



Exhibition Education Resource Guide

Developed by Rosemary Lennox

Justin Caguiat *Triple Solitaire*

September 17–December 8, 2024

Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery | Center for the Arts | Wesleyan University

This resource guide is meant to supplement the visit to the exhibition and the exhibition handout. It includes an overview of the exhibition, the artist, explanation of art terms referenced, discussion questions, as well as suggested activities and additional resources.

Visiting the exhibition is always free of charge, and guided tours are available by request. Please allow two weeks' notice. To schedule a tour, contact Rosemary Lennox, Exhibitions Manager, rlennox@wesleyan.edu.

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About the Artist and Exhibition

About the Artist

Justin Caguiat (b. 1989, Tokyo) lives and works between New York and California. Recent solo exhibitions include Greene Naftali, New York (2022); The Warehouse, Dallas (2022); Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo (2021); Modern Art, London (2023, 2020); and 15 Orient, New York (2018). Significant group shows include Greene Naftali, New York (2023); Modern Art, London (2023, 2021); Lomex, New York hosted by Arcadia Missa, London (2020); and Clima, Milan (2019). Caguiat is a published poet and has participated in various readings and performances, including in 2017 at the Kunsthalle Zurich, Switzerland. His work is in the collections of the Dallas Museum of Art; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among others.

About the Exhibition

Triple Solitaire, Justin Caguiat's first solo institution exhibition, is an installation that combines both abstract paintings and soundworks to create an immersive experience. In the Zilkha Gallery, the exhibition is anchored by three tremendous singular paintings that compose a triptych that brings together multiple temporalities. Painted in layers, familiar reference points from Art History may emerge – the Vienna Secession, Symbolism, Japanese woodcuts, les Nabis, Pop Art — but are transformed into sublime works that are relevant in both the present and future.

Much like the intention of panorama paintings that were popular in 18th- and 19th-century Europe, Caguiat's panoramic artwork provides the viewer with windows that open up into a larger and sublime world. Each panel contains images that become increasingly distinct but also abstract. The paint pigment is designed to oxidize over time, ultimately transforming the work over the course of the exhibition. The installation is further activated through sound works that are suspended from the ceiling, providing an intimate and sensorial experience that invites viewers to take in the exhibition as it materializes in real time.

For Reference



Triptych

An artwork in three panels intended to be displayed and read together.

Example: Francis Bacon, *Triptych August 1972*, (1972)

Triptych August 1972 by Francis Bacon, was painted in the wake of the death of the artist's former lover. All the panels, taken together, show the range of his anguish, suggesting different emotions and stages in processing his loss. One panel alone would not accurately demonstrate his grief.

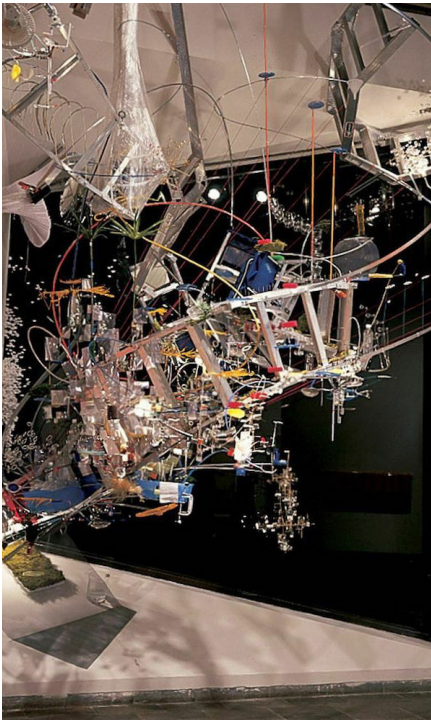
Abstract Art

Abstract art is art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead uses shapes, colors, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect.



Example: Helen Frankenthaler, *Mountains and Sea*, 1952

American abstract expressionist painter Helen Frankenthaler painted this work while on a road trip to Nova Scotia. While we cannot directly see any mountains or sea, it captures the essence that Frankenthaler experienced of the coast through her use of color and form, which she achieved by pouring paint directly onto a wet canvas, allowing the colors to flow together.



Installation Art

The term installation art is used to describe large-scale, mixed-media constructions, often designed for a specific place or for a temporary period of time.

Example: Sarah Sze, *Strange Attractor*, 2000

Strange Attractor was commissioned for the Whitney Museum of American Art's 2000 Biennial and was installed on the fourth floor window of the Museum. This meant the work could be seen from two directions— in the gallery and from the street— which redefined the space of the traditional exhibition viewing platform. The material in *Strange Attractor* is a cosmos of thousands of common household items (such as aspirin, plastic spoons, ladders) all purchased in the neighborhood surrounding the Whitney.



