

Benoit Maire

Chris Sharp and Joanna Fiduccia

We went to meet Benoît Maire one evening in November at his home in 14th arrondissement in Paris, an artist's quarter of old turned relatively quiet, residential neighborhood. Amiably greeting us at his door in jeans and a two-day-old beard, Maire came off as something of an erudite slacker whose idle air is actually quite deceiving. Originally from Bordeaux, where he still keeps a studio and works in the summer, Maire's winter workspace is his desk in Paris. His desktop workspace: a flock of loose papers and books encroaching on a large desktop monitor on which Maire stores, like most artists, pdfs of past projects and, less like most artists, Word files of his wintertide writing projects. Often philosophical in nature, they make distinguishing between artist and philosopher, or artwork and philosophy, increasingly untenable. Some works are literally conversation pieces, such as his 'visual readings' of texts by Arthur Danto and Alain Badiou. Others include collage and performances pieces, modular forms reflective of Benoît's rare ability to loiter in potentialities— a philosophical approach toward making art if there ever was one.



Benoît Maire, performance in Bordeaux, 2007.

Chris Sharp and Joanna Fiduccia: *Where did you study and what did you study?*

Benoît Maire: I studied Art and Philosophy at Bordeaux University 3, followed by Art at the Villa Arson in Nice and Philosophy at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. I then did a post-doc with the Pavillon at the Palais de Tokyo and around 2006, discontinued my PhD in Philosophy from the Sorbonne.

CS and JF: *Why are you an artist and not a philosopher? Or are you a philosopher?*

BM: I recently read, "The philosopher thinks about and knows his object, but he does not possess it, while a politician or a poet possesses his object, but does not know it." I'd rather possess my object than know it, and so I make art.

CS and JF: *What made you want to become an artist? —BM:* Signification.

CS and JF: *Do you see writing as integral to your practice? Do you think all artists should write?*

BM: Yes, writing plays an essential role in my work. I don't think that every artist has to write, but I like to read what other artists have written, from Daniel Buren to Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, Seth Price, Öyvind Fahlström, Ryan Gander. They all write

with very different approaches and with an absolute freedom. Something written exists in another temporality, and I like to multiply temporalities in my practice. The temporality of the writer is not that of the sculptor, but in art, you can combine as you like.



#1 The History of the Geometry, 2007.
Digital collage, lamda print, 60 x 60 cm.

CS and JF: *Why make something in images and not in words?*

BM: Images are more direct, yet they can also resist resolution. They can thus be both direct and unresolved—that's what I like about them. Sometimes I would like something I've written to be like an image, and the same goes for the inverse. I also think that an image is always true, whereas a text can be false, but that's still to be verified.

CS and JF: *What do you need to make art?*

BM: I need to get really bored, and then face my boredom as one faces the question of existence. And then I have to satisfy the boredom, by responding to the question of existence. And so I do something that is nothing but that falls into the category of art, which perhaps is the category of magic for monkeys.

CS and JF: *In the past, you created a work in response to a text by Arthur Danto, to serve as a point of departure for a discussion. Was the discussion an artwork too?*

BM: No, it was a discussion of a visual reading that I had done of his work. I read, I made a display to represent my reading, and then the discussion took place. I believe it interrogated the existence of intentionality without object, and the reading of philosophy as something that could engender visual arrangements -- which raises the question of the relationship between the written word and the image. Is it possible to turn a thought into an image? I just wanted to ask the question. -- **CS and JF:** *Is art for everyone?*

BM: Yes, but not right now. Art is for everyone, but always within the time frame of a de-synchronized reading. This is true except, for example, in the cases of Mathieu Mercier, James Turrell and Jeff Koons, who work inside a Hegelian temporality and should be seen in the present.

CS and JF: *Who are your heroes?*

BM: Diogenes the dog. Søren Kierkegaard. Thomas Chatterton. Ulysses.

CS and JF: *Who are not your heroes?*

BM: Emil Cioran.

CS and JF: *Which of your peers do you most admire?*

BM: Aurélien Froment, Etienne Chabaud, Alex Cecchetti, Triss Vonna-Michell, Diego Perrone, Isabelle Cornaro, Falke Pisano, Mark Geffriaud, Raphael Zarka, Dan Reeves, Christian Andersen, Bojan Sarcevic, Reto Pulfer, Masahide Otani, Karl Holmqvist, René Gabri.

CS and JF: *What are you reading now?*

BM: Alain Badiou's *Logiques des mondes, l'être et l'événement, Volume 2.* *An Anthology of English Poetry*, published by Pléiade. The 'no texts' by Steven Parrino. *The Diary of a Seducer* by Søren Kierkegaard. *Esthétique du chaos* by Mehdi Belhaj Kacem.

CS and JF: *What are you working on now?*

BM: I am working on a story in the form of a typed manuscript with mistakes and images included. I am also making "blank sheet" paintings with lined grids, done in gouache and graphite on paper mounted on wood. I am completing my reflections on photomontages linked to my readings of the myth of Tiresias. I am finishing up a video of a performance done at the CAPC in Bordeaux in April, entitled "Interrupt Jacques Lacan." And I am preparing several exhibitions, one that will take place at CroyNielsen in Berlin with Falke Pisano, dealing with the performative construction of objects tied to readings of history, fiction and theory of perception.



Images of the artist's studio.