

Kevin Rouillard

Crafted Lines: Echoes & Assemblage

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Press release



Kevin Rouillard,
Attention à tes mains, 2024
(detail)
Container, steel
144 x 100 cm.
Courtesy of the artist and Xippas

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Opening on Saturday January 11, 2025 from 3pm

Xippas gallery is pleased to present a personal exhibition by Kevin Rouillard in its Paris location. Entitled *Crafted Lines: Echoes & Assemblage*, it brings together a newly created body of work.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an interview between the artist and Cédric Fauq, chief curator at CAPC, Bordeaux.

Kevin Rouillard explores here the horizon line well beyond its conventional definition presenting it as a visual limit, one where the distance between sky and earth has become so small that these two parts seem to merge together. By investing the gallery walls, the artist uses this line, both as an element of formal vocabulary, specific to each work, but also as a visual tool capable of redefining our perception of the architecture where the works are hung.

The allusion to a distant landscape is signified by an overall geometry which includes a repetition of colored stripes creating a rhythmical order and visual resonances. Far from neglecting the aesthetic field of the abstract painting defined by Clement Greenberg, Rouillard offers here a universe where each metal work echoes the previous one and where the assembled colors create spaces for contemplation.

As for the technique used - the welding of strips of metal - it reveals to the viewer that gesture and material are closely linked and that their combination can alter our perception and feeling of space.

Born in 1989 in Vendôme, France, Kevin Rouillard lives and works in Bordeaux.

The artist creates installations and wall sculptures from large cans and containers that he flattens by hammering them. He often brings together sheets of metal that he welds together to create compositions which seem both complex and simple, since they are made with “poor” materials. Imposing and playing on reflections and material, they result from a process inspired by a logic of recycling.

Kevin Rouillard was graduated with honors from ENSBA in Paris in 2014. He participated to the 60th Salon de Montrouge and to the prize of Villa Emerige (Empiristes) in 2015. The same year, he also won the Foundation François de Hatvany prize. Since 2016 his work was included in the exhibition Distopark, at Confort Moderne in Poitiers, at Les Abattoirs, FRAC Midi-Pyrénées, Toulouse, at l'Assaut de la Menuiserie, Saint-Etienne and at The Chimney, New York, alongside with a group show with Centre d'Art Parc Saint Léger. Following the SAM Art Projects prize received in 2018, the Palais de Tokyo in Paris hosted his personal exhibition *Le Grand Mur* in 2020. More recently, during the summer 2024, his large-scale site-specific installation *Horizon : 1000 blocs, 6 couleurs* was presented during the Anglet Biennale, curated by Didier Arnaudet.

Interview between Kevin Rouillard and Cédric Fauq, chief curator at CAPC, Bordeaux

Cédric Fauq: *Can you first tell me about the starting point of these new works? Tell me about your pictorial thoughts on the horizon line and your material experiments with the barrels.*

Kévin Rouillard: The project originates from the installation I made for the 9th Anglet Biennale which was held last year: *Horizon: 1,000 blocks, 6 colors* (2024). This installation was located by the sea. I observed this light moving throughout the day and I used this background as a frame. I imagined what impressionist painting could be today, in our industrialized and globalized world. For the exhibition at the gallery, I shifted this into a painting project. As for barrels, I like the idea of using these objects as paint units, like pots of paint to be used. For these new series, I am particularly interested in the relationships between colors, in what they become in their interactions. The restricted palette of colors that I use evokes impressionist painting. Without black or white.

CF: *Did you actually have the choice of colors for the metal barrels?*

KR: Yes, with the Anglet Biennale project, I had, for the first time, the choice of the colors of the barrels. For the first time in 10 years. Before that I worked with a very limited palette, since I used the end of existing stocks. With *Horizon: 1,000 blocks, 6 colors*, I was able to place an order for 1,000 barrels and I had the opportunity to choose my colors. For the gallery exhibition, I use the same colors except beige.

CF: *When I came to your workshop, you showed me preparatory drawings, as well as texts. Are writing, sketching, and your relationship to paper essential steps in your process?*

R: It's essential, yes. I always buy a new notebook when I start a project and then I write and draw. First of all, it is a question of proportions. It's very rare that I work on pieces without them having a specific destination. So there is always a thought of space which pre-exists the works. Drawing, ultimately, is almost exclusively technical.

CF: *Did you have the idea of the blue horizon line during this time of preparation?*

KR: Yes, it happened quite quickly since I wanted to find a way to weave the works together. It's also quite rare for me that the pieces are independent of each other, or that a work stands alone. I also had in mind Monet's *Water Lilies*, a landscape that extends, that overflows.

CF: *I know that you delegated certain choices of composition of the pieces to close friends and relatives. How did this come to you? Is this something you have already done?*

KR: Yes, it's not the first time I work with people in my close surrounding. There are steps that can be delegated, others that I can't such as the whole part of assembly, welding – which are gestures of mine and which I own. On the other hand, for composition, I sometimes delegate (by communicating certain “guidelines”). For me, the important question raised concerns the freedom of production of the work.

CF: *What about the people you turned to for these compositions? Are they from the art world?*

KR: No, not at all.

CF: *I would like to discuss your relationship to the material, with the physical but also mental effort required for such works. There is a form of "performance" taking place... How do you approach this?*

KR: As far as I'm concerned, to be as free and as detached as possible, there must be rules. I therefore impose a discipline on myself which is very strict. I tell myself that from the moment the research is found in repetition, it should be in repetition until the end, it cannot be found exclusively in the painting. Beyond working hours, I force myself to have a quasi-monastic lifestyle. It goes beyond work, it covers all aspects of my life: apart from my studio work, almost nothing gets in the way. I think this approach is linked to personal experiences. I worked a lot in slaughterhouses, for example, where we repeated the same gesture countless times every hour. Obviously, there is something about assembly line work, blue-collar work, which echoes a social class and my family background. There is also something related to sports training.

CF: *This leads me to raise the question of technique, since you are self-taught in your relationship to metal, in your way of handling it, of assembling, of welding. Correct ?*

KR: I think the military discipline I impose on myself counterbalances a technique I don't have. But I'm not at all into technical research. I could, but I'm not interested by that. In the production of works, there is often an urgency of completion. It's really something that burns your hands and it has to come out, it has to be done, put down, turned over, and I can move on to something else. And in my opinion, everything happens with accidents.

CF: *One of the interesting things that happens with these pieces is the use of barrels which have not yet been used, and haven't been moved around. It is as if you're "preventing" them from being used as "barrels" by flattening them again.*

KR: What interests me in that is going backward in the shaping of a form. But it's not recycling. It's really preventing of form from becoming what it was, or preventing it from existing as it should. It is also a graphic work. And then there is violence, a type of contained violence. At the same time, I work with metal almost like a precious mineral. At the end, the barrel bands are certified. There is an interesting change of state for me, from stinky metal to canvas. I pay a lot of attention to it: the metal will first be mistreated, dirty, ripped open, burned, to finally be cleaned and shined.