Le Nabis

Les Nabis were a group of French painters active from 1888–1900 whose work is characterized by flat patches of color, bold contours and simplified drawing.

Example: Edouard Vuillard, *The Yellow Curtain*, 1893

Yellow Curtain by Édouard Vuillard is dominated by bold colors and patterns of the domestic space. A deep golden yellow curtain fills nearly three-quarters of the painting, slightly opened to reveal an intensely rendered wall of florals. The paint has been boldly applied— especially to the florals— which makes them appear semi-abstract.



Panoramas

Panoramas are usually painted in a broad and direct manner, akin to scene, or theatrical, painting. Popular in the late 18th and the 19th centuries, the panorama was essentially the antecedent of the stereopticon and of motion pictures, especially animations.

Example: John Vanderlyn, *Panoramic View of the Palace and Gardens of Versailles* (detail), 1818–19
John Vanderlyn's panoramic painting of Versailles envelops the viewer and transports them to the grounds of the famous palace and its water garden, blurring the line between art and reality. The immense size of the painting offered a radical new way of seeing by encouraging the eye and mind to lose itself in the all encompassing view.



Pop Art

Pop art is an art movement that emerged in the 1950s and flourished in the 1960s, drawing inspiration from sources in popular and commercial culture, such as Hollywood movies, advertising, product packaging, pop music and comic books.

Example: Andy Warhol, *Flowers* (detail), 1964
Andy Warhol's 1964 series *Flowers* appeared to be an artistic departure for the artist who is more prominently known for their silkscreen prints of commercial brands, such as Campbell Soup cans. However, by transforming a photograph of a flower Warhol found in an issue of *Modern Photography* magazine into a silkscreen (a method originally used for commercial printing) the flowers (a common theme in the history of painting) takes on an unnatural, even artificial, appearance.

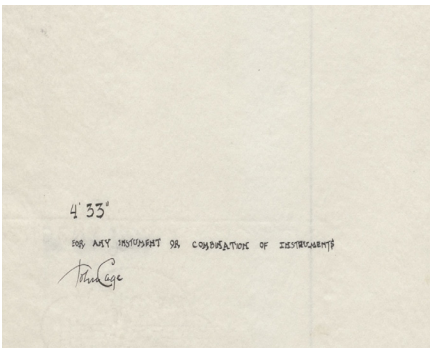


Secession

The breaking away of younger and more radical artists from an existing academy or art group to form a new grouping, the most famous being the Vienna secession formed in 1897 and led by symbolist painter Gustav Klimt.

Example: Gustav Klimt, *Hope II* (detail), 1907–1908

The painting *Hope II* by Gustav Klimt is dominated by a woman's rich gold-patterned robe, which has an extraordinary decorative beauty. It is filled with vibrant colors and symbolic elements, such as the prominent use of the color gold, suggesting a sacred quality to the composition.



Sound Art

Art which uses sound both as its medium (what it is made out of) and as its subject (what it is about).

Example: John Cage, *4'33"* (*In Proportional Notation*) (detail), 1952/1953

In sound art, anything that makes a noise can be a part of an artwork. In John Cage's *4' 33"* he famously included silence as sound for the first time. The piece consists of 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence.



Ukiyo-e woodblock prints

A Japanese art form that includes woodblock prints and paintings that depict the everyday life of people during the Edo period (17th–19th centuries). The term translates to “pictures of the floating world”.

Example: Kitagawa Utamaro, *Geisha and Attendant on a Rainy Night*, 1797

This woodblock print transports us into a scene of everyday life in the pleasure quarters of Edo Japan. Two geishas walk with an umbrella in a rainstorm, with rain falling strong and fast. Utamaro's attention to detail— their elaborate hairstyle known as “shimada” for instance— captures not only their elegance in weathering the storm, but also their tenacity.

Materials and Process

■ Materials used by the artist in *Triple Solitaire* include oil paint, acrylic paint, paper, silver leaf, blown glass, and mixed media (umbrella, speakers, hardware, sound). They are all new works completed in 2024. This is their first presentation.

■ Each work in the triptych was painted on large, unstretched canvas, leaving exposed the textiles' edges.

■ An unstretched canvas is a loose canvas material, but without stretcher bars or frame backing.

