ARTFORUM
MAY 2016 INTERNATIONAL

SUMMER PREVIEW

THE NEW LOOK:
ART AND FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY

Anyone who remembers Benetton ads from when they were new is not a "digital native" but rather someone who lived before the Internet was a public tool and before mobile technology and social media became pervasive extensions of human bodies and souls. Yet one always constructed and performed different versions of the self for different audiences. When I was sixteen, I starred in a television commercial for Typhoo Tea. It was an accident: As I was waiting for a friend, I was asked to audition; somehow I got the part by performing stories from my life, enacting someone's idea of a good-girl-turned-bad, an exaggerated version of myself. "Image Life" looked at that kind of experience: It explored what DIS term the "authentically generic" realm, in which the public self is styled to contain a familiar semiotics that conveys the tropes and emotions of the genre of "real life" one has chosen to portray—implying that we now exist in an echo chamber of performance, infinitely mirrored between the virtual and physical realms.

—*Kathy Noble*

PARIS

## Colette Brunschwig

GALERIE JOCELYN WOLFF

Despite having been created over five decades, from 1970 to the present, these eighteen works on paper by Colette Brunschwig in the exhibition "*Papiers*" had a similar dominant chromatic quality, with surprising correspondences, as if they were all part of a single series. It is difficult to say if, over time, Brunschwig's graphic works have proceeded toward darkness or light, if they are variations on black or experiments with the way in which a ray of light pierces, or at least illuminates, the accumulated densities of color. This ambiguity is partly a result of the technique employed: diluted ink on Chinese paper with frayed edges (except when the image is surrounded by a white border within the composition), so that the ink, absorbed by the support, seems to vibrate. The works are shown unframed and (in most cases) on an invisible mount that suspends the work slightly away from the wall.

Colette Brunschwig, *Untitled*, 2016, india ink on paper, 66¼ × 44½".

Brunschwig refers back to classical Chinese painting, which stands in stark contrast to the window-canvas of Renaissance perspectival theory, with its convention of keeping the surface affixed to the armature of an easel. For Brunschwig, who lived through the Holocaust, Chinese tradition was also a way to escape European history (maybe history *tout court*) in the wake of the tragic events of World War II. This runs counter to developments in France in the 1970s, when the Tel Quel group was drawn to Maoist China and members of the Supports/Surfaces movement gauged the efficacy of painting according to Marxist-Leninist positions. Brunschwig began painting in Paris in 1945. While she associated with artists such as Pierre Soulages, she gravitated above all to the world of writers and poets (among them Emmanuel Levinas, René Char, Robert Antelme, and Jean Bollack—a specialist in Greek philology and later on the poetry of Paul Celan). She easily embraced the entire history of modernist abstraction, establishing a dialogue with both the historical avant-garde movements and their neo-Dada reinvention between the '50s and '70s.

In retrospect, Brunschwig's abstractions seem to relate less to the modernism of Malevich or Mondrian than to the dark watercolors and drawings of Victor Hugo. She turns neither to geometry, the last resort of those who have abandoned the forms of the world, nor to art informel, to the expressive, spontaneous, or "lyrical" gesture. She rigorously avoids any recourse to figuration—upon which the catastrophe of the war seemed to stake a claim. She does not paint the last painting or an image beyond the visible, but rather observes, and produces, the conditions whereby an image can still come to light. The artist's activity is attested to by lines, scratches, and grids created by stenciling, a technique dissociated here from fashion, design, and the decorative arts, in which it was traditionally used in France.

Brunschwig's grids are irregular, incomplete, and undulating. At times they suggest snakeskin, life forms observed under a microscope, or sea depths through which light can barely filter. Rather than measuring a space, they evoke what, in 1946, Henri Michaux—with whom Brunschwig shares her predilection for abstraction, a confusion between painting and writing, and a passion for Chinese aesthetics—called *fantomisme*. Michaux used this neologism to describe the abandonment of any residual mimeticism in painting, the elimination of any physiognomic features in a portrait. There would no longer be hair, a nose, eyes, or other facial features, but rather an "*être fluidique*," a fluidic being that escapes any firm implantation in an image. This is the way that Brunschwig explores the texture of the paper, or what she calls its third dimension. Moreover, wasn't it Michaux who encouraged people to see their reflection not in the mirror but, precisely, in a sheet of paper?

