



A CONVERSATION

Bryan LeBoeuf and Christine Corday on their latest work

Bryan LeBoeuf (BL): So, this occasion marks ten years since meeting in Greenpoint, and it's invigorating to watch the trajectory of your work. At this point on the proverbial flight from the unknown to the unknown, would you say you've mastered the art of not thinking about an elephant in a barn?

Christine Corday (CC): I always squared myself off with that elephant walking into your studio—but in regards to painting itself, and that painting in particular in terms of “scale as muse,” lately I've been finding some new ways of approach. What did you call that painting?

BL: *Error of Margins*.

CC: Tell me about that title.



Bryan LeBoeuf, *Error of Margins*, 2006
105 x 116 inches, Oil on canvas, Private collection

BL: “Margin of error” is usually employed to describe what remains before some limitation or threshold is breached. “Error of Margins” would seem to indicate folly in terms of scale. It was the largest painting in an exhibition I called *To Scale*. When it comes to naming things, I try to employ a title to support what’s conceptual to me about the picture. Sometimes “X” marks the spot so to speak, and sometimes, “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*” after all.

CC: Ahh, you’re referring to *UNE*. With *Error of Margins*, I recognize a shared interest in those “margins” with what I call the “perceptive edge.” There’s a sensate edge to that margin—to what’s met. A blur of relativity . . . a subjective error . . . a folly of assertion, whether with conscious intent or less conscious bias perhaps. The self-permission to touch is one of those margins within my Protoist works . . . or even at the margin itself where two physical objects come into contact, leaving traces on each other; the hand leaves a fingerprint on a table but a table leaves dust on the hand.

BL: Literally, do you now have a preferred tool in the studio for that?

CC: Anything that gets my hands dirty. Your favorite?

BL: Everything is second to my eyes, but you mentioned new ways of approach?

CC: As I’ve been looking to vocalize it . . . you could say I’m exploring the “mediumness” of my materials. It began with making paint. I became interested in the paint itself, materially, so much so that it must qualify as my first form or first object. Seeking to intensify its mark making, I then thought of physics and space science, and thought *temperature* is another way to intensify the mark. Transfer of energy is less between like temperatures—i.e., room temp paint to room temp canvas—than let’s say a transfer between a seven thousand Fahrenheit plasma torch to cold conducting steel. So this is when I replaced paint with heat. And a canvas to take this intensification became a metal. And so, thus began *UNE*—a single intense mark on a single substrate, bent to physically enter and exit the stroke/mark. With a curve, I suspended the moment of entry and exit and desired to suspend the moment between sensory stimulus and definition.



Christine Corday, *UNE*, 2008
105 x 103 x 197 inches, 5,600 lbs., Weathering Alloy Steel
Photo: Tim Willis Lockbox Productions

BL: So its actual shape was predicated by what we identify as a *mark*, a singular actual stroke?

CC: Yes. It is the singular actual stroke.

BL: Your relationship to painting is interesting to me given the organic evolution from how you began, to the materials you’re using now. It reminds me in a different way of the trajectory of Mondrian’s work. In the basic formal premise of the “figure-ground relationship,” Mondrian maintained that the figure equals ground. From beginning to end, his paintings demonstrate this very claim. And for his trouble with such extreme reductionism, “Merciless master” is the moniker bestowed upon him by none other than De Kooning. As your work evolves and every reduction aims at getting to the crux of it, major leaps and risks you’ve taken seem to have originated from, and point towards, the material itself. The dichotomy of the gaze and the touch arises, and prior to having painted in the original sense of your experience, would you say it was mostly the material that compelled you?

CC: Yes, the material compelled me. Like Mondrian’s wall works, his painted chair seat is an extension or compulsion of neo-plasticism. Or Donald Judd’s house, studio and minimalism. Or On Kawara’s practice. This is the work itself.

In my own lens of extreme reductionism, an element within my work—say iron, carbon, argon . . . despite its changing material states from plasma, gas, solid, liquid, et cetera—in the studio the element never ceases being exactly what it is. It can disappear, become so hot it emits light, or become solid and formidable. It is a medium that endures, that is changeless. It's the sexiest thing to me . . . a most sensory muse. I'm interested in this changeless aspect of the elements within my work—its *matter*. It's this changeless aspect of its medium I attempt to work with, despite its classifications or nomenclature. It is what it is. And this is all limited by and informed by perception. Do we watch the touch or are our eyes at the ends of our fingers? Along the edge of the skin? Commence the proverbial rabbit hole.

I'm looking at this new painting of yours not only with alarming literal coincidence of heat from the match light, but also seeing that empty table as a form of abstraction, minimalism. You call this painting *Architect*. Why the matchstick? I'm curious about your choices.