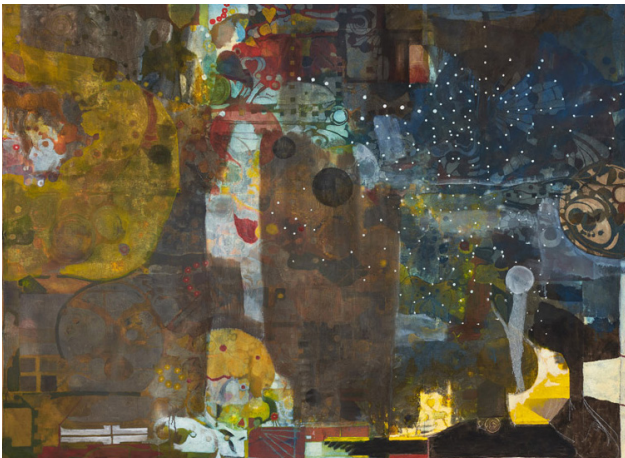
The paintings' fresco-like surfaces are developed by the technique of accumulating layers of paint (and sometimes other materials, such as paper) on linen. Derived from flax plant fibers, linen canvas offers durability and lends a luxurious quality to the finished work.

■ For Caguiat, in painting a triptych of this scale, space is a consideration - both physically and mentally. Caguiat's studio is not large enough to see all the panels together at once. This meant he had to physically move and store each panel when complete, and then hold the memory of the work in his mind when moving on to create the next panel.

■ Caguiat worked on the panels with their order in mind. They are to be read from left to right as they are installed in the gallery.

■ Artist collaboration is an integral part of Caguiat's work. For instance, the sculptural sound piece was developed with another artist who fashioned together the materials for the sound sculpture while Caguiat produced the sound work. The glass work is oil and silver leaf on blown glass, which was made in collaboration with a glassmith who also has an expertise in gilding. This is also the artist's first time working with glass as a material.

Examples of Previous Works by the Artist



From top:

Justin Caguiat, *Thousand year old laughter*, 2019. Oil on linen. 95 1/2 x 128 1/8 inches

Justin Caguiat, *Pissing in the Stars*, 2022. Oil and gouache on linen. 97 3/4 x 129 1/4 inches

Discussion Questions

1. The purpose of a triptych is often to tell a story in three parts. Can you read a narrative in the three panels? Can you read it from left to right as the artist intends? Now select two of the panels from the triptych. Look closely at their colors, composition, and shapes. What adjectives would you use to describe what you see? What commonalities do you see between the works? What are the differences? Does the story feel unfinished without the third panel?

2. The experience of panoramic paintings in the 17th and 18th century was a kind of amusement—it was marketed as an immersive transportation to view far flung places across the world without the act of travel. Cagliati's work appears to contain a more complex sense of time and place. If you could name and date where his works take you, where would you be?

3. The sound installation is intended to be site-specific to the paintings. How does the soundwork affect your experience of the exhibition? Does it change the way you view the work? How?

4. The act of looking at panoramic paintings was often described historically as a confusing and dizzying experience, with viewers being unsure of what to look at first or what information to prioritize. Where does your eye go first when viewing Cagliati's large scale paintings? Does the work transform from different angles and vantage points?

Art Activities in the Gallery or at Home

1. Caguiat's imagery often appears to spill out and overflow from the canvas spaces they inhabit. Use your body and movement to imagine and choreograph how these images would continue to move and evolve after leaving the canvas.

2. Panoramic paintings were once considered similar entertainment as what would then become the act of going to the cinema. The works held a narrative within them that the eyes would read by the act of looking. Write a movie script for this exhibition by looking closely at Caguiat's paintings.

3. Create your own panorama with your camera (supplies needed include a camera, access to a printer, and adhesive). Stand in one place and take photos moving your camera around in a semicircle but try to make sure the edges of the photos overlap. Print your photos and put them together (using adhesive) and consider what story your panorama tells about what you captured. An alternative would be to draw or paint the scenes you see and attach them together.

4. Make your own triptych (group activity, supplies needed include blank paper and a writing or coloring tool, such as pencils/markers/pastels). If you are visiting as a group, divide into three, and create a collaborative triptych. Decide on a theme, narrative, and design. Each person should keep these elements in mind as they create their part of the triptych. When the three panels are completed, the group will review them together and decide how best to arrange them.

Please note that the gallery does not have supplies on-hand.

Supplementary Readings and Related Events

Reviews

Dean Kissik, *Spike Art Magazine*, 2022

Tessa Molden, *Ocula*, 2020

Artist Books

Justin Caguiat, *Carnival*, 2023

Opening Reception

Tuesday, September 17, 2024, 4:30pm–6pm

Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery

Gretchen Lawrence Performance

Sunday, November 3, 2024, 2pm

Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery

Justin Caguiat Artist Talk

Wednesday, December 4, 2024, 4:30pm

Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery



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