

Sturtevant *ZIP ZAP !*

12 October—21 December 2024

Paris Marais



Thaddaeus Ropac

London Paris Salzburg Seoul

Sturtevant

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On the centenary of Sturtevant's birth, this exhibition celebrates the work of the pioneering American artist, spanning over five decades. The exhibition centres around Sturtevant's 1995 repetition of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform)* (1991), and retraces the evolution of her practice, from an early painting shown at her first exhibition in Europe in 1966, at Galerie J, Paris, to a significant video installation that manifests her later interest in the frenzy of fast-moving imagery that characterises our postmodern times. The exhibition is conceived in commemoration of an artist whose groundbreaking practice continues to confront us with an audacious and provocative rethinking of art, and as a celebration of art itself.

Sturtevant's repetitions, by memory, of artworks by her contemporaries are not copies, nor are they 'a matter of distanced, allusive quotation'. Rather, as Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris curator Anne Dressen wrote on the occasion of Sturtevant's major exhibition at the museum in 2010, they are 'tools [...] for getting away from the surface to provoke thought'. Through her process, Sturtevant created rigorous studies on the artworks she repeated: on their making, their canonisation, their valorisation. In this sense, her work is situated at the juncture where the visual gives way to the conceptual. As Sturtevant explained: 'The push and shove of the work is the leap from image to concept. The dynamics of the work is that it throws out representation.'

Sturtevant began to manually repeat works by other artists in 1964, initially engaging with American Pop artists such as Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Frank Stella and James Rosenquist. Works by all four of these artists, which would become iconic in their own right – Sturtevant had an exceptional instinct for selecting works that would later be recognised as masterpieces – are represented through repetitions in the exhibition. Among the early works on view is a 1966 repetition of Rosenquist's *Spaghetti and Grass* (1965). The work was part of the artist's very first, and now historic, exhibition in Europe, held in 1966 at Galerie J in Paris. Although some of her contemporaries were resistant to Sturtevant's method, Andy Warhol, who himself played with notions of authorship and originality in his own work, embraced it, to the extent that when asked about his own technique, he is said to have quipped: 'I don't know. Ask Elaine [Sturtevant].' Warhol even gave her one of his *Flowers* silkscreens so that she could repeat it. The resulting works have become some of Sturtevant's best known, and a monumental 1990 example, which was included in her very first exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais in 1991, is on view once again in *ZIP ZAP !*

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From the early 1980s onwards, Sturtevant increasingly turned her attention to the next generation of artists. Her 1995 repetition of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's 1991 *Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform)* consists of a large platform edged with a garland of lightbulbs, which serves as a stage for a live go-go dancer. Sturtevant follows exactly the concept of Gonzalez-Torres's original: the visitor encounters the dancer by chance, most frequently seeing the platform empty, its lights still lit. The performance itself, therefore, is less important than the fact that the work confronts the viewer with his absence.

By restating the centrality of absence in Gonzalez-Torres's work in her own repetition, Sturtevant reiterated the interest in absences, gaps, and *difference* that underscores her wider practice. Her approach resonates with the theories put forward by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze in his early masterwork *Difference and Repetition* (1968): that the inevitable imperfection of a repetition establishes *difference*, a distance that simultaneously separates it from and connects it to what it repeats. In repeating the works of other artists, Sturtevant creates *difference*, in the Deleuzian sense. The disparities between versions encourage the viewer to look beyond their surface similarities to make, as Sturtevant put it, 'the leap from image to concept': instead of something to be taken at face value, the work becomes a catalyst for considering the 'understructure' of art. By drawing our attention to that which isn't, Sturtevant makes us think anew about what is.