BL: I consider *Architect* to be a portrait of the gesture of illumination . . . an advent of vision . . . a moment shrouded in darkness turned by a single match. In an instant the architect illuminates a field of vision. This composition will inform the next. The scale will change, and ultimately there will be multiple figures. The single figure and gesture in this minimal space will be a layer of meaning among other figures in a different space . . . and just as relative as all the relationships—formal and otherwise—within this original painting. I've noticed when aiming for what is seemingly simple in a picture, the painting grows more complex. And this is when it requires vigorous navigation skills with the material, or it risks failing to become merely even the sum of its parts. Sometimes trying to keep it as simple, as Degas said, "Art sums up," isn't that simple at all.

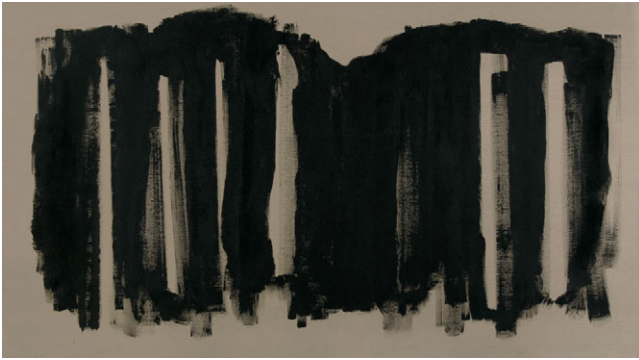
CC: Akin to another quote: "Art excludes the unnecessary." For me, the summing up is a subtraction of sorts, a reduction to a singular assertion in practice. With your practice, would you say it is additive?

BL: Most of the time I work indirectly with many layers, and from the start, I'm either rubbing paint out of the picture or



Bryan LeBoeuf, *Architect*, 2015
16 x 16 inches, Oil on wood, Private collection

adding it. Opacity and transparency in painting equals language to me, and they enhance one another optically, just as light and shadow, just as complementary colors do also. Taken all together, the language in one passage may seem quiet and slow . . . and in another perhaps more nimble or even bombastic. And all of this "language" is contingent on "how" it's painted and the properties of the material itself. So, the paintings I tend to make are both additive and subtractive. You know very well how unpredictable it can be in the studio. I tend to think that each picture is its own solitary poem of sorts . . . and when I look at a painting, I'm intrigued by how you get to see its beginning, end, and everything in between all at once on its surface; and many times what resonates long after viewing the work will remain a mystery. If you liken it to a different form, for instance: it's funny to think about someone who is impatient about getting to the opera to find out the narrative's exciting conclusion, when odds are it's simply experiencing the artifice of it all that resonates and stays with you after the performance. For example, as much as I'm drawn to the image *HELDAN III*, I know the sensation I felt upon seeing it for the first time had less to do with the actual image and more to do with the shift from black to white paint.



Christine Corday, *PROME*, 2006
63 x 111 inches, Synthetic polymer and pigment on raw linen
In Collection of SOM Architects, San Francisco As Overseen
by Partner Craig W. Hartman

CC: I'm still at the opera. Great analogy! From black to white, yes. Strangely. The white was impetuously straight from the can. The image for *HELDAN III* formed quickly . . . and without hesitation I ripped open a bucket of some base white . . . not to rush the arias narrative. There was some back and forth, but it was painted in one session. Without deception or device, although white was an expedience . . . yet thin, almost vulnerably thin in application. It had special impact . . . like coming into your studio and seeing *Cancelled Flight* for the first time. Indelible. Regardless of your rubbing technique, that work remains . . . even if all the paint was wiped away. But looking at it now, I'm surprised to see you've altered it, yes?

BL: Yes. A lot of time passed . . . and recently I realized how to settle with that painting. Not surprisingly the end was determined by the beginning. Ultimately, it had to evoke the sensation like when you are walking and even your feet become obscured from your own sight in the wilderness. And then there's something underneath it all that you sense but can't quite see. It's back to your "perceptive edge." And in the end, there could be no talking around it. It simply had to be painted.

CC: Well, the alternative sounds like the answer to the riddle . . .

BL: It's said to be greater than God, worse than evil. The rich want it. The poor have it. And if you eat it, you die. What is it?

CC: Nothing.



Christine Corday, *HELDAN III*, 2006
94 x 119 inches, Synthetic polymer and pigment on raw linen



Bryan LeBoeuf, *Cancelled Flight*, 2008-15
58 x 68 inches, Oil on canvas, Private collection

Learn more about Bryan at: www.bryanleboeuf.com & learn more about Christine at: www.christinecorday.com