

# LISSON GALLERY

*Absolute Art*  
27 December 2021

## Bernard Piffaretti: "Systematic Imperfection"

Absolute art 2021-12-27 17:00

Click on the blue word "Absolute Art" above to pay attention not to get lost

**+ 权威**

**+ 公正**

**+ 有态度**



**Bernard Piffaretti © Bernard Piffaretti. Courtesy Lisson Gallery**

Bernard Piffaretti was born in Saint-Etienne, France in 1955, and currently lives and works in Paris. His first solo exhibition "Puppet" in Beijing is now on display at the Bole De International Art Gallery space. This exhibition is also the first temporary exhibition launched by Lisson Gallery in Beijing.



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled, 1999, Acrylic on canvas, 150.5 x 200 x 3.7 cm, 59 1/4 x 78 5/8 x 1 3/8 in © Bernard Piffaretti.

Courtesy Lisson Gallery



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled, 1998, Acrylic on canvas, 250 x 300 x 2.5 cm, 98 3/8 x 118 x 7/8 in © Bernard Piffaretti.

Courtesy Lisson Gallery

As a continuation of the first exhibition "The Twin Peaks and Companion" at Lisson Gallery Shanghai Space in March this year, "Ou" presents 13 recent and selected early paintings by Piffaretti, focusing on the artist's mark that has been upholding for nearly 40 years. Sexual creation technique "Piffaretti System". This exhibition is curated by art historian and writer Zhang Yuling, and is also part of the opening exhibition of the Bolede International Art Gallery.



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 90 x 90 x 2.5 cm, 35 3/8 x 35 3/8 x 7/8 in © Bernard Piffaretti.

Courtesy Lisson Gallery



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled, 2001, Acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150 x 2.5 cm, 59 x 59 x 7/8 in © Bernard Piffaretti. Courtesy

Lisson Gallery

French artist Bernard Piffaretti (Bernard Piffaretti) is committed to using repetitive methods to analyze the components of the painting. He studied art at the Saint-Etienne Academy of Fine Arts in France from 1973 to 1979 and began to develop the "Pifaretti System" in 1979.



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 170 x 170 x 2.5 cm, 66 7/8 x 66 7/8 x 7/8 in © Bernard Piffaretti.

Courtesy Lisson Gallery

"Pifaretti System": A line is separated in the middle of the canvas. The artist draws a structure and pattern on one half of it, and then reproduces the "almost" same pattern on the other edition by hand. The artist emphasizes that he never draws two identical things on the same picture. Sometimes it starts from the left, and sometimes it starts from the right. There is no certain rule, deliberately creating a kind of "systematic imperfection" that the artist calls.



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled, 2003, Acrylic on canvas, 250 x 300 x 2.5 cm, 98 3/8 x 118 x 7/8 in © Bernard Piffaretti.

Courtesy Lisson Gallery



Although the patterns on the left and right are very similar, they are not symmetrical mirror images, but twins in the same direction. That is, it can be called "two left sides" or "two right sides". Because these two parts are copied manually, there must be subtle differences in details. These differences may exist in the thin bottom line, the trail of a drop of color or a blank position, which is obviously a trace of artificial imperfection. . Or in his own words, "the same but different."



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled, 2005, Acrylic on canvas, 180.5 x 250.5 x 3.5 cm, 71 x 98 1/2 x 1 3/8 in © Bernard Piffaretti.

Courtesy Lisson Gallery

When the viewer faces a piece of this kind of work, he can't help but constantly refer to the two parts, looking for a part that is "imperfect". But since the left and right parts have no sequence and subordination relationship, there is no right or wrong relationship, and there is no prototype and copy relationship.



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled, 1999, Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 200 cm, 70 3/4 x 78 5/8 in © Bernard Piffaretti. Courtesy Lisson

Gallery



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled (métapeinture), 1998, Acrylic on canvas, 278 x 152 cm, 109 3/8 x 59 3/4 in © Bernard Piffaretti.

