

THROUGH
BERNARD VILLERS

Opening 9.01.20
10.01.20 > 22.02.20



Bernard Villers, *Cageot*, 2019, Acrylic paint on wood, 39 x 29 x 4,5 cm

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Bernard Villers' painting, built on the potentialities of the medium and its support, acts as an open window on the astonishing explorations led by pictorial movements starting with Malevitch and the first monochromes. Fuelled by American Abstraction and Supports/Surfaces, he developed his reflexion since the 60s with steadfastness, openness and humour. Knowing that each title provides a key to understand the artwork, *Through*, the artist's first solo show at Irène Laub Gallery, appears like a journey through a selection of recently-produced paintings on paper and wood, as well as a vast installation of artworks originating from found objects.

Through. The meaning of the word also refers to the gestures made by the artist. The large "Mingeishi" papers displayed in the window reveal the radicality of Bernard Villers' principles. In these five pieces, his hand draws a line as thick as the brush – a single stroke, made irregular by the fluctuating pressure of the instrument and the coating of paint. Blackness penetrates the thin surface and the paper is unfolded. The line is partitioned as the support is flattened, the fold almost disappears. From gesture to idea, unless it is the other way around, Bernard Villers turns the process into the artwork itself. Unpretentiously, he gives value to what is actually happening. Any protocol thus created is not necessarily followed to the letter but, nevertheless, arbitrary decisions find their logic within this given framework. There is no chance in « Un coup de scie ». The work refers to Stéphane Mallarmé's poem, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (*A Throw of the Dice will Never Abolish Chance*), which itself later inspired an artwork by Marcel Broodthaers. In these pieces, split by a saw and held on the wall by a single nail, the fragile balance is enriched by the referential layers contained within.

Through. Lewis Carroll's imagination, recurring in the artist's work, is unsurprisingly present in this exhibition. Bernard Villers has always been attracted by what is happening on the other side of the canvas. Maintaining and demonstrating the equal value of the front and back side of his works, he plays with their potential reversal, from the effect of an invisible verso to the surface of the work itself, or even that of the wall it shines upon. Although they are often destined to be perceived as a whole, they are not sculptures, but a vast exploration of painting's possibilities in a conscious relationship with the history of art, literature and philosophy. The supports have therefore long since ceased to be traditional canvases. The varied forms of the found objects gleaned by the artist are ready-mades that he appropriates, diverts and transcends through painting to profoundly displace our pre-conceived notions about contemporary art.

- Cécile Vandernoot

Cécile Vandernoot is an architect, visual artist and journalist specialised in the field of architecture.

Her interest lies in urbanism and landscape as well as the space of the page. Since 2011, she has been teaching at the UCL Faculty of Architecture.



Bernard Villers, view of his Studio, Brussels (BE)

Born in 1939 in Brussels (BE)
Lives and works in Brussels (BE)

After training in monumental painting at the École nationale supérieure des Arts visuels of La Cambre with Paul Delvaux and Jo Delahaut, Bernard Villers developed his pictorial research and became a leading figure of the Belgian art scene. His sensitive and innovative approach was celebrated in a retrospective exhibition at the Botanique art center (Brussels, BE) in 2018.

Bernard Villers' practice questions the traditional relationship between support and color, revealing a true symbiotic interaction and fostering an equal dialogue between those two essential elements. The artist diverts the viewer's expectations by proposing chromatic interventions that are direct and minimal without being devoid of emotion: the beauty of everyday life reveals itself in the subtle imperfections of Bernard Villers' lines.

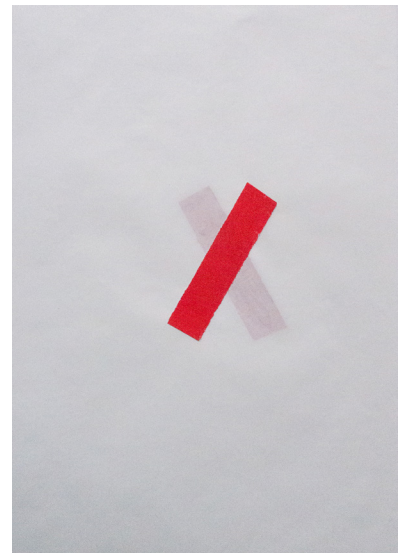
His artworks are present in the collections of FRAC Bretagne, Rennes (FR), FRAC Bourgogne, Dijon (FR), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (FR), Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (BE), Centre de la Gravure, La Louvière (BE), Fondation Gordon Matta-Clark, Antwerp (BE), Collection FWB, Brussels (BE), Musée d'Ixelles, Brussels (BE), Musée royal de Mariemont, Morlanwelz (BE), Serralves, Porto (PT), Werserburg Museum, Bremen (DE), among others.

