

WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Press Release

Bernar Venet: *Hypotheses*

28 September–12 November 2022



“Many people think that I have studied mathematics, but I am not a mathematician: I believe an artist’s real role is to question everything that constitutes the nature and definition of art. Putting mathematical language at the centre of my work allows me to introduce a subject to the artistic field that is neither abstract nor figurative: it is freed from those traditions.”

On the occasion of his first solo exhibition at Waddington Custot in London, French conceptual artist Bernar Venet presents new Angles, including large-scale sculptures in steel. These works, at once sculptural and graphic, define the ways in which the gallery can be navigated by the viewer. These will be shown together with drawings and smaller sculptures to offer a deeper understanding of the artist’s practice.

Venet’s radical contribution to the history of art is to present mathematics as a worthy and interesting subject for art, for its clarity as a subject with no disagreement over its meaning. After moving from Nice to New York in 1966, Venet became known for a pronounced radicalism, using the language of mathematics and science in his artwork. It was here that Venet developed a body of work, steeped in non-art propositions which he borrowed from mathematicians and theoretical scientists, which formed the basis of his Five Years exhibition at the New York Cultural Center in 1971-1972. Marking 50 years after the closing of this iconic exhibition, Bernar Venet: *Hypotheses* celebrates Venet’s development over the decades and his unerring exploration of the line as a subject.

The Angles, understood in basic terms as two lines sharing the same endpoint, are one of the most important iterations of Venet’s work. Distinct from other visual subject matter, which, figurative or abstract, might convey a multitude of impressions or meanings, angles, as part of mathematical language, can only be interpreted and experienced in a single way. They can be understood as ‘monosemic’, otherwise, forms with a single, unequivocal meaning.

Marking a new era for the artist, the works in this exhibition have been developed in France: Venet, now in his eightieth year, has recently moved back to Le Muy after almost half a century living in New York. This unique site, located on some 17 acres of the French countryside in the heart of Provence, is an exceptional mental studio for Venet from which he takes inspiration and where he continually develops new ideas.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Credit Line

Bernar Venet: *Hypotheses* at Waddington Custot from 28 September – 12 November 2022.
waddingtoncustot.com

Image

Bernar Venet, *13 Acute Unequal Angles*, 2017. Installed at Château Saint-Maur, 2020. Photo: François Fernandez

About Bernar Venet

Bernar Venet (b.1941, Château-Arnoux, France), is a conceptual artist best known for his curved sculptures in steel which appear to defy gravity with their mathematical precision and swooping forms. Venet was fascinated with art from an early age, influenced by his mother and a keen interest in books. Whilst serving his obligatory military service, Venet continued making work, developing his black monochromatic tar paintings and *Tas de charbon* (1963), widely recognised as the first sculpture without a specific shape and regarded as one of his most important works. In 1966, Venet established himself in New York where over the course of the next four decades he explored painting, poetry, film and performance, though he was particularly attracted to pure science and mathematics as a subject for art.

Venet's work has been exhibited extensively throughout Europe, the United States, South America and Asia both in solo museum shows, as well as in major art events such as the Kassel Documenta in 1977, and the Biennales of Paris, Venice and São Paulo. To date, Venet is the most internationally exhibited French artist with 30 public sculpture exhibitions and monumental works permanently installed in cities including Auckland, Austin, Berlin, Bonn, Denver, Geneva, Lyon, Neu-Ulm, Nice, Paris, Seoul, Shenzhen, and Toulouse.

He is the recipient of many awards including the Grand Prix des Arts de la Ville de Paris and Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, France's highest decoration. In February 2016, the International Sculpture Center endowed Venet the 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award for his exemplary contributions to the field of sculpture and in 2020 he was admitted to the Royal Society of Sculptors.

About Waddington Custot

Waddington Custot was formed through the partnership of French art dealer Stephane Custot and long-time London art dealer Leslie Waddington, in 2010. Located in Cork Street since 1958, formerly as Waddington Galleries, the gallery has a rich heritage and an international reputation for quality and expertise in works by modern and contemporary masters, with a particular focus on monumental sculpture.

The gallery has cemented its reputation over several decades for high quality and well-researched exhibitions of significant artists operating in the mid-twentieth century and beyond. Today, Waddington Custot represents heavyweight contemporary and modern artists and their estates including Peter Blake, David Annesley, Patrick Caulfield, Ian Davenport, Fabienne Verdier, Barry Flanagan, Allan D'Arcangelo, Jedd Novatt, Pablo Reinoso, Bernar Venet and Robert Indiana. The inventory includes works by important modern European artists including Jean Dubuffet, Pierre Soulages, Joan Miró, Josef Albers, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, Fausto Melotti, and Antoni Tàpies.

Gallery Contact

Marcus Crofton | marcus@waddingtoncustot.com | +44 (0)20 7851 2200

Florence Ritter | florence@waddingtoncustot.com | +44 (0)20 7851 2200

Exhibition Listing Details

Exhibition: Bernar Venet: *Hypotheses*

Address: Waddington Custot, 11 Cork Street, London W1S 3LT

Dates: 28 September – 12 November 2022

Opening Times: Monday to Friday, 10am–6pm; Saturday: 11am–6pm

Admission: Free

Travel: Piccadilly, Green Park or Bond Street