Courtesy Lisson Gallery

Bernard Piffaretti sought another abstract method (different from the stereotypes formed by abstract expressionism after World War II) to analyze the operation and concept of abstract essence. He has also become a quiet rebel of abstractionism. Since 1986, he has insisted on painting with a single system for more than 30 years, but he has continuously introduced new visual breakthroughs in the simplest form on the picture.



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled, 2005, Acrylic on canvas, 199.5 x 250.5 x 3.5 cm, 78 1/2 x 98 1/2 x 1 3/8 in © Bernard Piffaretti.

Courtesy Lisson Gallery

# LISSON GALLERY

artnet News

11 August 2020

artnet®news

## An Element of Musical Composition Inspired Bernard Piffaretti's Latest Exhibition—Watch the Artist Explain His Idiosyncratic Process Here

Watch a video of the artist discussing "Coda," his show on view online at Lisson Gallery through August 23.

**Katie White**, August 11, 2020



Bernard Piffaretti, *Untitled* (1998). Courtesy of Lisson Gallery.

In music, a coda is a particular kind of finale that's meant to sound at once familiar and innovative. Compositionally, the coda revisits passages from earlier in the score but expands and reworks them here and there to create a more expansive sound. One could consider it the musical equivalent of bringing an essay to its final conclusion.

In his new exhibition, "Coda," at Lisson Gallery, French artist Bernard Piffaretti uses the idea of the coda to parallel two bodies of work on view; one, a group of paintings he made between 1989 and 1999, and the others, made as a kind of response to these earlier works created over just the past few years.

What all the works share in common is Piffaretti's signature compositional structure. When starting a new work the artist always begins by painting a single vertical line down the middle of his canvas, spitting it in two. On one side of the line, he then paints a composition, often filled with characteristically loose geometric shapes in bright colors. Then, on the other side, he attempts to recreate the same image, creating a doubling effect.



Bernard Piffaretti, *Untitled* (2019). Courtesy of Lisson Gallery.

The process is an intentionally imperfect one that allows for chance, changes, and mistakes. Once completed, the viewer cannot help but search out the differences, as the eye darts back and forth between seeing two separate compositions and the unifying larger image. For Piffaretti, the process allows him to reconsider the very composition he's just created and improvise upon it.

"I believe that this central marking, which is a line that carries on from canvas to canvas, is a bit like the coda symbol in sheet music that indicates that there will be resumption at some point," the artist has said. "And in my paintings, I know from the start that there will be a resumption and that it is this central marking that will lead to this new beginning."



Portrait of Bernard Piffaretti. Photo by Justin Westover.

Piffaretti doubles down on this process of return and conceptualization in this exhibition. His new paintings from 2019 and 2020 respond to the earlier canvases, and to themes he was examining some 20 to 30 years ago. Here, his chronological shift mimics the musical coda—revisiting ideas, but layering upon them and intensifying them in such a way as to feel conclusive.

For Piffaretti, the boundaries he creates are arbitrary. Instead, he is most interested in the process of creating an open-ended body that can be returned to again and again, existing in a perpetually unfinished, adaptive state.

*"Bernard Piffaretti: Coda" is on view at Lisson Gallery Online through August 23, 2020.*



*Brooklyn Rail*  
6 October 2021

## BROOKLYN RAIL

ArtSeen

### Bernard Piffaretti

Instead of a tussle between original and copy, we get something much more eye-bending and mind-bending.

