



Niele Toroni, *Empreintes de pinceau N°50 à intervalles réguliers de 30 cm* (Brush Impressions No. 50 at Regular Intervals of 30 cm), 2020, collage and acrylic on foam board, 25 5/8 × 19 3/4".

Niele Toroni

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY | PARIS

STILL A CARRIER OF THE PAINTING VIRUS. These words, handwritten by Niele Toroni and posted near the gallery's reception desk, greeted visitors to the artist's recent exhibition "*Un tout de différences*" (A Set of Differences). The show featured the same monochrome imprints the artist has been making for more than fifty years, and the works were all titled, as usual, with blunt descriptiveness (e.g., *Empreintes de pinceau N°50 à intervalles réguliers de 30 cm* [Brush Impressions No. 50 at Regular Intervals of 30 cm]). Yet the familiar marks looked quite different post-Covid-19. Developed by Toroni in 1966 as a means of divorcing painting from traditional notions of authorship and originality (a concern he shared with the other

founding members of the short-lived but influential BMPT group, also consisting of Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, and Michel Parmentier), the artist's "*travail/peinture*" (work/painting) suddenly appeared inherently viral. As is always the case with Toroni's work, the consistent and repetitive gesture provides a constant against which endless variables—physical, conceptual, political, or personal—inspire new and transient interpretations.

Installed across the entire back wall of the gallery, a row of ten five-imprint paintings on canvas made in 2019 appeared to aptly illustrate viral replication. The varying colors of the imprints, which were yellow, red, gray, blue, and orange, suggested slight mutations in a strain of painting that's been potent enough to stay alive for more than half a century. On the adjacent wall, a triptych comprised three canvases, each just under a foot square and bearing one black imprint. The work was accompanied by another triptych of the same dimensions, each with one saffron imprint, scattered across the wall. Seen together, the intact and dispersed triptychs, both 2017, evoked the final stage of replication during which newly produced virions burst from their host in search of neighboring cells to infect.

Opposite these apparently infected walls, the juxtaposition of two older paintings on a sliver of wall between two large windows addressed the here and now in more physical terms. Echoing the tall arched windows of the gallery's facade, a small tondo bearing three burgundy imprints (1997) was hung just above an oblong rectangular canvas with six black imprints (2012). The tondo was originally made for a 1997 exhibition at CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux, France, in which Toroni showed numerous similarly painted wine-cask lids. And while this peculiar support and the wine-colored paint connect the tondo to another time and place, this work inevitably takes on a new significance according to its current context. In this case, the visual link that Toroni set up between his paintings and the windows seemed to mock the famous comparison of painting to a window in Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura* (1435).

In a group of six painted collages from 2020, Toroni engaged directly with his own past. An important aspect of his practice, his collages typically feature original photographs, invitations, and other archival ephemera related to the artist's previous exhibitions. In one such

piece, Toroni made five orange imprints over a collage of photos taken at four different exhibitions. At the bottom of this composition, a photo depicting a painting Toroni made on a glass wall at Collection Lambert in Avignon, France, in 2004 perfectly illustrated the artist's ability to cleave—in both senses of this word—distinct realms, whether temporal, spatial, material, or social. In the photo, the glass marked by Toroni's imprints separates a Lawrence Weiner text work inside the exhibition space from the donkeys and chickens mingling outside. And yet while it stands between these two scenes, Toroni's painting also incorporates both. Other photos in this collage document a 1978 exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland, a 1992 outdoor installation in Waiblingen, Germany, and a 1993 show at Galerie Tschudi in Glarus, Switzerland. By combining these far-flung souvenirs and then overlaying them with his signature imprints, Toroni effectively collapses many layers of space, memory, and history to create new works of art for a new moment in time.

— Mara Hoberman

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