

INTRO

THE TALENT

ective
magazine



BEN
WEINER

AUGUST 2012



BY MOST STANDARDS,
WATCHING PAINT
DRY ISN'T, WELL, A
FASCINATING ACTIVITY.

Ben Weiner, on the other hand, has made it the focus of his artistic inquiry. Not only does the 31-year-old New York artist make his own oil paints, he films the process of the oil, pigment and varnish dissolving into one another in stop-motion. He then makes photographs of the palette he has created, with its spikes and gobs of dried paint and blended tones and hues, which in turn become the subject for a painting — and the chain continues from there.

In this way, Weiner creates a connective narrative, adding another layer — subtext — to his already-textured

work. “So the paintings present the story of their own creation,” he explains. Weiner, who is represented both by Mark Moore Gallery in Los Angeles and Benrimon Contemporary in New York, will have a solo show at the latter in November that will feature seven linked canvases and three videos depicting the oil-pigment fusion.

Ben Weiner's time-lapse videos and photorealistic paintings depict extreme close-ups of beauty products, artificial food ingredients and, fittingly, the paint he uses to create the work itself, as is the case with *C10H22O7 + C10H18 + C18H32O2*, 2011. All images courtesy of the artist

want my work to reflect my process," Weiner notes. "It's combining technology with traditional methods. I'm literally putting the paint under a magnifying glass, studying it and painting the granules of pigment and striations of colors." Weiner admits that his process is as much physical as it is theoretical — citing as his touchstones Clement Greenberg's "self-criticism" (the notion that art reflects the conditions of its own production) and Marshall McLuhan's "medium-as-message" (the meaning of an object is embedded in the perception of it). But "ultimately, I am aiming to create a moving or compelling image," he explains. "There is emotion to it, but at the same time, there's a weird, cold, analytical aspect to my paintings where I'm stepping back and clinically dissecting the paint."

To achieve the photorealistic quality of his work, Weiner builds a roadmap of warm tones, then adds a top-coat glaze — a technique traditionally used by 17th- and 18th-century painters to give their canvases depth and luminosity.



HOMETOWN

Westchester County, New York

HOME BASE

Brooklyn and Long Island City, New York

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

I was really crazy about comic books and fantastic imagery when I was a kid. But it wasn't until college that I started painting; I studied studio art at Wesleyan University with Tula Telfair. The summer after my junior year, I worked on a portrait commission. I had been trying to find ways to incorporate the artifacts of representation into my work, and I started photographing my palette. So many things came together when I started taking those photos and making those paintings that I knew I was on to something.

EARLY INFLUENCES

My father is a doctor and my mother is a nurse, so there were always medical journals in the house that would have close-up pictures of the insides of an intestine or some organ. That stuck with me, as did the idea of being a magnifying glass and creating an



objective perspective that takes you away from your human body as a reference point. You're experiencing something that's familiar in a much more in-depth way, but at the same time it's alienating you from your normal experience of it.

Water Lilies Study # 3, 2011



INSPIRED BY

I think a lot about the Color Field painters, especially Jules Olitski, who studied the formal properties of paint and approached it as a science, like chemistry. I'm also inspired by such Abstract Expressionists as Jackson Pollock and Willem De Kooning. I guess there's also a Pop aspect to what I'm doing that stems from James Rosenquist and Ed Ruscha. And the video artist Bill Viola — he's got depth.

TECHNIQUES

I love the fact that I have this intimate relationship with my medium; there's a romantic aspect to my imagery, but I'm making it through intense planning and a technical lens. I make my paintings by taking an object, training my eye to see all the tones of it by thinking about all the color relationships, and then just breaking it down from there.

For the last two years, I've been doing a lot of work in video. It is a great opportunity to make my art accessible and has impacted my process. Like creating a narrative within a body of paintings — I never would have arrived at that if I didn't work in video.

From top: Weiner photographing the oil-pigment mixing process; putting the final touches of varnish on *The Crimes of Paris (Pink Hair Gel)*, 2008.





ART WORLD EXPERIENCE

For one year right out of college I worked for Jeff Koons as one of his painters during his collage and photorealist period, like the one that included his Popeye series. I love his art, but it was also so interesting to see the inner workings of his complex studio.

BEST PIECE OF ADVICE RECEIVED

At one point, Koons was waxing about “how anyone in this studio could do what I’ve done, he or she just really needs to focus and make all the right moves.”

That rang true for me. He’s the most devoted person to his art I’ve ever met. So if you immerse yourself in whatever you’re doing and completely focus on that, it’s possible to succeed.

BIG BREAK

In 2006 Mark Moore took me on, and my first show sold out. When I heard the news I was in Miami at Basel walking on the beach in the early morning, and it all felt so surreal.

Dream of the Centerless World, 2007, is part of a body of work that examines the properties of hair gel.



ARTISTS YOU MOST ADMIRE

Gerhard Richter is the one who brings it all together for me. His whole spiel is: abstraction is at one end of the spectrum, and realism is on the other; I'm just going to fill in the gaps. While it's kind of manufactured, he made a grand gesture of exhibiting both abstractions and realistic paintings simultaneously to show he could transform one into the other.

CURRENT PLAYLIST

While I'm working, I listen to a lot of minimalist composers. Steve Reich is my favorite. But I also listen to pop-y stuff like Kid Cudi, St. Vincent, Ladytron and Robyn. Music with an emphasis on rhythm that's totally repetitive is really good for working. Even though I'm painting very carefully, there's a lot of gesture, so I need something that can get me moving in a rhythmic way.

TELEVISION

Entertainment and media these days are so interconnected that it's interesting to see how things bleed into one another. Reality TV is really fascinating, and it relates so well to what's been going on in art for the past 20 years; it's like Marcel Duchamp's Readymade concept blown up into this huge industry.

OWN WORDS OF WISDOM

Gandhi said, "People are the sum of their actions." You can think about something, but if you don't put it out into the world, it doesn't exist.

Weiner mixing one of his palettes.