By **Raphael Rubinstein**



Bernard Piffaretti, *Untitled*, 2013. Acrylic on canvas, 31 7/8 x 25 1/2 x 7/8 inches. © Bernard Piffaretti. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Until this current show at Lisson, French painter Bernard Piffaretti hadn't had a solo exhibition in New York since 2002 (at Cheim and Read). That's 17 years ago. Far, far too long a time to pass without seeing the work of an artist who is one of the great painters of his generation (born in 1955). The reasons for this protracted absence probably have something to do with the curious prejudice against contemporary French art, especially painting, that prevailed in New York for many decades. Happily, this bias seems to be fading as several galleries have begun helping New Yorkers catch up with decades of artistic developments in France. I'm thinking of recent shows devoted to Pierre Buraglio and Claude Viallat (at Ceysson-Bénétière), Bernard Frize (at Perrotin) and numerous participants of the Supports/Surfaces movement (at Canada).

The procedure that has dominated Piffaretti's work since the early 1980s is simple to describe, but the paintings that result from it, and the lines of thought they inspire, are anything but simple. Each painting begins with the artist using a single vertical line to divide the canvas into two equal parts. Using thin acrylic paint, Piffaretti then builds an abstract composition of flat loose shapes on one side of the line, left or right as the mood strikes him. He then re-creates the same composition on the other side of the dividing line. Of course, it's not the same composition. For one thing, although Piffaretti attempts to follow the first composition as closely as possible, his intentionally casual manner makes it hard to create a perfect copy (sometimes he finds himself totally unable to remake a composition and leaves half of the canvas blank). Secondly, even if he could make a perfect copy, that's not his chief concern. Thirdly, and most importantly, because the second version inevitably must share a canvas with the first version, it is now a question of looking at a doubled image, not a single one. In other words, all three components—the central line, the first composition, and the second—must be taken in as a single painting.

It's here that things begin to get complicated. Sometimes the vertical line, what Piffaretti has called "the central mark," establishes a stark division between left and right, but often it seems to attach itself to one side or the other, and as it does so it throws off the symmetry of the painting. Seeking stability, the viewer tries to hold onto the idea of a repeated image, while the painter, more interested in instability, seeks to thwart such readings. Usually, chez Piffaretti, instability wins.

Because we can't know which side came first, a chronological approach is of no use. This is one reason why, despite initial similarities, Piffaretti's project has almost nothing to do with appropriation art. Instead of a tussle between original and copy, we get something much more eye-bending and mind-bending. As Piffaretti has noted, one effect of redoing a composition is to "cut off any subjective efforts due to the painting's form, style or color." The doubling process demystifies painting and renders it useless as an emblem of selfhood. Of course, Piffaretti is not the first painter to deconstruct his medium, but what makes his work so fundamentally different from other critique-driven painters from Martin Barré to Peter Halley is that he pursues an exhilarating formal freedom, which he achieves, unexpectedly, with standard colors and no-nonsense paint handling.



Bernard Piffaretti, Untitled , 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 66 7/8 x 66 7/8 inches. © Bernard Piffaretti. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.



Bernard Piffaretti, *Untitled*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 25 1/2 x 36 1/8 x 7/8 inches. © Bernard Piffaretti. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

The discourse of doubleness and repetition is vast: Borges's *Pierre Menard*, Artaud's *Theater and its Double*, Poe's *William Wilson*, Rauschenberg's *Factum 1* and *2* (often cited in relation to Piffaretti, but actually not very relevant), Marx's notion of historical repetition as tragedy and farce, Nietzsche's *Eternal Return*, all those Warhol silkscreens, the film *Groundhog Day*. For his part, Piffaretti professes affinities with constraint-driven Oulipo writers like Georges Perec and with Samuel Beckett and the Melville of *Bartleby the Scrivener* (both exemplars of what Spanish novelist Enrique Vila-Matas calls "writers of the No.") Piffaretti likes to describe his painting as driven by negation.

My first exposure to Piffaretti's work was in the 1980s at the Parisian gallery Jean Fournier on Rue Quincampoix. There his work was often shown alongside gallery artists who included, among others, Shirley Jaffe, Joan Mitchell and Sam Francis. For all their conceptual density, Piffaretti's compositions easily held their own among such high-powered retinalists. I thought then and still think now how wonderfully paradoxical it is that a strict procedure and a spirit of negation should result in some of the most visually buoyant paintings I have ever seen.

