

# Bertrand Lavier

## *Walt Disney Series*

15 January – 20 February 2016

Press Release

Xavier Hufkens is pleased to announce an exhibition of recent work by Bertrand Lavier.

At the heart of the presentation is a new series of paintings that belong to one of Lavier's most iconic bodies of work: *Walt Disney Productions*. The starting point for the project, which began in 1984, is to be found in a Walt Disney comic strip from 1977, in which Mickey and Minnie Mouse visit a modern art gallery. Here, they encounter an array of paintings and sculptures that ingeniously mimic genuine modern and contemporary art (the biomorphic sculptures in the story resemble the work of Jean Arp, for example). Fascinated by this, Lavier started to make life-size replicas of the Disney artworks. Hence his colourful, abstract canvases are directly inspired by the paintings that sprang from the cartoonist's imagination but which, in their own humorous way, were undoubtedly based upon real works of art. By appropriating the fictitious paintings from the inaccessible, printed page and presenting them as autonomous objects within a real gallery space, Lavier recreates an equivalent viewing experience to that of Mickey and Minnie. This loop calls into question the link between fact and fiction – notably the point as which the simulacrum becomes reality – and the representation of modern art in society. Interestingly, the striking simplicity of Lavier's compositions and the thick, painterly surfaces belie their technical complexity: each canvas incorporates a number of different materials and techniques, ranging from photography to laser-jet and silk-screen printing.

*Walt Disney Productions* is but one of several distinct bodies of work that Lavier has developed over the years, and which he refers to as *chantiers*. The term means 'building site' in English: a reference to the fact that each corpus is a work in progress, and therefore a mechanism through which to deal with constantly evolving issues about the nature of art, and the way that it is both appreciated and exhibited. Another famous *chantier* encompasses three-dimensional objects that have been covered in a thick layer of paint, one that is identical in colour to whatever lies beneath, right down to the smallest details. Except for the paint, Lavier's objects look exactly like the original – which confuses the viewer's visual perception. The cabinet in this exhibition is a typical example of this process. Lavier describes these works as being painted *sur le motif*, a 19th-century artistic term that means 'the painting of objects' or 'what the eye actually sees'. In this *chantier*, the idea is taken to a literal extreme. Yet by playing with such ambiguous words and concepts, the artist is also inviting the viewer to consider the true nature of this cabinet: is it an ordinary object or an artwork? Thus Lavier questions our notions about the way in which works of art are perceived, valued and accepted.

Bertrand Lavier (b. 1949) lives and works in Aigney-le-Duc (Burgundy, France) and Paris. In 2012, his work was the subject of a retrospective at the Pompidou Centre, Paris. Recent solo exhibitions and projects include *L'Affaire Tournesol*, Fondation Vincent Van Gogh, Arles, France (2014); *Fountain 2014*, Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London; *En résonance avec la Biennale d'art Contemporain de Lyon*, Musée d'Art Moderne, St Etienne, France (2011); *Afternoon*, Tsum, Moscow and the Musée Hermes, Seoul, Korea (2010) and *Correspondances: Bertrand Lavier/Edouard Manet*, Musée d'Orsay, Paris (2008).

Xavier Hufkens

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