

BERTRAND LAVIER, SINCE 1969

26 SEPTEMBER 2012 – 7 JANUARY 2013

Along the course of what he calls his “chantiers” – i.e. series of works based on rules which are both simple and open – Bertrand Lavier builds a body of work which invites visitors to shed their certainties. Playing with categories, codes, genres and materials, his art conveys an inclination for addition, crossing, hybridization and transposition. Born in 1949 in Burgundy, Lavier produced his first works in 1969, influenced by land art and conceptual art. In the early 80s, he quickly asserted himself as one of the major figures on the European art scene, through various series including his “painted objects”, “superimposed objects” and “Walt Disney Productions”.

These series confirm his aptitude to shake up the most solid categories in the history of art (painting, sculpture, figuration, abstraction, etc.). In later works (crashed car, African statues, neon tubes made after paintings by American artist Frank Stella), he continued his endeavour to short-circuit identities and confirmed his capacity to present a concept while preserving the right to give it shape and emotion.

The retrospective on “Bertrand Lavier, since 1969” is presented by themes. Through some fifty works, several of which are from 2012, it shows the artist's method and the major patterns which underpin his art.

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From his horticulture studies, Bertrand Lavier kept the memory of a technique which is at the heart of his method: grafting. While the items grafted to one another changed with the years and according to the "**chantiers**" launched by the artist, the creative logic remained the same. In 1980, Lavier did a strange sort of grafting: the pictorial representation of an object – for example a mirror or a piano – was grafted on the object itself. A new genre of figurative painting thus came into being. However, these "still lives" are not hyperrealist: on the contrary, the sort of "Van Gogh" stroke is highly visible. The great originality of this type of painting is its support: not a canvas, but the very object it represents.

Shortly after, Lavier experimented with another type of grafting, that of a refrigerator on a safe. Many other superimpositions followed. Lavier did not stop there, but also grafted styles. In 2002, he asked Studio Harcourt, well-known for its images striving for immortality, to photograph wax statues from the Grévin museum, which strive to be real. Lavier's entire body of work show his credence in the virtues of addition and hybridization. According to Lavier, "the entity obtained from the grafting process is always greater than the sum of its parts".

OF THINGS AND WORDS

When Bertrand Lavier began his career, in the late 1960s, the prevailing artistic movement was conceptual art. While this art assumes there is a concordance between things and words, Lavier demonstrated the exact opposite, with a certain humour: the words do not correspond to the things. The "**chantier**" of "industrial paintings", which he started in 1974, plays on this discordance. On a wall or on a canvass, a diptych is divided into two equal parts, showing two nuances of a particular colour. Lavier used paints of the same name produced by two different manufacturers. The words are identical, but the things aren't.

Soon after, with **Polished**, the young artist showed in another way the irreconcilable orders of language and reality. He wrote the description of a little sculpture in French. The text was then translated into eleven languages. Each of these translations was used to produce the object it described. The twelve objects are just as different from one another as the two colours of the same name. An object superimposition dating from 1988, consisting in placing a small sculpture of Alexander Calder on a radiator of the Calder brand shows the same preoccupation. But here, the difference between the words and the things is even greater: instead of shades of a colour, words do not distinguish between a magnificent work of art and a common heating device.

AFTER THE READYMADE: FORM AND FEELING

With Bertrand Lavier, the readymade slips away from its inventor Marcel Duchamp. The **Bottle Rack** that Duchamp had bought in 1914 to transform it into a work of art was a neutral, cold, industrial object, a pure concept. The **Giulietta** – the crashed Alfa Romeo that Lavier went to "save" from a scrapyard in 1993 is a radical change from the Duchamp model. With this car, the industrial object is no longer faithful to its original concept: something obviously happened to that car, which shows itself, in its present state, as a genuine bundle of emotion. Likewise, when Lavier places the red mouth-shaped sofa designed by Salvador Dalí onto a white freezer, he plays with colours, putting tension between curves and right angles. He erotises the readymade. And **Teddy**, the little teddy bear mounted like an object in a primitive art museum, also has a life history. Lavier's art embodies that moment of aesthetic sensitivity where the readymade stops being worth anything in itself and becomes a means of expression for the artist.

