

David Reed

Whirlpool

September 6 - October 26, 2024

91, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Paris 8^e



#795, 2023 - 2024, acrylic on polyester, 76,2 × 172,7 cm (30 × 68 in.) / © Lance Brewer / Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia Paris/Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present *Whirlpool*, the first solo exhibition of the American artist David Reed at its gallery in Paris. Born in 1946 in San Diego, California, Reed has lived and worked in New York since 1966. After attending the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Madison, Maine, and Reed College in Portland, Oregon, he continued his studies under the tuition of Milton Resnick and Mercedes Matter at the New York Studio School, where he also took part in a seminar directed by Philip Guston.

While the New York School did have an influence on Reed, it was the emphasis on process and physicality in the work of such artists as Richard Serra and Barry Le Va that enabled him to transcend the prevailing approach to painting in the United States at the time¹. Reed feels that the particular potential of painting lies in its ability to remain open to other media. Minimalist sculpture, photography, and cinema—notably the flicker films of Paul Sharits, with their colorimetry and optical effects—were among his early influences. Throughout a prolific career spanning more than sixty years, he has developed a body of work in which process, light, and color play a pivotal role. Galerie Nathalie Obadia exhibition brings together a series of recent paintings that exemplify Reed's latest thoughts on the notion of “optical color” in painting.

There is a secretive aspect to Reed's works: their titles are simply numbers and the processes that produce them remain enigmatic. The viewer's gaze penetrates the internal structure of each painting, wandering between light and dark, through fluid layers of paint that seem almost to shift as the various overlapping hues are illuminated by permeating light. “In this suspended atmosphere, then, Reed's paintings seem to float in shrouded glory—all the darker for their lightness—and to evoke, in Mike Kelley's phrase, that ‘uncanny’ moment at which ‘a dead thing seems on the verge of coming to life.’”²

The distinctive sense of light in Reed's work might well be an echo from his childhood. He grew up in Point Loma, California, in a modernist house designed by his uncle, the Southern California architect John August Reed. The artist himself has said that the best qualities of his paintings probably have their roots in the experiences of his youth—his childhood home, flooded with daylight and filled with constantly moving shadows, and the larger context of the southern California coast, with its beauty and yet sense of danger from the immensity and roughness of the ocean on the edge of the continent.

Reed's virtuoso shaping of light also aligns his work with that of certain sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian painters of the Mannerist and Baroque schools. Among his inspirations he cites Tintoretto, whom he sees as a pioneer in the use of “optical color” in painting thanks to the artist's skills in the art of dyeing. Tintoretto used white lead paint,

¹See, e.g., Craig G. Staff, *Modernist Painting and Materiality* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011).

²Dave Hickey, “David Reed: Flesh, Fabric, Film, Finish,” in Ingvild Goetz, *New York Painters*, exh. cat. (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1993), 42–45.

which, in places where it's unevenly glazed with a transparent green, gives the impression of rose-tinted light—a light that actually does not exist on the painted surface. This interest also appears in the work of contemporary artists such as Simon Hantaï, especially in his *Tabulas Lilas* (1980). Fascinated by this enigmatic particularity, Reed explores the possibilities it entails in all the works on display in the exhibition.

Reed intends each of his works to become “a unique color experience that tests all of the possible aspects of color.” He employs simultaneous contrasts, sometimes enclosing them in a gray that veers toward a green or a reddish color. Bursts of color, some almost like splashes, spread across the canvas and vary in hue when they overlap. Through this body of work, shown for the first time at Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Reed probes unfathomed areas of our brain, seeking not to understand its complexities but to activate its capacities. Because that is what painting achieves: it produces, activates, and touches something in the mind that, as Reed says, “is not an emotion or a thought.”

Reed is an observer of these effects engendered by painting—like Hantaï before him, who declared that “above and beyond a profound desire to paint, there is an interrogation of gesture that imposes itself.”³ The way painting affects the mind could be at the root of certain unexplained cerebral phenomena, like those birds that dive into the void, wings folded, along the cliffs of the Grand Canyon. As Reed himself wonders, “What draws one to jump off a high place, or to the edge, to look down?”

³Simon Hantaï, quoted in Marcelin Pleynet, “La levée de l'interprétation des signes ou Les Manteaux de la Vierge,” in Pleynet, *Simon Hantaï*, exh. cat. (Paris : Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1976).

Born in 1946 in San Diego (USA), David Reed lives and works in New York (USA).

After studying at the New York Studio School, where he became familiar with the great tradition of abstract expressionism, David Reed found inspiration in the minimalist sculptors and experimental cinema, among others. The artist also finds his inspiration in European painting, in particular Italian Renaissance painters. In fact, he borrows the dramatic gesturalness from the Baroque, while also reflecting on the concept of *cangiante* or changing color. The latter is a painting mode dating back to the Italian Renaissance and it consists in the modeling of light using opposing hues, by working on the chromatic transitions and the contrast. His fluid, swirling brushstrokes reveal both the alacrity of his brushwork and the speed of color and light, in a similar way to a photograph or a film. Over the last sixty years of his prolific career, David Reed has developed a virtuoso body of work, establishing him amongst the most influential abstract painters on the international art scene.

David Reed has been the subject of numerous important solo exhibitions, including *David Reed Vice and Reflection - An Old Painting*, New Paintings and Animations at the Pérez Art Museum (Miami, USA, 2016), *Two by Two : Mary Heilmann & David Reed* at Museum für Gegenwart, Hamburger Bahnhof (Berlin, Germany, 2015), *The Mirror and The Pool* at Kunstmuseen Krefeld, Museum Haus Lange (Krefeld, Germany, 2015), *David Reed - Heart of Glass, Paintings and Drawings 1967-2012* at Kunstmuseum Bonn (Bonn, Germany, 2012), *David Reed: Lives of Paintings* at Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College (Portland, USA, 2008), *Leave Yourself Behind. Paintings and Special Projects 1967-2005* at the Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State University (Wichita, USA, 2005), *David Reed - You look good in blue* at the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen (St. Gallen, Switzerland, 2001).

His works can be found in important international institutional collections, including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo, USA); Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, USA); Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris, France); FRAC-Auvergne (Clermont-Ferrand, France); Museum für Moderne Kunst (Frankfurt am Main, Germany); Kunstmuseum St. Gallen (St. Gallen, Switzerland); Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, USA); Museum of Contemporary Art (San Diego, USA); National Gallery of Art (Washington, USA); Orange County Museum of Art (Costa Mesa, USA); Virginia Museum of Fine Art (Richmond, USA); Roswell Museum and Art Center (Roswell, USA); Sammlung Goetz (Munich, Germany); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York, USA); Ulrich Museum of Art (Wichita, USA).

Paris Saint-Honoré

David Reed
Whirlpool
September 6 - October 26, 2024

Laure Prouvost
November 15 - January 2025

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Johanna Mirabel
Adieu la chair
September 7 - October 19, 2024

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri - Espace II

Jérôme Zonder
October 5 - December 2024

Brussels

Nú Barreto
Sensibilité
September 5 - October 19, 2024

Joris Van de Moortel
October 24 - January 11, 2025

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