Beginning in the 1990s, Sturtevant's work shifted away from repetitions as such, instead engaging with 'the zip zap of our digital world with its dangerous potent power'. Her video works interrogate and short-circuit the endlessly repeating imagery of post-internet life in a way that, today, seems more relevant than ever. In *Elastic Tango* (2010), nine stacked screens run clips of Sturtevant's previous works alongside a miscellaneous jumble of fragments she recorded from the television: BBC nature documentary footage with cartoons; the ominous mushroom cloud of an explosion with commercials. In her early works, as Eugene M. Schwartz wrote, Sturtevant was 'the first to reverse the modernist direction of creative flow – not from idea to object, but from object to idea'. In the post-internet world, as Sturtevant explained, 'it's moved from an object over image [...] to an image over image'. Responding to this very contemporary set of impositions, Sturtevant's purpose in her video works is the same as always: 'to confront, [...] to trigger thinking', and to assert the power of thought itself.

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Sturtevant, *ZIP ZAP !*, installation view,
Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais, 2024. Photo: Charles Duprat



Sturtevant

Duchamp Fresh Widow, 1992-2012

Enamel paint on wood, leather, glass, resin knobs

77 × 51.5 × 10.5 cm (30.31 × 20.28 × 4.13 in)

Ed. 1 of 6

(ST 2055)



Sturtevant, *ZIP ZAP!*, installation view,
Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais, 2024. Photo: Charles Duprat



Sturtevant
Double Marilyn, 2004
Silkscreen on canvas
68 × 42 cm (26.77 × 16.54 in)
(ST 3034)



Sturtevant, *ZIP ZAP !*, installation view,
Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais, 2024. Photo: Charles Duprat



Sturtevant
Felix Gonzalez-Torres *Untitled*
(*Go-Go Dancing Platform*), 1995
Wood, light bulbs, acrylic paint, wire
and go-go dancer in silver lamée bikini and walkman
54.5 × 183 × 183 cm (21.46 × 72.05 × 72.05 in)
(ST 3330)



Sturtevant
*Felix Gonzalez-Torres Untitled
(Go-Go Dancing Platform)*, 1995
Wood, light bulbs, acrylic paint, wire
and go-go dancer in silver lamée bikini and walkman
54.5 × 183 × 183 cm (21.46 × 72.05 × 72.05 in)
(ST 3330)



Sturtevant

Elastic Tango

A three act play, 2010

HD cam - metallic tape, nine camera video installation

16/9, installed on an upside down pyramid, RT: 11"

(ST 3320)



Sturtevant, *ZIP ZAP !*, installation view,
Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais, 2024. Photo: Charles Duprat



Sturtevant

Johns Flag above White Ground, 1967-68

Encaustic and collage on canvas, mounted on board

56.9 × 49.8 cm (22.4 × 19.61 in)

(ST 3235)



Sturtevant, ZIP ZAP I, installation view,
Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais, 2024. Photo: Charles Duprat