# LISSON GALLERY

*Hyperallergic*  
5 October 2019

## HYPERALLERGIC

### Abstraction's Exhaustion and Renewal

Bernard Piffaretti is an artist who recognizes painting as an act of inquiry and skepticism.



Jason Stopa    October 5, 2019



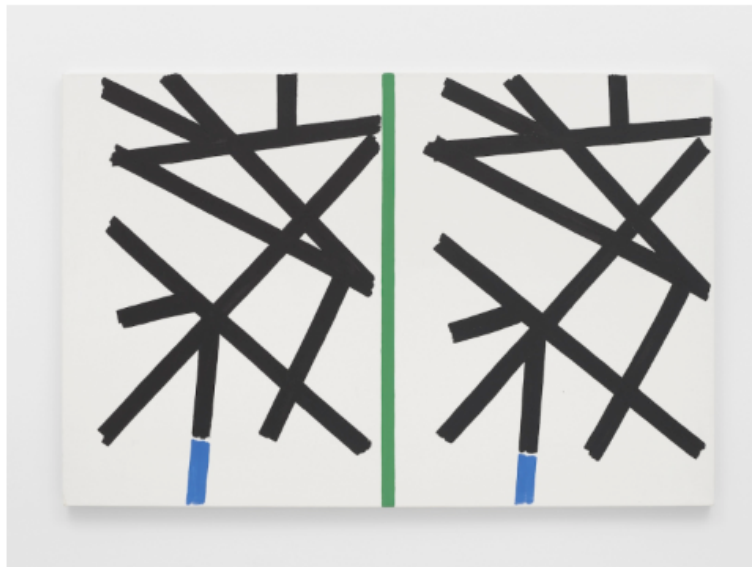
Bernard Piffaretti, "Untitled" (2019), acrylic on canvas, 47 1/8 x 31 1/2 x 7/8 inches, © Bernard Piffaretti (all images courtesy Lisson Gallery)

The current solo [exhibition](#) of Paris-based artist Bernard Piffaretti at Lisson Gallery charts the familiar territory he has trodden since the mid-1980s. Piffaretti came of age after the innovations of the French artist groups BMPT (Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni) and Support/Surface, whose work, in contrast to the almost purely aesthetic interpretation it receives today, held radical, political intentions.



Formally, the serialization and repetition practiced by the two groups would appear to have had the greatest effect on Piffaretti's work, but herein lies a major difference in postwar thinking about painting.

The Americans, in an effort to avoid any residual subjectivity from the Abstract Expressionists, careened toward serialization *and* the fetishization of surface, evidenced by the machine aesthetic present in the works of Donald Judd.



Bernard Piffaretti, "Untitled" (2005), acrylic on canvas, 38 1/8 x 57 3/8 x 7/8 inches, © Bernard Piffaretti

Piffaretti, along with French peers like Bernard Frize and Jérôme Boutherin, were not engaged in simple stylistic endeavors, but sought out new possibilities for abstraction, and went on to discover a provincial form of idiosyncratic painting; Piffaretti's twelve modest-sized paintings on view at Lisson present themselves as an altogether humbler, yet exacting project.

The artist divides his canvas into halves, bisecting each half with a central vertical strip of paint; one side is then painted in crisp, graphic lines, color patterns, and gestural swipes, which are painstakingly mimicked on the other half.

Or so one thinks. These works are nothing if not contradictory. The occasional drip, mark, or line on the second half doesn't always square up with the original, begging the viewer to look now and look again. Asking for sustained attention is not an easy get, but these works do not disappoint. The artist doesn't repeat any singular motif; rather he sets up a series of problems to be resolved by doubling the image.

