artist-jester whose antics both disguised and permitted a piercing analysis of contemporary art and society.

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Alan MICHAEL (Glasgow, Scotland, 1967, works in Glasgow)

Michael's paintings form an idiolect of cultural references. Photographs, impressions and reproductions from the worlds of art and popular music are scrupulously studied, transformed, duplicated and assembled. In *Apologia*, the cross and the circle of the record label Positiva are maintained but the subject subverted. The writing in *Decamp* is drawn from font used by the Scottish group Belle and Sebastian on one of their singles. This style evokes the commercial art of the 1960s, which made a comeback at the turn of the twentieth century.

Todd NORSTEN (Sunburg, Minnesota, 1967, works in Minneapolis and New York)

Norsten explores the natural relation between painting and writing. On the basis of photographs (commercial signs, objects and posters) used as digital sketches, he extracts words and images from their context and reframes them in a different system of communication, thus exploring the possibilities of language. His pictures ultimately become formal exercises spotlighting the possibilities of painting. *JFK* reproduces a placard held by a person in the crowds watching the Presidential cavalcade in Dallas on 22 November 1963, the date of Kennedy's assassination.

Albert OEHLEN (Krefeld, 1954, works in Spain and Switzerland)

With Martin Kippenberger, Oehlen forms part of a generation of artists who, in the early 80s, vigorously criticized the prevailing ideology. Albert Oehlen's painting displays a serious engagement with the history of painting and a radical political opposition to its hierarchies and values. His oeuvre is constantly transformed under pressure from the tensions between abstract and figurative expression. His painting is at once an expression of his reflection on the medium, a critique of its prestige and an analysis of its multiple possibilities artistic, social and so on. Breaking all the traditional laws of painting, Oehlen exposes their function and operation.

Davis RHODES (Victoria B.C., Canada, 1983, works in New York)

Rhodes has found a new way of exploiting the heritage of pictorial movements such as Colorfield and Hard Edge painting. The incorporation of latex and spray makes his works seem a direct product of the streets. Motifs that form part of our daily life—discovered on signposts, advertising panels, hip-hop posters or cigarette packets—are rapidly transposed (in color) onto the canvas. Rhodes's work suggests new solutions midway between Minimalism and Post-Minimalism. He takes the painted object as his point of departure, interrogating the act of painting and the cultural values and exhibition strategies associated with it.

Sterling RUBY (Bitburg, Germany 1972, lives and works in Los Angeles)

With his large format pictures crafted in spray-paint—their spectra of pure color sullied with a toxic black—Ruby takes the basic urban art of graffiti to new heights and invests it with new levels of profundity. A sort of modern Rothko, he does not merely redefine the picture space (as formulated by the Minimalists and practitioners of Colorfield painting) but uses the language of modernity as the starting point for a contemporary investigation of identity, referring in the process to various themes: death, Zen, sex and criminality.

Jim SHAW (Midland, Michigan, 1952, works in Los Angeles)

Shaw emerged from the Californian scene alongside artists such as Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy and Raymond Pettibon. He draws his inspiration from the world of fairy tales, the fantastic, religion and politics. His extensive body of work is comprised of ongoing narratives that subvert the notion of authorship in favor of fictional constructs. Ranging from the *My Mirage* series, in which Shaw explores the life of his alter ego Billy; to *O-ism*, a series based on a fictional religion; to the appropriated *Thrift Store paintings*, Shaw has continually challenged the authoritative function of authorship. The *Dream Objects* and *Dream Drawings* reflect this interest by delegating the image selection to Shaw's unconscious. Throughout his work, images from the media, pop culture, and Shaw's own personal history arise to express a collective cultural consciousness.

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Dan WALSH (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1960, works in New York)

Walsh's work deals with the potential of the canvas to become a field of optical experience. His paintings are, in a sense, propositions on perception, presented to the spectator in the form of a simplified vocabulary of lines and forms that interact and afford a multitude of visual experiences. Austere and geometrical, his works evoke the history of abstract painting but their irony and humor counter any thought of pretension or arrogance. His variations of form and color make of his paintings a form of serene meditation.

Johannes WOHNSEIFER (Cologne, 1967, works in Cologne)

Wohnseifer's work highlights the malleable nature of our visual perception, in which ideas and symbols can quickly assume new meanings. For his *Spam Paintings* series, he has taken his inspiration from the undesirable e-mail ads that invade our inboxes: the most spammed products are porn services, drugs, credit, online casinos, replica watches, fake diplomas, etc. Wohnseifer integrates these fragments of text into pictorial abstracts, analyzing the typography of these coded messages. By appropriating, deciphering and reinterpreting these languages in his paintings, he entirely subverts their meaning.