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5 Questions with Bernar Venet

We pick the brain of French artist Bernar Venet to find out about his favourite themes and how math and science can mingle with art to great effect

BY ANNABELLE TEO



Bernar Venet

Turning scribbles into sculptures, Bernar Venet's new *GRIB* series translates the action of two-dimensional random drawing into the physicality of precise three-dimensional figures. Those familiar with the French artist's repertoire may have connected the figurative dots with his previous *Indeterminate Line* wall reliefs made between 1979 and 1983, which also recalls the irregularity of scribbled shapes.

Venet is today regarded as an influential contemporary artist, and last year he unveiled his solo exhibition at the Château de Versailles in France, making him only one of five contemporary artists to be given the honour.

References to mathematical concepts and scientific theories have always been present in his abstract pieces, and he has explored the various media of painting, poetry, film, and performance over the course of close to five decades of artistic endeavours.



GRIBS

The *GRIB* series is presented as part of Venet's first solo exhibition in Singapore, at Art Plural Gallery, which also features some of his latest paintings of mathematical equations, *Saturation* and *Shaped Canvases*, which manage to form a thought-provoking synthesis of art and mathematics.

We pose a few questions to Venet to get more insight on his creative process and the key themes that drive his work forward.

Asia Tatler: What would you say are some of your aesthetic hallmarks?

Bernar Venet: The spectacular aspect of my sculptures based on lines and the diversity of my monumental pieces seem to have left more of an impression than the rest of my work which came before. The public, or rather the art critics, often mention the conceptual aspect of my paintings related to mathematics without a proper understanding of my intentions. Some people think that I am passionate about mathematics, which is completely untrue.

AT: What are some recurring themes you find yourself exploring through your works?

BV: Volume (*Effondrements*, or "collapses"); Surface Area (*Indeterminate Surfaces*) and Points are all themes that I've explored more or less throughout my 50 years of artistic activity. But it is above all the Line that has afforded me my most original developments. For this, I remain most faithful, and continue to delve in depth into the subject. Order and Disorder are at the basis of my formal proposals, and it is the autonomy of art, the aspect of self-referentiality, that remains a major concern for me.

AT: What inspires you?

BV: Nothing really that is outside of my artwork. My work is self-generated, and builds upon itself by taking chances. Initially, I have an intuition about something that is possible, all while remaining distanced from notions from the past. There are still uncertainties during the construction process, though occasionally the result allows for the discovery of new possibilities, both formal and conceptual.

Bernar Venet's solo exhibition is now on until November 24, 2012, at Art Plural Gallery, 38 Armenian Street

Photos: Andreas Zimmermann (Bernar Venet portrait); Archives Bernar Venet, New York