

Bernar Venet

Indeterminacy

26 April – 22 June 2019

Blain|Southern Berlin



Continuous Curves, 2018
 Courtesy: Archives Bernar Venet, New York
 Photo: Jerome Cavaliere

Blain|Southern Berlin presents two major bodies of works from the last decade by conceptual artist Bernar Venet (b. 1941, France). The exhibition debuts Venet's *Continuous Curve* series, which stems from the artist's renowned *Indeterminate Line* sculptures, several iterations of which are shown here, alongside related works on paper.

Five large *Indeterminate Line* sculptures of looping rolled steel stand freely on the ground floor of the gallery. Their order and balance find their counterpoint in what appears to be the same loops, collapsed into a chaotic heap that obstructs the entrance. Venet describes this *Effondrement: Five Indeterminate Lines* and the accompanying *Indeterminate Lines* as "the result of improvised, intuitive, and empirical work. These sculptures don't create themselves. One must witness their production to understand how difficult it is to cold-twist these full steel bars, the largest of which measure 11 centimetres in square section. One then understands the dangers to which I expose myself and the physical efforts that I am subjected to. At each instant it is necessary to find improvised solutions so that I can attain the desired goals".

The upper gallery is dedicated to Venet's new series of wall reliefs, titled *Continuous Curves*. As with other works in the exhibition, these works, torch-cut from large steel plates, are grounded in mathematical practice. With their reduced, yet imposing elementary lines, they are positioned somewhere between the artist's sculptural works and works on paper, the latter of which relate to Venet's *Continuous Curves* and *Indeterminate Lines*. These graphite drawings and collages of lines drawn in heavy oil stick are generated through an equivalent, though less industrial, process to the making of the artist's torch-cut reliefs.

Born in 1941 in Château-Arnoux-Saint-Auban, France, Bernar Venet rose to prominence in the late Sixties through the avant-garde art scene in New York. He became instrumental in developing a radical new proposition involving the use of mathematics and scientific language, alongside artists such as On Kawara, Lawrence Weiner and Joseph Kosuth.

By the late Seventies, Venet found that the geometrical definitions that determined an outline allowed him to engage in an aesthetic approach that he had previously eschewed. In 1979, the outline became the work in itself; Venet made *Position of an Indeterminate Line* and shifted his focus away from pure geometry. Created

randomly without the aid of instruments, this graphite-on-wood work was in sharp visual contrast to earlier works. The introduction of chance into his practice, over time, created various opportunities for him to explore new aesthetics in works that remained rooted in mathematics.

Whether geometrically defined or indeterminate, the relief of Venet's wall-based works moved closer over time towards sculpture, for the first time connecting with both the wall and the ground in *Indeterminate Line*, 1984. His works are in collections of major museums, including Centre Pompidou, Paris; Guggenheim, New York and MoMA, New York. Venet's works have been exhibited widely around the globe, including at The Palace of Versailles and a recent retrospective at MAC Lyon. An exhibition of his sculptures has been touring various cities around the world since 1994.

Notes to Editors

About the artist

Bernar Venet (b. 1941, Château-Arnoux-Saint-Auban, FR) has made a significant impact on the development of conceptual art. His 1963 installation, *Tas de charbon*, (*Pile of Coal*), is widely recognised as the first sculpture without specific shape and the first recorded instance of an unmanipulated, natural material that was presented as a work of art. Until 1966, Venet predominately created paintings with tar and cardboard reliefs. From 1966 onwards, he worked for four highly productive years in New York, before breaking off his artistic activities as part of a plan he had defined years before. During this period, Venet devoted himself to theory and teaching at the Sorbonne in Paris. He resumed his art-making practice in 1976 with a renewed focus on the line as his main subject. In 1994, Venet was invited by Mayor Jacques Chirac to present twelve sculptures from his *Indeterminate Line* series on the Champ de Mars, beneath the Eiffel Tower in Paris, which went on to tour 35 cities across Europe, Asia, and the Americas. More recently, in 2011, Venet became the fourth contemporary artist to be offered a solo exhibition in the grounds of the Château de Versailles. He has been awarded France's highest decoration, the Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, Commandeur dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the French Ministry of Culture and was the 2013 recipient of the International Julio González Sculpture Prize from Valencia's IVAM, having already received the Grand Prix des Arts de la Ville de Paris in 1989. In February 2016, the International Sculpture Center in New York presented Venet with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his exemplary contributions to the field of sculpture.

Venet's recent exhibitions include: *Bernar Venet. The conceptual years 1966-1976*, MAMAC, Nice, FR (2019); *Bernar Venet, Retrospective 2019-1959*, MAC Lyon, FR (2018); *Bernar Venet*, Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc, Antibes and Château Saint-Martin, Vence (in association with Oetker Collection), FR (2018); *Bernar Venet at Cliveden*, The National Trust's Cliveden, Buckinghamshire, UK, (2017); *Looking Forward: 1961-1984*, Blain|Southern London (2017); *Bernar Venet: Les origines 1961-1966*, L'Espace de l'art concret, Mouans-Sartoux, FR (2016); *Bernar Venet*, Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids, Michigan, US (2012); *Bernar Venet*, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, KS, *Venet-Versailles*, Château de Versailles, Château de Marly, FR (2011); *Bernar Venet*, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM) (curated by Barbara Rose), Valencia, ES, (2010); *Bernar Venet*, Le Arsenale di Venezia, 53rd Venice Biennale, IT (2009); *Bernar Venet: System und Zufall*, Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst in Duisburg, DE (2007); *Bernar Venet aux Tuileries*, Jardin des Tuileries, Paris, FR (2003); *Bernar Venet*, Musée d'Art moderne et d'Art contemporain (MAMAC), Nice, FR (2003).

About Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern was founded in 2010 by Harry Blain and Graham Southern, with gallery spaces in London, followed by Berlin in 2011 and New York this year. The gallery represents an expanding roster of international artists and several artists' estates, including: Avigdor Arikha; Agathe de Bailliencourt; Ali Banisadr; Marius Bercea; Jonas Burgert; Lynn Chadwick; Jake & Dinos Chapman; Francesco Clemente; Mat Collishaw; Amy Feldman; Lucian Freud; Damien Hirst; Rachel Howard; Michael Joo; Edward & Nancy Kienholz; Joanna Kirk; Abdoulaye Konaté; Moshekwa Langa; Enrique Martínez Celaya; Harland Miller; François Morellet; Ed Moses; Fujiko Nakaya; Pietro Ruffo; Sean Scully; Chiharu Shiota; Yinka Shonibare CBE; Michael Simpson; Joan Snyder; Bosco Sodi; Henning Strassburger; Kishio Suga; Frank Thiel; Liliane Tomasko; Nasan Tur; Bernar Venet; Jeroen Verhoeven; Bill Viola; Tim Noble and Sue Webster; Lawrence Weiner; Wim Wenders; James White; Sislej Xhafa; and Gilberto Zorio.

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