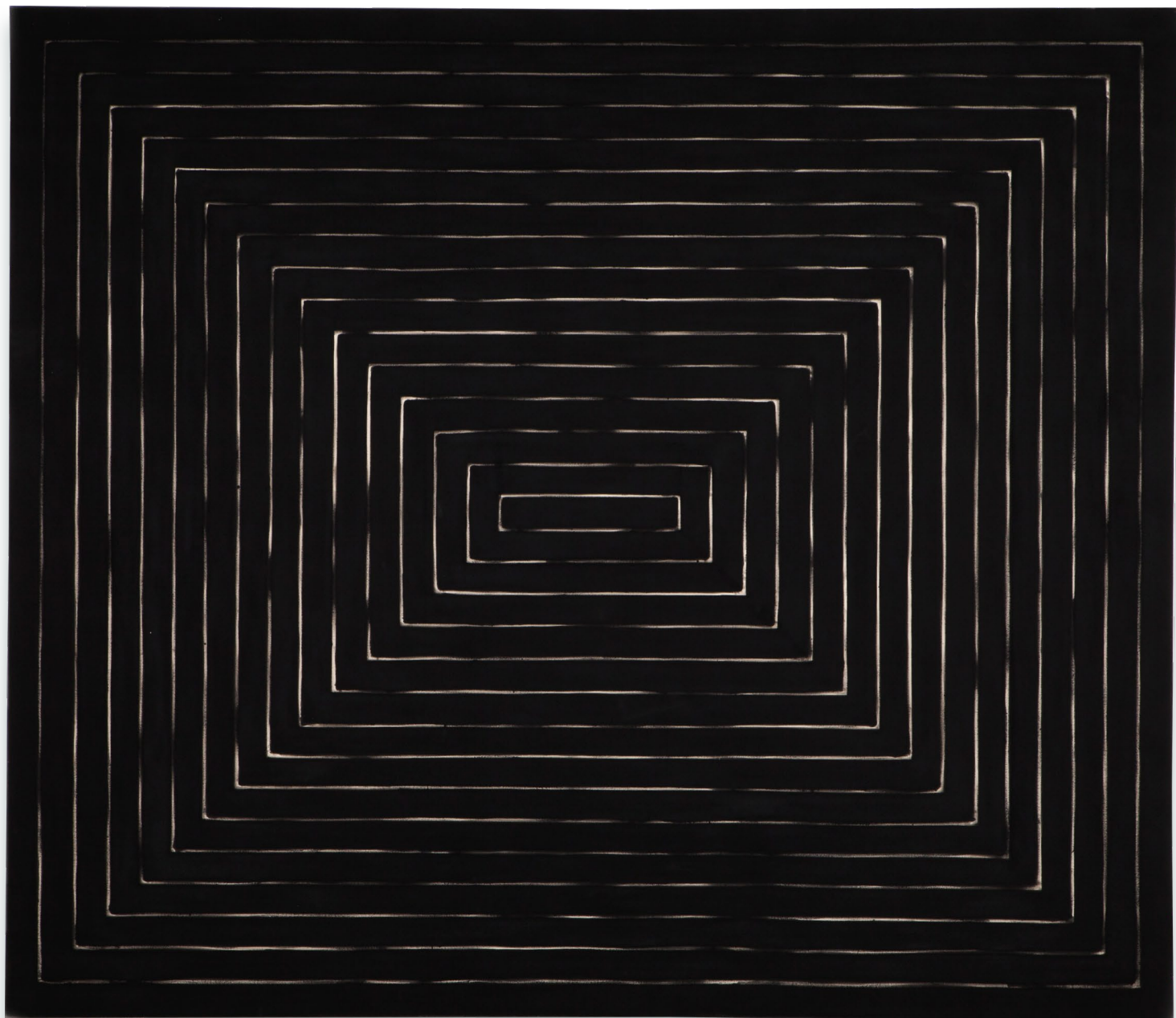


Sturtevant
Study for Rosenquist Spaghetti Grass, 1966
Oil on canvas
164 × 116 cm (64.57 × 45.67 in)
(ST 3097)



Sturtevant
Study for Rosenquist Spaghetti Grass, 1966
Oil on canvas
164 × 116 cm (64.57 × 45.67 in)
(ST 3097)





Sturtevant

Stella Tomlinson

Court Park (First Study), 1988

Black enamel on canvas

214 x 246.5 cm (84.25 x 97.05 in)

(ST 3099)



Sturtevant, *ZIP ZAP !*, installation view,
Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais, 2024. Photo: Charles Duprat



Sturtevant

Stella Averroes, 1989/1990

Aluminium oil paint on canvas

187.5 × 181 cm (73.82 × 71.26 in)

(ST 3100)



Sturtevant

Warhol Flowers, 1990

Synthetic polymer silkscreen
and acrylic on canvas

293.8 × 293.8 cm (115.67 × 115.67 in)

(ST 1006)



Sturtevant, *Flowers*, installation view, Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais, 1991

