

Press Release

Niele Toroni

January 27 – March 2, 2024
Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm

Galerie Barbara Weiss is pleased to present an exhibition comprising eleven works on newspaper by Niele Toroni.

Niele Toroni was born in Muralto, Switzerland in 1937. In 1959 he went to Paris to paint. Since 1967 his work has unfolded from a single method: imprints of a N° 50 paintbrush at regular intervals of 30 cm, which he first introduced at the Eighteenth Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Since then he has been applying, on a wide variety of surfaces, imprints of a N° 50 paintbrush at regular intervals of 30 cm. Toroni calls all his work *travail/peinture* (work/painting) in an emphasis on the physical, mundane aspect of his chosen approach to painting and to categorically de-mystify the medium. As he states it:

'Imprints of a N° 50 brush repeated at regular intervals of 30 cm' is the title of all my work and all my pieces. It's the literal statement as I have already written it; this wording is the common denominator of all my work/painting; it says everything and nothing (means nothing) if one doesn't see the given work.

Niele Toroni's practice unfolds with each imprint, which are always the same (an imprint of a N° 50 brush at regular intervals of 30 cm) and always different (no imprint looks exactly like the one before or after). The invitation card for Toroni's first exhibition intentionally did not include his name, rather simply stating: *Empreintes de pinceau N° 50 répétées à intervalles réguliers (30 cm)* followed by the name and the address of Galerie Yvon Lambert. Here too, Toroni emphasizes the work/painting as the only information necessary when encountering his imprints.

As a young artist without a studio, Toroni worked on weekends in the halls of the school where his wife was teaching. He would bring a roll of waxed canvas, and at the end of the weekend he would have 15 or 20 meters of work, which he then could carry around in a roll. When invited to an exhibition, Toroni would bring a roll to the venue and, once a suitable space was found, he would cut the roll accordingly. Soon, Toroni began to apply the brush directly on the walls instead of bringing his roll, in what he called interventions.

Toroni cites his experience visiting frescos by Giotto and Piero della Francesca as an inspiration in his quest to allow painting to show itself unencumbered, and how seeing these works in the spaces they were created for influenced his own practice. In his interventions, Toroni aims towards a dialogue between his work/painting and the surrounding, making all decisions in situ, without any preparatory drawings or sketches. Often, these works are characterized by a precariousness, as most of his interventions are inevitably painted over. The works on view are all painted on newspaper, dating between 1989 and 1991. Toroni worked in this way for a short period of a few years, and the series constitutes a rare case where he chose a non-monochromatic support for his work/painting. Generally using newspapers that were available in the places he was preparing an exhibition, Toroni located these works both in time (via their exact dates) and the cultural context (via the articles, advertisements and design of the newspapers). The superimposition of his work/painting over the daily events – significant or trivial – contrasts a snapshot of the endless flowing and updating news cycle with Toroni's unchanging, stoically executed methodology.

Niele Toroni belongs to the first generation of European minimalist painters active since the 1960s. From 1966–67, Toroni was part of the artist group BMPT – Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni— which opposed the established pictorial tradition while asserting rigorous abstraction. After the group disbanded in 1967, Toroni was the only member to remain absolutely faithful to his initial working method.

Niele Toroni was awarded the Rubenspreis in 2016; the Meret-Oppenheim Prize in 2012; the Wolfgang-Hahn Prize by the Museum Ludwig Cologne in 2003; and the French Vermeil Medal by the City of Paris in 2001.

His work has been exhibited widely including at: Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris, France, and the Swiss Institute, New York (both 2015); Bagnolo di Lonigo, Venice, Italy (2012); Foundation De 11 Lijnen, oudenburg, Belgium (2010); Museo Belle Arti, Lugano, Switzerland (2005); Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Germany (2002); L'école des Beaux-Arts de Nîmes, France (2001); CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, France (1997); the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (1994); the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France (1991); and the Renaissance Society, Chicago, Illinois (1990).

Permanent interventions include Villa Pisani Bonetti, Bagnolo di Lonigo, Italy; Ludwig Museum, Köln, Germany; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, France; Furkapass, Switzerland; Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany; Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands; Le Réservoir d'eau, Martigny, Switzerland.