

Stop 34: Eye to Eye: Joseph Marioni

Eye to Eye: Joseph Marioni presents a group of paintings by modern American artist Joseph Marioni in the context of the museum permanent collection.

Marioni is best known for his highly saturated paintings constructed of multiple layers of superimposed colors. Free of narrative, Marioni's work explores color and light, or, as he says, "liquid light." The artist applies coats of acrylic paint on stretched linen with rollers, brushes, palette knives, spoons, and even his own hands in order to manipulate the paint and accomplish the sensation of a flowing surface. Marioni also shapes his canvases to control the downward flow of liquid pigment, which by the law of gravity creates a density in the center of the composition, transparency in the upper part, and various drips and marks down below. It is through this interlace of opaque and translucent, dense and fluid that Marioni's work achieves strong visceral presence. Marioni's work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Fogg Museum, Cambridge; and Kunstmuseum Basel, among others. He lives and works in New York City.

In *Eye to Eye*, Marioni's paintings are surrounded with works by artists from the late-19th century to the present who employ color, light, line, and gestural marks as their primary means of expression. One room brings together the paintings of modern European colorists (Pierre Bonnard, Henri Matisse, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cezanne, and Wassily Kandinsky) who forayed into abstraction, while another showcases their American counterparts (Milton Avery, Arthur Dove, Albert Pinkham Ryder, Georgia O'Keeffe, and William Merit Chase), revealing the artists' similar preoccupation with color and light yet different sensibilities. Another room is dedicated to both American and European modernists (Adolph Gottlieb, Joan Mitchell, Piet Mondrian, Franz Kline, Ilya Bolotovsky, Maria de la Silva, and Nicolas deStael), who established their paintings as autonomous pictorial entities rather than representations of reality. Additional rooms are dedicated to John Marin, one of the first Americans to embrace abstraction through color and line; the Washington Color School painters (Gene Davis, Thomas Downing, Morris Louis, and Kenneth Noland), who focused on the expressive power and optical effects of color; and contemporary artists (Tayo Heuser, Jorge Pardo, Kate Shepherd), who engage the eye in the experience of color and light.

Organized as part of The Phillips Collection's 90th anniversary, *Eye to Eye*, introduces the shared belief of museum founder Duncan Phillips and painter Joseph Marioni: color is the "most direct instrument of painting."