Sturtevant

About the artist



Portrait of Sturtevant. Courtesy Sturtevant Estate, Paris.
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Born in Lakewood, Ohio, in 1924, Elaine Sturtevant received her BA from the University of Iowa and studied philosophy at the University of Zürich. She then obtained an MA in psychology from Columbia University. In 1990, she relocated from the US to Paris, where she lived and worked until her death in 2014. She was awarded the Golden Lion for lifetime achievement at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011, and was appointed to the rank of Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur in France in 2013. Her work has been the subject of monographic exhibitions at institutions including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2015); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014); MMK Museum für moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2014); Albertina, Vienna (2014); Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2014); Serpentine Galleries, London (2013); Kunsthalle, Zürich (2012); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2012); Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (2010); Le Consortium, Dijon (2008); Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2004); École Régionale des Beaux-arts de Nantes (2000); MAMCO, Geneva (1999) and Villa Arson, Nice (1993). Notable recent group exhibitions include *Inheritance* at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2023–24); *Carte blanche à Anne Imhof, Natures Mortes* at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2021); and *She-Bam Pow POP Wizz ! Les Amazones du POP* at MAMAC, Nice (2020), and her work is currently on view as part of the exhibition *La Répétition* at Centre Pompidou-Metz until 27 January 2025. A monographic exhibition dedicated to Sturtevant will open at the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla, in February 2025.

Current & upcoming exhibitions



Ely House, London

Heemin Chung
UMBRA

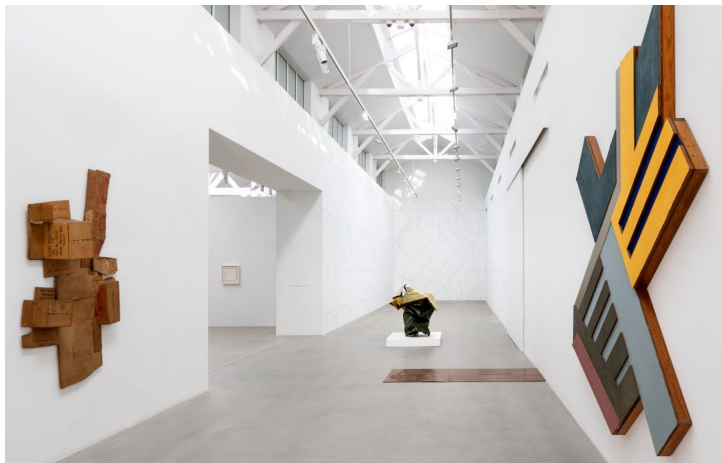
8 October—20 November 2024



Ely House, London

Robert Longo
Searchers

8 October—20 November 2024



Paris Pantin

**Expanded Horizons:
American Art in the 70s**
21 September 2024—1 February 2025



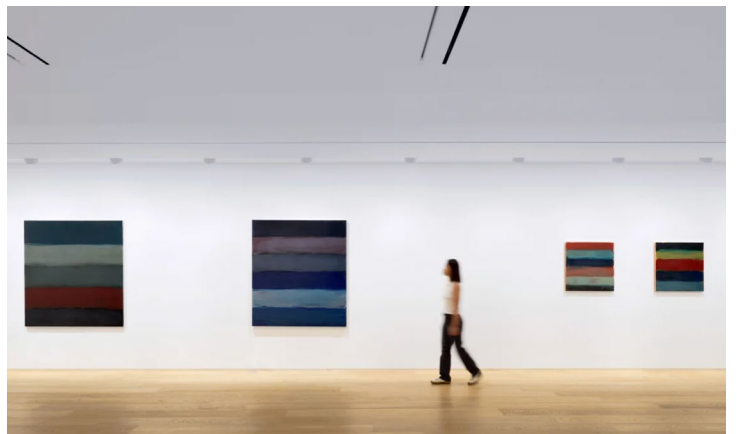
Salzburg Villa Kast

Alex Katz
Flower Journals
5 October—21 December 2024



Seoul Fort Hill

Georg Baselitz
adler barfuß
Until 9 November 2024



Seoul Fort Hill

Sean Scully
Soul
Until 9 November 2024