

# GÉRARD FROMANGER

17 FEBRUARY – 16 MAY 2016

After early works inspired by Giacometti, the mid-1960s saw Fromanger's painting turn towards the Pop aesthetic of France's "Figuration Narrative". Actively involved as an artist in the events of May 68, notably as a participant in the Atelier Populaire at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, in the decade that followed he painted a number of series that were among the major works of the period: "Boulevard des Italiens", "Le Peintre et le modèle", "Annoncez la couleur", "Le désir est partout", "Questions". Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault were among those who wrote about him.

Fromanger's painting is capable of evoking burning contemporary issues and registering profound social changes while never forgetting its status as painting – a painting in which colour plays a key role. Through 50 or so works ranging from 1957 to 2015, many of them donated to the Musée National d'Art Moderne, the exhibition takes up different aspects of an art in which political preoccupations and formal concerns are inseparably united, and neither the painting of life nor the life of painting is conceived independently of the other.

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## RED

From the running paint of a monochrome to the cut-out silhouettes of the pedestrians on the Boulevard des Italiens, red has played a continuing role in the successive phases of Gérard Fromanger's painting. At first the most simple affirmation of paint itself, it then became the radiant signifier of life's resistance to the commodity logic that takes over urban space. At the same time, the red of running paint became, under the eye of Jean-Luc Godard's camera, a political symbol, one of the colours of a flag that bleeds. And in the screen prints of the album *Le Rouge*, ten such bloodied flags flank the red silhouettes of the demonstrators of May 68. Red has thus played an essential role in Fromanger's art, embodying its twin commitments, as emblem of painting and symbol of social struggle.

## COLOUR CHART

In 1967, Fromanger set six elements of a colour chart in a vertical row against a schematic landscape, thus registering not only colour's importance to his art but also its arbitrary, coded character. The idea of colour as code finds notably accomplished expression in the series "Annoncez la couleur" (1973-1974); in these street scenes, the anti-naturalistic treatment of colour is underlined by the presence of sample rectangles of the paints used. If these refer to the painter's practice, they equally belong to the world of printing and the press. The colour code motif would be found throughout Fromanger's work up to the "Série noire" of 2002. Deployed in this way, the colour chart bars any naturalisation of the image.

## "DÉRIVE"

In the series "Paysages découpés" (1966-1967) the sun of the astonishing *Le soleil inonde ma toile* (1966) is combined with a cloud and a horizon line to form a schematic landscape subjected to a series of improbable vicissitudes. This aberration [dérive] of landscape continues in the *Souffles de mai* (1968), in which the circle of colour acts as a means to the transformation of urban space, flooding it with red. Since then, the sun of 1966 has continued its course through Fromanger's work; in *Peinture-Monde, Blanc de titane* (2015), it is multiplied, changing in colour and size, both pure painterly mark and symbol of *dérive* – aberrancy, insubordination – on a cosmic scale. In the canvases of the "Bastilles-Dérives" series, the passers-by that crowd the multisolar world of *Peinture-Monde* are invited to abandon the beaten path in a *dérive* in Situationist vein. Fromanger's art thus progresses from a transformation of landscape inspired by the struggle against the order of representation to a transformed interaction with the landscape prompted by rejection of the increasing functionalism and commodification of the street.

## THE ARTISTIC LIFE

For Fromanger, the artist's life is lived between art and the real, between studio and street. In the series "Le Peintre et le modèle", the black silhouette of the artist stands out in front of the spectacle of the street. Here, as Deleuze says, "The painter's model is the commodity". In *Au printemps ou la Vie à l'endroit* (1972), the painter restores to the living, to the passers-by, the colour of the commodities enthroned in the shop windows. On one side, the grim rule of the commodity, which at times finds expression in the greatest social violence (*La Mort de Pierre Overney*, 1975); on the other, the mortal threat of a pictorial tradition reduced to a long list of names (*Noir, nature morte*, 1994-1995). *La Vie d'artiste* (1975-1977) represents Fromanger's art in its duality, both testifying to the social struggles of the time and showing the painter amid the material and technical realities of his work.