The left half of the hot-colored "Untitled" (2016), one of the largest paintings in the show, is nearly covered by a thin, drippy, fuchsia pink field that stops a few inches short of the bottom. A solid white line zigzags on top of the pink, where a cobalt blue band breaks near the upper edge to form a hook.



Bernard Piffaretti, "Untitled" (2016), acrylic on canvas, 59 x 59 x 7/8 inches, © Bernard Piffaretti

Cadmium red and bright orange bands alternate behind and beside the blue, obscuring the pink field and the zigzagging line, but painted thinly enough to reveal their ghosts. Drips appear on each half of the canvas that do not match the locations of their counterparts. There is in fact a greenish-blue drip emerging from the bottom left orange band, a color seen nowhere else in the painting, while the right half features more drips in pink. These incidental marks defy the notion that Piffaretti's process is about execution rather than chance, intuition, and intentionality.

More recent works, like "Untitled" (2019), offer a convincing case for the artist's off-handed, casual approach to mark-making. Here, Piffaretti leaves much of the canvas bare, establishing a relationship to the irresolution employed by American counterparts like Matt Connors, Mary Heilmann, Joe Fyfe, and Patricia Treib. The paint is thin, like ceramic glaze. The mark-making is unembellished, matter of fact. The resulting images are by turns comical, serious, contradictory, playful, and searching — all very human. In the end, all the viewer has left to go on are the inconsistencies and variations between the two halves.





Bernard Piffaretti, "Untitled" (2019), acrylic on canvas, 66 7/8 x 66 7/8 inches, © Bernard Piffaretti

This is how Piffaretti doubles down on how we see. His mirroring of image and surface illuminates the act of perception, highlighting the emotional and philosophical relationships present in a response to a given set of conditions. Despite rapid changes in contemporary art, the conditions of painting remain essentially problems of scale, facture, color, and content. The artist establishes mirroring as a simple, yet significant approach to the continuance of abstraction after many of its forms and solutions have reached exhaustion.

Major galleries may boast rosters of highly skilled technicians who know how to make slick, dressed-up paintings that are optical, painterly, and luminous, yet few painters have a practice that recognizes painting as an act of inquiry and skepticism. In a world of image overconsumption, it is rare for an artist to make work that questions the status of authenticity in mark-making, and highlights discrepancies between image and painting.

Piffaretti's paintings are objects created with a certain kind of syntactical structure that evinces a snappy relationship to the ideas they represent, and demands to be perceived in a specific way.



Bernard Piffaretti, "Untitled" (2019), acrylic on canvas, 94 3/8 x 55 x 1 inches, © Bernard Piffaretti

First, there are acts of negation. The artist avoids style. He paints in a number of manners and vocabularies, and in doing so, he resists subjective readings based on related motifs and a consistent painterly approach. Second, he avoids surface fetishization. The fetish object conceals the work that went into producing it, while luxury goods foreground the quality of the handiwork that went into them. Piffaretti is undertaking one of painting's roles today, which is to wedge space between these two ways of addressing an object.

When we scroll through social media, we often occupy the position of the passive spectator, who takes pleasure in images while ignoring their production, ideology, or value. It is a mode of viewing that is insulated from a concrete relationship to objects in the world.

By doubling his imagery, the artist implicates the spectator within the space of the painting. The inconsistencies and variations in these paintings challenge our dulled gaze. By creating an animated space of play through the presentation of inexact repetitions, Piffaretti foregrounds the importance of the shared space of viewership, and requires that we actively look and interpret the work. Beneath the formal apparatus of these paintings, there runs an unexpected current of egalitarianism.

These works are about sensate pleasure. With 40 years of painting behind it, Piffaretti's project points toward endless discovery. There are no retreads in his oeuvre, but rather a series of colorful, dynamic one-offs. These are works which call us back to painting as a space of immeasurable possibility, reveling in the enlivened exchange between artist and observer.

Bernard Piffaretti continues at *Lisson Gallery* (138 Tenth Avenue, Chelsea, Manhattan) through October 19.