NEW IMPRESSIONS OF AFRICA

For the "Afrikus" exhibition in Johannesburg in 1995, Bertrand Lavier had various manufactured objects mounted on pedestals, in the same way as the objects exhibited in ethnographic museums. Since that date, he renewed the operation several times: with a lock, a skateboard, a motorbike helmet and a famous designer's seat. When objects are presented in this way, their nature changes: while they are everyday objects, they become imbued with a sort of strangeness. They also incite us to ponder on the status of certain primitive art objects which have been made sacred through their mode of exhibition in a museum. With his mounted objects and even more so with **Nautiraid** – a modern kayak in very bad condition, meticulously restored as if it were an antique object – Lavier takes us into the archaeological museum of the future. While, by being mounted or restored, the most common objects become "primitive", conversely the wooden African statues that Lavier had cast in nickel-plated bronze become westernised cast objects. Here, the artist taunts the decorative African statue trend.

THE PHOTO WITHOUT A CAMERA

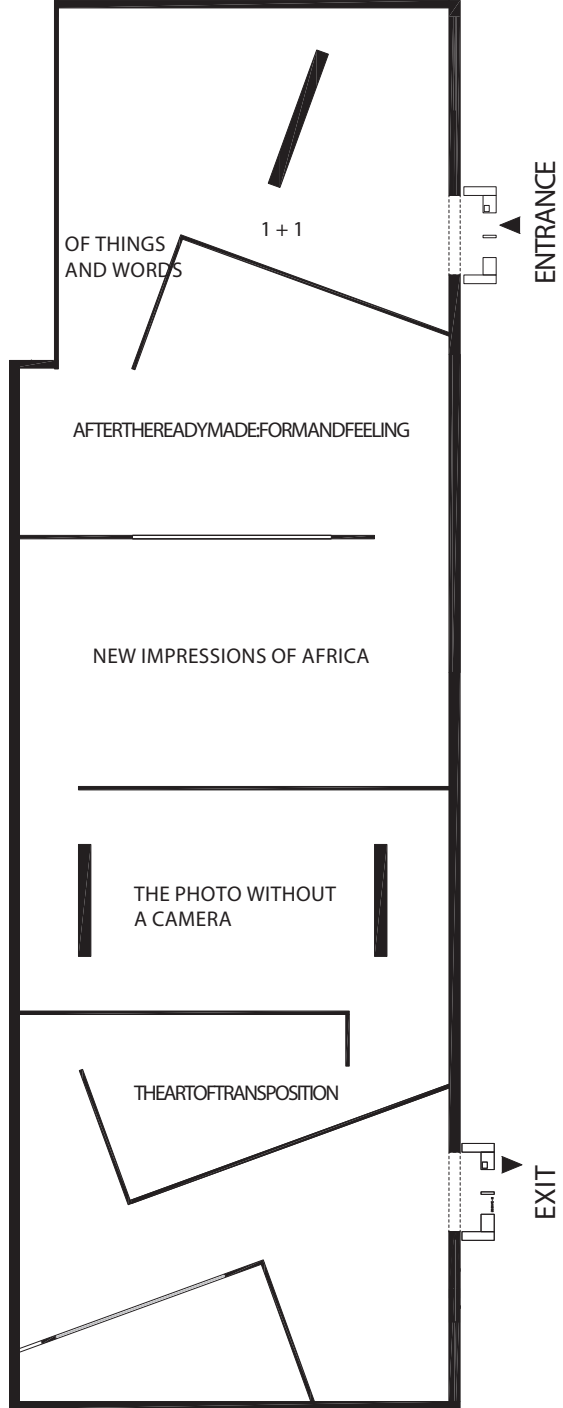
Lavier likes to play with genres and techniques. If one of the essential properties of the photographic craft consists in framing a portion of reality, Lavier becomes a photographer in several of his works, even though he doesn't use a camera. With **Philips**, he frames a portion of a wall by lighting it, highlighting the enhancement which automatically accompanies the framing action. With **Melker**, he frames the central part of a piece of upholstery fabric and paints it like he does for his "painted objects". With **Cole & Son**, he frames and places behind glass a detail from wallpaper covering the wall, thereby producing a work which fits perfectly into the decor. In his **Photo-reliefs**, he cuts up an object so that it fits into the frame according to which it was photographed; Lavier thus inverts the relationship between the image and its reference. The latter now becomes the reflection of the former. With these works, Lavier reminds us that the reality which is photographed, filmed or simply in our field of vision, always reaches us framed. But, far from seeing this as an unfortunate fatality, he turns framing into a real method of creation.