SHOWS (SELECTED)

- 2020 *Bernard Villers*, Espace 157, Verviers (BE)
- 2019 *Achrome*, Irène Laub Gallery, Brussels (BE)
La force de la couleur, galerie Brigitte Geerinckx, Brussels (BE)
- 2018 *La couleur manifeste*, cur. Cécile Vandernoot and Daniel Dutrieux, Le Botanique, Brussels (BE)
En de wind van achter: Vitrine, Sint-Lukas, Brussels (BE)
Livres et dessins à l'emporte-pièce, le Comptoir, Liège (BE)
La collection, CDLA, Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche (FR)
- 2017 *Vitrine : Le Nouveau Remorqueur*, Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels (BE)
Knip en plak (pliages-collages), Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam (NL)
- 2016 *Le Grand Large*, Quai 4, Liège (BE)
100 artistes, Musée Juif de Belgique, Brussels (BE)
Mise en pli, FRAC PACA, Marseille (FR)
- 2015 *Lieu(x) Commun(s)*, Maison des Arts, Schaerbeek (BE)
Jo Delahaut - Hors Limite, Botanique, Brussels (BE)
Du plomb dans la tête, Maison de l'imprimerie, Thuin (BE)
Le livre dans le livre, Les Abattoirs, Toulouse (FR)
- 2014 *Trouées*, Froidart, Liège (BE)
Icietoulà, 34 6, Linkebeek (BE)
It is not new, it is a book, Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, Madrid (SP)
- 2013 *Répliques*, Musée de Mariemont, Mariemont (BE)
Solo made in Belgium, Tableau d'une position, librairie Hors-série, Brussels (BE)
- 2012 *Le bel horizon : Les éditions du Remorqueur*, Les abattoirs, Toulouse (FR)
Kaolin, Centre Des Livres d'Artistes, Saint-Yrieix (FR)
Anonymouslyours, cur. E. Lambion Maison Grégoire, Brussels (BE)
- 2011 *Inuit*, Experimental Intermedia, Ei-Huis, Gent (BE)
Non, pas ce soir, *La Trame à 10 ans*, Musée d'Ixelles, Brussels (BE)
- 2010 *Half en half*, Maison de la Culture, Namur (BE)
- 2009 *La vue en Rose*, *La carte de Tendre*, Cabinet du Livre d'Artiste, Rennes (FR)
- 2008 *Mickey, talvez*, Musée Serralves. Porto (PT)
- 2007 *À table : livres et tableaux*, l'émulation, Liège (BE)
Le Nouveau Remorqueur, Iselp, Brussels (BE)
- 2006 *Une impression persistante IV*, Les Lisières Librairie, Roubaix (FR)

FAIRS & EVENTS

- 2020 Drawing Now Paris (FR)
- 2019 Vienna Contemporary (AT)
Art Fair Book, Antwerpen (BE)
Marché du livre, Musée Royal de Mariemont (BE)
- 2017 Art Fair Book, Antwerpen (BE)
Art Book Fair, Gent (BE)
Colloque sur le livre d'artiste, Bibliothèque Royale, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2016 Inverread, Art Basel, Basel (CH)



Bernard Villers, *Dessins collages*, 1985, carbone et papier, 35 x 50 cm

COLLECTIONS

- Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (BE)
Centre de la Gravure, La Lavouvière (BE)
Musée d'Ixelles, Brussels (BE)
Musée des Beaux-Art de Marimont (BE)
Fondation Gordon Matta-Clark, Antwerpen (BE)
Collection Fédération Walonnie-Brussels (BE)
FRAC Bretagne, Rennes (FR)
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (FR)
Serralves (PT)
Weserburg Museum, Bremen (DE)



Bernard Villers, exhibition view of «La Couleur Manifeste» at Le Botanique, Brussels (BE), ©



