

Five on Five: Huseyin Sami and Bernard Frize's *Suite Segond*

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HUSEYIN SAMI [INTRODUCTION QUOTE]

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TIARNEY MIEKUS [INTRODUCTION]

For this series of 'Five On Five', we're asking five artists to reflect upon a painting that has influenced or inspired them. In this episode, hear Huseyin Sami discuss 'Suite Segond' (1980) painted by French artist Bernard Frize.

HS

My name's Huseyin Sami. I'm a painter based in Sydney, and my practice poses questions and develops new strategies for the production of making paintings.

The artist whose work I've chosen to speak about today is Bernard Frize. And the work of his that I've chosen is a painting titled 'Suite Segond', a work from a series he created in the 1980s. How would I describe Bernard Frize and his output? Well, I would describe him as an innovator and experimenter. A performer, a materialist. But fundamentally, I see him as a dedicated painter. Frize's work invokes all things possible in painting, which has been refined and expanded through decades of paintings, and processes that are evidence of his unrelenting dedication to art making. He is for me, one of my all time art heroes. Frize came out of a period in the 1970s in France, and the practice of painting was in constant question, and its intellectual currency was in decline. Yet Frize was one of those artists who ignored the stigma around painting and decided to work through the problems of painting.

When I first saw Frize's work, 'Suite Segond', I was in third year painting at art school. It was in an exhibition catalogue that my lecturer brought back from a trip to Europe. The catalogue was called 'Size Matters', and as I was flicking through the pages, I came across this work that for me addressed a lot of critical thinking that was influencing my ideas about my work and the ability for painting to be able to capture material record of the painterly process. 'Suite Segond' presented a way or a process of art making that made complete sense to me as a painter and as an artist, dealing with the materiality of painting and looking to unconventional tools and methods in which to approach the conventional paradigm of painting. For me, this painting represented the possibilities of painting and the possibilities of material. It reduced the elements with which he worked to the essentials of just material and surface, and this is something which appealed to me greatly. With this painting Frize literally dealt with the elements of time, chance, and the inherent material qualities of paint. For he has made this work by allowing skins to form and dry upon open containers of wet paint. These thin skins were then lifted from the open cans and collaged onto the surface. He repeated this process over a period of time, eventually completely covering the entire surface of the canvas.

It was made without any assistance of conventional tools. It relied solely on the material of paint, exposed to the element of air, and that was it. It was incredibly beautiful in its conceptual ideation and execution. I found Frize's approach to this particular work and series, both experimental and progressive. It became influential in shaping my conceptual approach to the process of painting and art making in general. During the period when I first encountered this painting, I was already experimenting with pouring paint directly from the can onto various surfaces and allowing it to dry into a mailable form. So when I saw this work, I was incredibly excited. I felt as though I had channeled or tapped into a way of conceptual thinking that was validated and propelled by the existence of this work. Frize's work and broader approach to making painting are of huge significance and importance to me. His practice seems to delight in the process of inventing rules and structures within which to work. In doing so, most of the time removing the intrusion of choice and expression, which is an important consideration when viewing his work. 'Suite Segond'. I would like to quote Frize describing his approach to painting, which might shed some light on his conceptual thinking and motivation: "I need reasons to

make a painting. The reason has to drive me happily to the painting it. I am always unsatisfied. That's why I'm doing the next one." He's not interested in producing a single masterpiece. Instead, he works in series with each work of equal collective importance and interest. It reveals Frize's preoccupation with continuous exploration within the process of painting, moving progressively forward through different ways to approach the making of paintings. His work speaks directly with creating a dialogue with the physical properties of the material, the substance of paint, and the surface of painting.

With the painting 'Suite Segond', it revealed to me an artist who is deeply invested in high level experimentation in various technical facilities that address his role within the production process, allowing chance to play a major role in the outcome of the work.