



**Martin Barré, 67-Z-26-70x53, 1967**

Glycerophthalic and acrylic paint on canvas, 70 x 53 cm

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## Press release

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# Martin Barré

14 October 2020 - 4 January 2021

Galerie 3, level 1

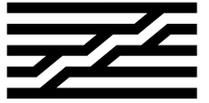
**Considered one of the most important abstract painters of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Martin Barré is the focus of a retrospective event at the Centre Pompidou. The exhibition follows those dedicated to abstract artists Pierre Soulages, Simon Hantaï, Jesus Rafael Soto, François Morellet and, most recently, Ellsworth Kelly.**

**The work of Martin Barré (1924-1993) is radical and among the most ambitious of his times.**

**The last major Parisian exhibition dedicated to him was that at the Jeu de Paume in 1993, focusing mainly on his output from the 1980s, following the exhibitions at the museums of Nantes, city of his birth, in 1989 and at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris in 1979.**

**The exhibition features 66 paintings dating from 1955 to 1992, including twelve of the twenty or so canvases in the Centre Pompidou collection, and presents the key sequences of his work and their specific logic.**

**In parallel, the 14 canvases that make up his work *L'Indissociable* (1977-78) are on show in the collections spaces on level 4 of the Museum. It has only been exhibited once, in 1979, on the occasion of the exhibition at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris.**



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From the middle of the 1950s, Martin Barré embarked on a very singular abstraction that was neither informal nor geometric. His painting was quick to draw attention as being among the most ambitious of the time and the Guggenheim Museum admitted him to its collection as early as 1958. His ambition was to reveal space rather than to produce forms and to do so, he made the line the central element of his language from 1960. Initially traced directly from the tube on the canvas, then using a spray can from 1963 until 1967, the line possesses a twofold virtue. It is much more effective than a form in referring to the gesture that produced it, whether the movement of the artist or the varying force with which the paint came out of the tube or spray can. Unlike the form, the line does not occupy the surface of the painting, but transforms it into a space under the effect of the trajectory it draws there.

After a four-year break spent on a “photo-conceptual episode”, Martin Barré returned to painting in 1972. Through to 1977, he created five series in which the reductive vein of the 1960s was reversed. All the series were created by the same method:

1. A fragment of a grid was traced obliquely on a white ground;
2. All or some of the boxes were filled with hatching (or marked in another way);
3. A more or less white veil was then added. The sequence could then begin again several times, with the grid changing its position or not, the hatching filling different boxes or the same ones and, in the latter case, with an identical or different orientation, before adding another veil.

A system was thus displayed (lines, either continuous or dotted, hyphens, transparency of the veils). Despite this revelation, however, any effect of mastery was evaded. The work became serial not to demonstrate the power of the system, but to show its excess, the very impossibility of completing the programme it opened up.

In the 1980s, the figure came back to the fore, having been eliminated by the predominance of the line through the 1960s and then being nothing more than a collateral effect of the system in the series of the 1970s. Along with the figure, colour also asserted itself, first of all in the “80-81” series with its subtle Pompeian hues, and then in his final series, in which figure and colour identified with each other, set against very slightly coloured whites. During this period, the painting of Martin Barré seemed to enter into a conversation with geometric abstraction, restoring the traditional relationship between ground and form which it had always sought to evade, yet without creating any illusion of depth of the pictorial field.

These paintings can be grasped immediately and propose a pure experience of beauty.

The catalogue of the exhibition has been prepared in partnership with the Mamco in Geneva, which organised a major Martin Barré retrospective in October 2019.



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## Practical information

The Exhibition

Martin Barré

14 october 2020 - 4 january 2021

Galerie 3, niveau 1

Curator

**Michel Gauthier**, curator Musée national d'art moderne, contemporary department  
assisted by **Rita Cusimano**, assistant curator at Musée national d'art moderne

Production Manager : **Bruno Veret**

Scenographer-architect : **Camille Excoffon**

Le Centre Pompidou

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Métro : Hôtel de Ville, Rambuteau

RER Châtelet-Les-Halles

### Opening times

Every day from 11am to 9pm, except Tuesdays

### Admissions

€14, reduced €11 / Free for those under 18. Young people under 26\*, teachers and students at schools of art, drama, dance and music and members of the Maison des artistes may visit the Museum for free and buy tickets for exhibitions at the concessionary rate. Free admission for Centre Pompidou members.

**Online booking mandatory on:** [www.billetterie.centrepompidou.fr](http://www.billetterie.centrepompidou.fr)

The requirement to book a time slot applies to all visitors, including members and visitors entitled to free admission.

**Visitors aged 11 and over must wear a mask.**

\* Nationals of Member States of the EU or the European Economic Area aged 18-25. Valid the same day for the Musée national d'art moderne and all exhibitions.

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