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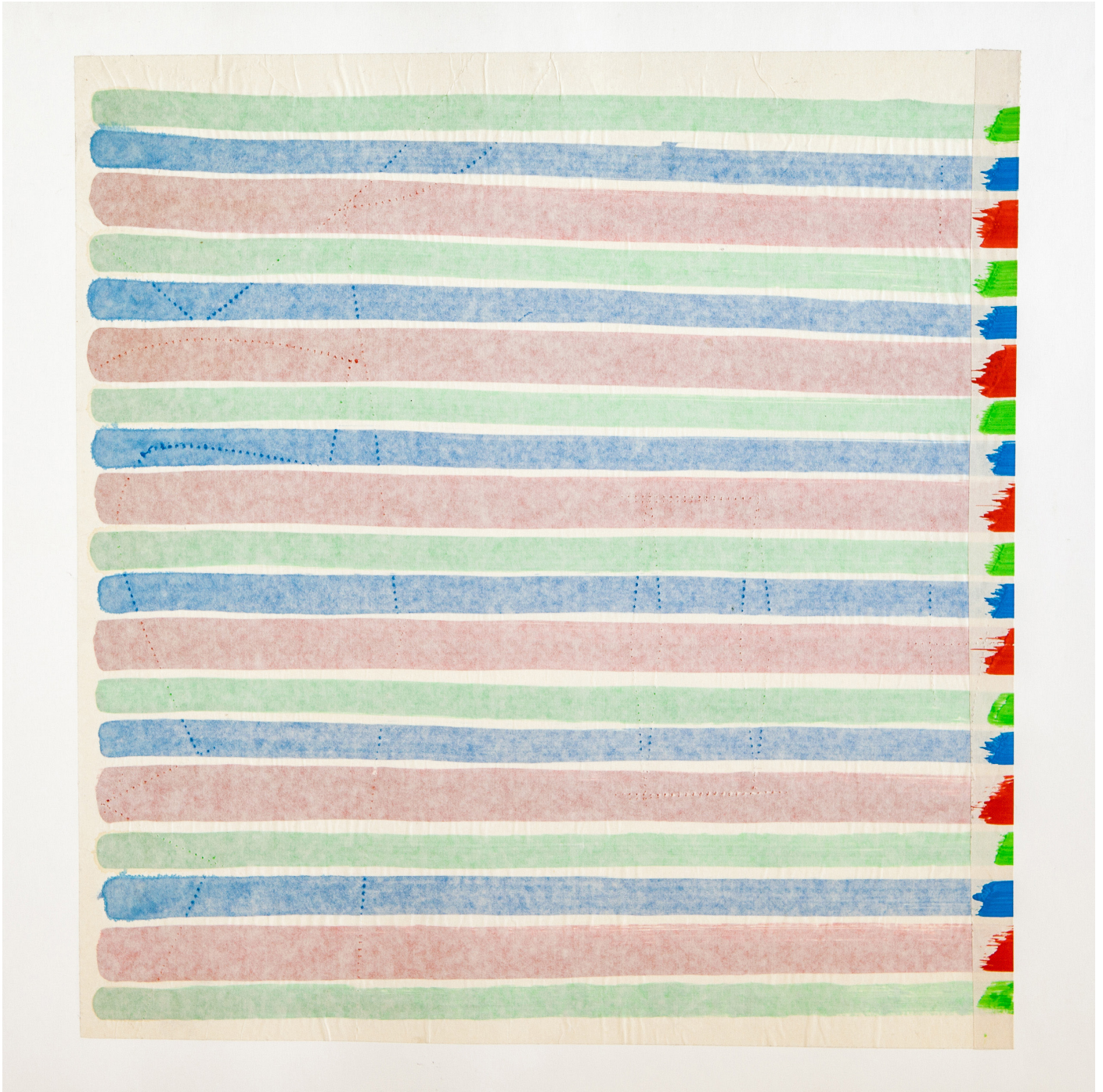
Bernard Villers, exhibition view of «La Couleur Manifeste» at Le Botanique, Brussels (BE), ©



Bernard Villiers, *Inclinaison*, 2010, tempera, toile, bois, 40 x 35 x 5 cm (each)



Bernard Villiers, *3 jaunes, 2 fois 4 cobalts*, 1990, Tempera sur bois, variable dimensions



Portrait d'une modèle ayant posé à titre intérimaire entre 1957 et 1962 pour l'artiste Espagnol Pablo Ruiz Picasso, 2016, Oil on canvas, 50 x 40,5 cm

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