## **THE DANCE OF CODES**

The "Questions" series (1976-1977) heralds the advent of the information society, interrogating painting's relationship to the media. Here we see photographers and reporters armed with cameras and microphones confronting purely painterly events; abstract form is presented as antithetical to the logic of the media. Fromanger's reflections on this theme culminate in the series "Tout est allumé" (1979); in today's empire of signs, painting must take these as its raw material, engaging in what Alain Jouffroy called a "dance of codes". The monumental *De toutes les couleurs, Peinture d'histoire* (1991-1992) is a continuation of "Tout est allumé", presenting the accelerated and disorganised circulation of data of all kinds – images of warplanes, Egyptian pyramids, animals, abstract blobs of colour – through the electronic channels that act as modern society's nervous system.

## **LINE PORTRAITS**

Fromanger has practiced portraiture from the start. From the 1970s onward, his portraits chiefly testify to friendships and encounters: Jacques Prévert, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Jean-Luc Godard... The portrait, though, is not just a testimony; it is also a terrain of formal exploration, as can be seen in drawings where the face magically emerges from the interaction of lines that appear completely non-representational in intent.

## EXHIBITION

### CURATOR

Michel Gauthier

### RESEARCH

Gabrielle Moussafir

### PRODUCTION

Anne-Claire Gervais  
assisted by Sara Renaud

### EXHIBITION DESIGN

Laurence Le Bris

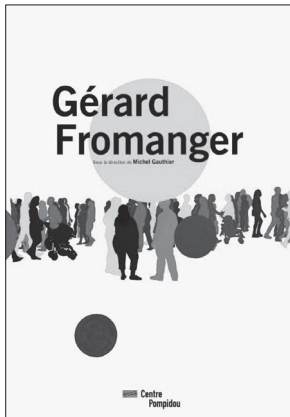
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## CATALOGUE

### G rard Fromanger

Edited by Michel Gauthier,  
curator of the exhibition  
144 pp., 124 col. ill.  
Price: €29.90



## AROUND THE EXHIBITION

### TOURS FOR VISITORS WITH DISABILITIES

#### Saturday 12/3

11 am, for the hearing impaired

#### Saturday 2/4

11 am, for the visually impaired

€4.50, companion free

### WORKSHOPS FOR YOUNG PUBLIC

#### Workshop: "Le charivari Fromanger!" 2-5 yrs, with parents/carers.

Superimposed, intertwined, juxtaposed or all lined up, colours and forms come together and come apart in these enjoyable sessions. Through pictures and physical play, children are gently introduced to the creative pleasures afforded by the world of G rard

Fromanger: geometric, musical and gripping, like his paintings.

**Saturdays 19/3, 2/4, 7/5**

**Sundays 20/3, 8/5**

**3 pm - 4.30 pm**

#### Workshop: "Le sc nario Fromanger!" 6-10 yrs, with parents/carers.

The workshop offers a hands-on exploration of the various phases of the artist's work - choice of subject, production of large scale silhouettes, combination and organisation of forms, contrast of colours - introducing children to the whole process of creation.

**Saturdays 19/3, 2/4, 7/5**

**Sundays 20/3, 8/5**

**3 pm - 4.30 pm**

## INFORMATION

01 44 78 12 33

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### EXHIBITION OPEN TO THE PUBLIC 17 February - 16 May 2016

Galerie du Mus e, Level 4  
(Entrance by level 5)

Every day except Tuesdays,  
11 am to 9 pm

Ticket desks close at 8.00 pm

### PRICES

#### Entry with "Museum & Exhibitions" ticket

Valid the same day for a single admission to each area:  
the Museum, all exhibitions and  
the View of Paris

#### €14, concessions €11

Free for under -18s and holders of  
the annual pass

### Tickets on line

[www.centrepompidou.fr/billetterie](http://www.centrepompidou.fr/billetterie)

### TWITTER

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  Centre Pompidou,  
Direction des publics, 2016

### Graphic Design

Pascal Guth

### Printing

Graph2000, 2016