THE ART OF TRANSPOSITION

According to modern aesthetics, the mission of each form of art is to exalt its specificity: paintings must strive to be as pictorial as possible, while sculptures should be as sculptural as possible. With Lavier this credo is no longer appropriate. In 1979, he created **Or not to be** – a block of green acrylic paint – then had it cast in bronze. In 1986, he created a diptych consisting in the photo of a panel painted in red, half of which was covered with identical paint. A real to-and-from between photography and painting which blurs the identity of the two media. In the late 1990s, Lavier undertook to transform whitewashed shop windows into abstract paintings. Lavier's entire body of work gives numerous and varied examples of this art of transposition, i.e. changing from one state to another.

In the **Walt Disney Productions**, the imaginary artworks of a comic strip become real paintings and sculptures. Conversely, authentic masterpieces of art history (by Paul Signac, Mark Rothko or Frank Stella) are also transposed by Lavier into other materials. In 2012, an anonymous wooden Christ statue from the late 19th century, without arms or a head, was revived and cast into bronze. For Lavier, a work of art remains alive as long as it can be transposed.

EXHIBITION MAP



EXHIBITION

CURATOR

Michel Gauthier
Assisted by Marie Griffay

ARCHITECT/DESIGNER

Camille Excoffon

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Marie-Odile Peynet

En partenariat média avec



PUBLICATIONS

CATALOGUE

Bertrand Lavier, since 1969

Directed by Michel Gauthier
168 p., 135 ill.
€34,90

ALBUM

Bertrand Lavier, since 1969

Bilingual English-French
By Michel Gauthier
and Guillaume Durand
60 p., 60 ill.
€9,90

AROUND THE EXHIBITION

PAROLE AUX EXPOSITIONS

Interview with Bertrand Lavier
by Catherine Millet,
Jean-Pierre Criqui
and Michel Gauthier
Thursday, 25 October, 7 pm,
Petite Salle
Free, within the limit of available
seats

GUIDED TOURS

In French
Every Saturday at 3:30 PM
On Wednesdays at 7 pm: 26
September, 3, 10, 17 and 24
October, 7 and 14 November
€4.50 / concessions €3.50
[+ticket for Museum & exhibitions at
reduced price, €10]
€3.50 with the pass.
Go to the exhibition entrance with
your ticket

SPECIAL TOURS

- Lip-reading tour: for hearing-impaired persons

Saturday 13 October at 11 am
€4.50 including admittance, free for
one accompanying person.
Reservation required at least 3 days
before.
Fax 01 44 78 16 62
SMS 06 17 48 45 50
nicole.fournier@centrepompidou.fr

- Tour in French sign language: deaf visitors

Saturday 13 October at 2:30 PM
€4.50, free for one accompanying
person
Reservation required
SMS 06 17 48 45 50
nicole.fournier@centrepompidou.fr

AUDIOGUIDE

Languages: French, English,
Spanish, German and Italian.
On the forum level you can rent an audioguide that will plunge you into the heart of creation. Let the artist Bertrand Lavier give you a guided tour of the exhibition, "Bertrand Lavier, since 1969". Also discover almost seventy works from the Museum's permanent collections, as well as an architectural visit of the building.

Rental of the audioguide at the ticket counter, level 0. Retrieval at the Espace Audioguide, level 0.
€5, concessions €4, free for children under 13.

INFORMATIONS

01 44 78 12 33
www.centrepompidou.fr

EXHIBITION OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

from 26 September 2012
to 7 January 2013
Galerie 2, Level 6
Every day except Tuesdays
from 11 am to 9 pm
Ticket counters close at 8 pm
Evening visits on Thursdays
until 11 pm
Ticket counters close at 10 pm

ADMISSION

Access with the ticket "Museum & Expositions"

Valid throughout the day at the Museum, for all exhibitions and the Panorama, for a single admission in each space
€13, concessions €10
Free with the annual pass and for under-18s

Online ticket purchase and printing (full price only)

www.centrepompidou.fr/billetterie

TWITTER

Find exhibition information and contents on twitter via hashtag #Lavier, or on the page <http://www.twitter.com/centrepompidou>

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