

TEMPLON

II

CLAUDE VIALLAT

THE BROOKLYN RAIL, April 2024

Claude Viallat: *Made in Nîmes*

By [David Rhodes](#)



Installation view: *Claude Viallat: Made in Nîmes*, Galerie Templon, New York, 2024.

The 20 works included in the exhibition date from the 1960s to the present. The first two rooms of the gallery present a number of large-scale works that furnish the spaces with a heteroclitic and yet rhythmic sense of excess. Claude Viallat pins his paintings, made on a wide range of fabrics, to the wall unstretched. Across the surface of the fabric Viallat repeatedly paints the same form: a “form of some kind” or a “form of chance” as Viallat has called it, and first used by him in 1966. The form was inspired by Mediterranean house painters who use a sponge soaked in a bucket of blue lime to apply a repeated pattern on kitchen walls as a wallpaper-like decoration. The diagonality of this form in the paintings refuses identification with the rational and familiar grid of minimalism, and at least one of its fabric edges is usually incomplete, implying an infinite field or larger work of which these paintings are a fragment. The paintings are by turns harmonic and dissonant, inclusive of both aspects.

ON VIEW

Galerie Templon

March 14–April 27, 2024

New York



Claude Viallat, *Sans Titre n°53*, 1980. Acrylic on canvas, 80 1/4 × 126 3/4 inches. © Courtesy of the artist and TEMPLON, Paris — Brussels — New York / Droits réservés © ADAGP, 2024. Photo: Laurent Edeline.

The title of the exhibition, *Made in Nîmes*, refers to the place on the Mediterranean coast where the artist was born in 1939, and the place where he continues to live and work. In his studio he collects the discarded and found, picked up and sourced; fabrics of all kinds, objects and pieces of objects, with no apparent hierarchies, the valuable and worthless, all metamorphosed into what constitutes his work. Singularly, and from one work to another, correlations and conversations appear, “constellations” as Walter Benjamin would say, configurations that are heterogeneous and dialectical, their particular meanings generated by the proximities and distances, similarities and disparities, rather than by an imposed exegesis of any particular type. *Sans titre n. 469* (2020) is the flat octagonal orange shade of a beach umbrella (one of two works on beach umbrella here) a void at its center, and painted with Viallat’s form in red outline that repeats, circles centripetally. *Sans titre n. 155* (1988) is a vertical fragment of tarpaulin, ten forms this time, gray, outlined in a dark red on an ochre ground, the three to the right side only partial, a sliver of one more at the lower torn edge: implying their potential continuance outside the paintings edge and the incompleteness of the painting as an image.



Claude Viallat, *Sans Titre n°117*, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 105 1/2 × 86 5/8 inches. © Courtesy of the artist and TEMPLON, Paris — Brussels — New York / Droits réservés © ADAGP, 2024. Photo: Tanguy Beurdeley

Viallat is a tutelary figure in the French abstract art movement known as Supports/Surfaces. Characteristic of this work is the abandonment of stretched canvas as a formal given for painting. As with the other artists of this group, Viallat's work has evolved beyond the art historical category that it was first associated with, and which he was instrumental in founding. The fecundity of renewed approaches found in following his impulses has maintained a growing body of work that expands while still revisiting old themes with playful repetition. The form Viallat paints is not a simple signature of recognition but rather a way to allow the unconscious and unplanned to drive the works in directions that are not subject to the artist's will and instrumental reason; a kind of material automatism emerges, in the co-authorship of artist, and materials. The consistent gesture connects Viallat's paintings and objects to a directness lost to over sophistication.

The vitality—what in other contexts could be called ornamentation, and I mean this positively—is significant to the exhibition environments that Viallat creates, and the one seen here at Templon. The rhythm and transition of material and color across the gallery walls recalls Heinrich Wölfflin's comment that "ornamentation is the blossoming of a force that need accomplish nothing further."