

STAYING IN SHAPE

The method

Methods are radically different depending on works. The black grid are extremely prepared and made from selected sketches that are copied and enlarged. Paint is the ultimate step. In more recent paintings the preparation work is part of what we see, it is the meshwork. I generally go through a long phase where what I do is only a training session. The brain gets tired and another way of doing things take over. I believe in two mechanisms. One that projects, writes down, argues, plans and knows. This one is very invasive. And another one that tries to dismantle all that. It all comes down to knowledge and something that isn't satisfied with it and fights it. All the reasons have to dissolve. At that very moment, I am working.

The position

The project that takes shape might actually be about painting the project, the moment when what is developing positions itself. I am looking where projects begin and how they start. For now, I haven't found anything better than painting to really see how it goes, to not be disturbed by anything else than what is happening on a plane and determined surface. I use simple elements such as a line, a sort of ABC. I favor a simple approach, an experimental state.

The tools

There must be mechanisms or procedures, but they get lost along the way, in any case they don't end up where they should be going, they make the pattern inadvertently. The attitudes that consist in using a tool in different ways are behind us, it's all been done before. Two options then present themselves, carrying on or looking for the flaws in order to start again and hold on. So, while I am interested in the line, it is preferably where it's no longer relevant, where there is an error. The line in "les absences du modeleur" (the modeler's absences) drawings says yes and no. I wanted to create simple geometric shapes, but obviously I didn't believe in that simplicity, and my hand took over and created this kind of binary outline. In the final black pastel drawings, the line gets tangled up, some people see sketches or landscapes in them, a very precise story that continuously intersect, a fairytale: the princess who loves the prince who loves the king who loves the princess.

The detachment

I wish that if something should appear or disappear, then that's all there would be. There is no more pattern than there is background. In fact, the pattern is what bothers me when I look at the paintings. I always get the impression that, just like in a cinema room, there is somebody in front of me who is too tall and obstructing the screen. It is true that I have troubled myself with knowing how a pattern stood out from a background, but I realized that I also made the pattern stand out.

The shape

I often get asked how I stop a shape. One day, someone was a bit embarrassed to tell me, about a drawing, that "it looks like... a rabbit". It doesn't matter if the shapes remind you of something, I don't want them to be pure. And in that case, they are sticky, they stick to your memory by going through several categories.

The loosening

Legitimacy is in the very simple processes, the games that allow me to start a painting. Sensitivity is about adopting the loosening of an initial distracted and automatic gesture. When I talk about legitimacy, I allude to what could create a painting and it seems to me that it measures up to the stakes brought out by painting. Yet painting has detached itself from our reality and has settled in the reality of its history and practice. This double movement was able to lead to the appearance of a simple formalism, an abstract painting ending up in a self-sufficient academism. But that would be judging it a bit too quickly and I can't bring myself to do that. I think it is still possible to have a painting that does care about its shape and implementation, In fact this worry joins that of our own positions in a reality. I remain convinced that painting is a story of unacceptable shapes, so wondering whether it is legitimate is good, looking to respond to it is dramatic.

The partners.

The echoes are numerous. Somebody said that painting is done with ghosts. As for me, some of them schematically come from post-war American painting. I had set a program for myself, which was to find out what I could do with the "expression" of the painting connected to this history. I respect it and at the same time I hate its bulimia, its profusion, its completely selfish stance. Therefore, I go from an intense state of repulsion to great tenderness. Right now, I am looking at two photos of paintings by Philip Guston and one of him in his studio. I like these paintings, this massive uncertainty and then I look at him in his studio, he is standing in front of the small paintings and he looks a bit tired. I am surprised by the medium and therefore very difficult size of the paintings.

The performance.

When I start painting, there is a discussion in my head, – what's this green curve? can't you see it's taking all the space – you have to start somewhere, it's taking up half the space – and what about this green, green and pink, are you happy with yourself, it's working well, yes – put some brown in, some brown, some brown above, on top of it and there, the red, yes spread it, not like that, a big dose of turquoise, blue blue green the yellow put it on top – it's really good, not soft enough, it has to get lost – maybe a yellow on top of everything – the yellow is underneath, three yellow-beige lines – put some purple on it – on it, completely, take up the grey again and put it down that way – no, some red some yellow some khaki – some green some orange, some orange some grey some blue some orange green – some green brown yellow blue some turquoise some black olive pink some light brown some beige grey blue some red pink bottle green, some green green green some yellow with some white that is too thick – some petrol – a bit too much with the pink some red – after that a big grey that drop slowly from top to bottom that turns around and creates a big blob – a small yellow green stain that stops; yellow, garnet pink, fuchsia that softly covers the purple that is too black – the purple is letting itself be pushed around – the dirty yellow is going too far – I stop it, we look; - the green green black that makes a loop – lost – no the loop is a ringlet, you want it fawning and confident or fearful and dirty? – I don't know, the mauve is too tight with the two beige trails, finally, it's true that I don't care whether it's on top or underneath.

Jérôme Boutterin, October 1999. in "Jérôme Boutterin" catalogue, DAP, Mairie de Paris. Exhibition 4-27 November 1999, contemporary art space, Paris, France.