

Martin Barré, a major figure in the history of postwar French abstraction, and R.H Quaytman, an American artist pivotal in the current resurgence of conceptual painting, use systems of proportion to create paintings as well as to install them. Rebellious against the classical ideal of compositional balance, their goal is to simultaneously establish a pictorial order and to destroy it. R.H Quaytman writes: “I seek to maintain and simultaneously disrupt painting’s absolute presence.” While Martin Barré states that: “I use a rule (a “rule of the game”): I transgress it when the painting calls for it.\*”

“Arrhythmia” will pair two paintings from Martin Barré’s «86-87» series with several of Quaytman’s panels from recent installations or “chapters.” Both sets of paintings begin with a modular grid only to then offset and perturb it in various ways – by changing its orientation, adding photographic imagery, extending the series, and varying the installation.

What happens when two different systems – each already complicated in its own right – come together in the same gallery? “Arrhythmia” will orchestrate the subliminal harmonies between the work of Martin Barré and R.H Quaytman. But it will also sow the seeds of their discord.

Now that the anti-pictorial bias of conceptual and post-minimal art has faded like a ship disappearing over the horizon, today’s art is free to re-think abstract painting - and even to think of painting itself as a kind of conceptual art form - by following Martin Barré’s and Rebecca Quaytman’s example.

\* Martin Barré, interview with Jean Clay, *Macula*, n° 2, 1977, p. 77-78.

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