—*Riccardo Venturi*

*Translated from Italián by Marguerite Shore.*

## Thomas Fougeirol

PRAZ-DELAVALLADE

Thomas Fougeirol is a painter who paints as if he were printing, meaning he uses paint to take imprints of actions and objects rather than using it to represent them. Channeling another French artist, Yves Klein, who famously attached canvas to the roof of his car in order to capture the effects of wind, rain, and dirt, Fougeirol has left paintings out in the elements. Whereas the moonlike cratered surfaces of his "*Tableaux de pluie*" (Rain Paintings), 2010–, document natural phenomena—rain falling on wet oil paint—the artist's most recent works chart an intimate universe: his own studios in Paris and Brooklyn.

To make the predominantly black-and-white paintings, eight of which (all untitled, 2016) were on view in Fougeirol's exhibition

**View of "Thomas Fougeirol," 2016.** Foreground: *Untitled*, 2016. Background, from left: *Untitled* (detail), 2016; *Untitled*, 2016; *Untitled*, 2016; *Untitled* (detail), 2016. Photo: Rebecca Fanuele.

"OP's," the artist coated stretched linen with layer upon layer of white gesso and one heavy coat of oil paint, then scattered dirt and detritus collected from his studio floor across the still-tacky surfaces. The results are high-contrast, low-relief monoprints marked by powdery black sprays and smatterings of debris—shards of glass, insects, torn bits of paper, pieces of string, chips of paint, and whatever else the vacuum sucked up. Energetically launched over each painting, Fougeirol's Dada-esque dust propulsions combine the chance procedures of Jean Arp's collages with the scavenged materials of Kurt Schwitters's *Merz* pictures. Because the dust and debris are dispersed from a fixed position over each painting, the dark material accentuates the texture of the underlying monochromes. Ridges and peaks of white paint are entirely blackened on one side while remaining pristine on the other. Elegant gray wakes that fade gradually across the compositions give a great sense of momentum, showing how the dirt dispersed over, around, and between various superficial obstacles.

Topographical without being representational, the dust paintings initially seem to describe a world either much greater or smaller than our own. At once vertiginously expansive and claustrophobically myopic, they alternately suggest distant galaxies and mold spores. This dizzying back-and-forth between micro and macro is ultimately overcome by the presence of identifiable objects embedded in the painted surfaces. Semi-sunken into the paint and coated with dirt like artifacts awaiting careful extraction and classification, dustpan treasures—including bent staples and a thumbtack—help to establish the paintings' printerly, fossil-like one-to-one scale. Though less useful in terms of establishing a sense of relative proportions, odd bits of colorful matter—a piece of pink tape, shards of green glass, a scrap of blue plastic—interrupt the vaporous dust trails and force abrupt reconciliations between the paintings' atmospheric effects and their tactile crusts.

The two largest paintings on view were installed against a floor-to-ceiling backdrop made up of eight enormous sheets of bleached black linen. Made by dipping variously folded and crumpled pieces of fabric into baths of bleach, these emulsive sepia-toned tapestries suggest messier, paintless versions of Simon Hantaï's 1960s "*pliages*" (foldings). Installed as a kind of wallpaper intended to disrupt the white-cube exhibition space, the bleached linen works (all untitled, 2015) pair well with the dust paintings. Shown together, the black-on-white and white-on-black compositions corroborated Fougeirol's fascination with forces beyond his control, whether specific chemical processes or the universal laws of nature (gravity, flow patterns), and described a cyclical, pointedly random process of renewal.

—*Mara Hoberman*

**BERLIN**

## Emmett Williams

GALERIE BARBARA WIEN

Barbara Wien began working with Emmett Williams in 1991, and she has continued to collaborate with the artist's estate following his death in 2007. Her "gallery and art bookshop" makes an appropriate venue for the Fluxus pioneer's written and visual work. A writer, editor, performer, visual artist, concrete poet, and chronicler of Fluxus—"a non-historian recounting the history of a non-movement," according to critic Gauthier Lesturgie—Williams has published a multitude of texts, anthologies, poetry collections, and artist's books. This show focused (though not solely) on his collaborations with fellow Fluxus artist A-Yo and the musician Yo-Yo Ma. With self-declared "Rainbow Artist" (referring to his colorful palette) A-Yo, Williams shared not so much working methods as what he called a "universal humor."