

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Martin Barré**

February 17 – April 7, 2018

Opening: Friday, February 16, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce **Martin Barré**, the next exhibition in his gallery at 522 West 22nd Street. Featuring twenty-three canvases made between 1960 and 1992, it is the largest exhibition of the work of Martin Barré (1924–1993) ever held in the United States, representing the range of his inventive and quietly influential abstract paintings.

In the 1950s Barré rejected the gestural abstraction popular with other young artists at the time. First he gave up working with the brush, applying paint with only a palette knife. In 1960 he started squeezing paint from the tube directly onto canvas. This exhibition includes two works originally shown in Paris at his breakthrough exhibition of “tube” paintings, including the largest work from that 1960 show, a four-panel painting almost eleven feet wide.

In 1963, inspired by graffiti he had seen in the Paris Métro, Barré began a series of spray paintings on canvas that were exhibited at a Paris gallery the following year. The current exhibition includes a large spray painting that has not been shown publicly since then.

In the early 1970s Barré returned to using brushes, embedding each composition in layers of transparent washes with subtle colors traversed by a penciled grid, often laid out on a diagonal, implying a much larger, potentially infinite composition.

Barré continued to explore the possibilities and limitations of painting until the end of his life. In the canvases from the 1980s and 1990s, colorful polygons are arranged on modular grids in a system both strict and playful. Paradoxes like this are central to Barré’s art. As he said in a 1974 interview, “Without contradictions, without paradoxes, would there have been an evolution of painting, and without evolution would there be *painting*?”

Martin Barré exhibited his work regularly throughout Europe from the mid-1950s onward. His paintings were included in the 1961 Carnegie International in Pittsburgh and the 1964 and 1978 Venice Biennales. The Musée des Beaux Arts de Nantes organized a career retrospective in 1989, and in 1993 his paintings from the 1980s were the subject of an exhibition at the Jeu de Paume in Paris. In 2019 the Centre Pompidou in Paris will present the first museum retrospective of Barré’s work since his death.

Accompanying the current exhibition is a clothbound catalogue featuring color plates of twenty-seven paintings spanning more than thirty years, with an essay by Alex Bacon and photographs of Barré’s Paris studio taken in 1993 by David Seidner.

**Martin Barré** is on view at 522 West 22nd Street from February 17 to April 7, 2018, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

For additional information, please contact Jacqueline Tran at 212-243-0200 or [jacqueline@matthewmarks.com](mailto:jacqueline@matthewmarks.com).