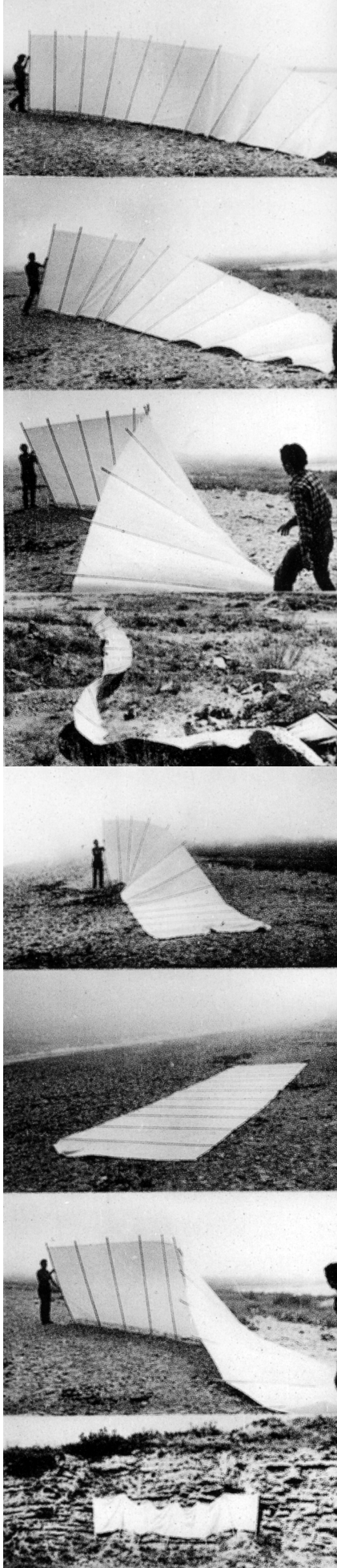




SUPPORTS

SURFACES



Supports/Surfaces is an artistic movement that coalesced in Southern France in the late 1960s through the shared concerns of twelve artists dedicated to liberating painting, and everyday life, from the artistic conventions and social inequities of the post-war period. Invigorated by the protests of May 1968, the artists were inspired, artistically, by the works of Simon Hantaï and Henri Matisse; American Color Field painting (which was on view at the time at the Fournier Gallery in Paris); and Chinese ink painting. The Supports/Surfaces artists deconstructed painting in terms of its most essential qualities – color, surface, and pliability – embracing its capacity for beauty and touch. Studying Matisse, they collapsed foreground and background into vibrant, lyrical patterns and motifs. As described by Marc Devade: “... the object of a pictorial structure is not therefore the result of the exteriority of formal elements in relation to format: it is, on the contrary, the very form of the structure that develops its own effects,” (Dezeuze 1971). In the 1964 words of Marshall McLuhan, whose writings the artists read and quoted: *the medium is the message*.

With a deep love of painting politically fueled by Marxist and psycho-analytic theory, most of the Supports/Surfaces artists rejected “elitist” tools such as fine-art brushes and oil paint, working instead with liquid dyes, spray paint, soot, sponges, stencils, razors, and utility brushes. They worked on fabric, gauze, rope, wood, vinyl, and found objects such as dish towels and tablecloths, engaging these surfaces in reverse and from all sides, often blind to the immediate results of their actions. They stained, folded, creased, rolled, burned, and doused their paintings into being, trusting the materials to do *their* work. Artist Daniel Dezeuze described the movement as “... revolting against the art world and the world in general without having to make anti-art,” (Rubinstein 2004).

In the early years (1966–1970) before Supports/Surfaces became an official movement, many of the artists installed their work in public spaces and the natural environment, organizing and participating in projects in Southern France, in Céret, 1966; Cannes, 1968; Coaraze, 1969; and along the French coast, in 1970. Works were suspended from electrical lines, hung on buildings, and unrolled across streets and beaches. The artists expanded their work to the scale of public life. While many of the group preferred the engagement of public space over the static atmosphere of the museum, they participated in important museum exhibitions, including: *Supports/Surfaces*, ARC, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville, Paris, in 1970; and *12 Ans d'Art Contemporain en France*, at the Grand Palais in Paris in 1972. At various times, though, members of the group actively protested Supports/Surfaces exhibitions or refused to participate in them altogether.

A vital aspect of the Supports/Surfaces movement was its participation in French intellectual culture. In 1971, four of the group's members – Bioulès, Dezeuze, Devade, and Cane – founded the journal *Peinture: cahiers théoriques* (Painting: theoretical notebooks) in Paris. Working closely with Marcelin Pleynet, the literary editor of the influential

journal *Tel Quel*, and a Supports/Surfaces advocate, the *Peinture* editors published Supports/Surfaces writings amidst an astonishingly wide variety of critical texts on art, philosophy, and literature. Absorbing and debating the theories of Karl Marx, Jacques Derrida, Marshall McLuhan, and Louis Althusser, the editors set about theorizing painting and art history as an object of knowledge. In the first issue of *Peinture: cahiers théoriques*, they declared: “To consider painting as a significant practice takes into account not the object produced, but the work of the maker – not the merchandise, but the productive force: which is to say, the way in which the subject of the painting (the painter) effaces himself in the work (death drive/sublimation) and brings about the creation/deconstruction of the painting,” (Dezeuze 1971). This Marxist/psychoanalytic position privileges the artist’s labor while de-emphasizing the ego and narcissism of the artist – and the viewer.

By 1974 the Supports/Surfaces artists were established members of the French art world. That year, former Pompidou director Bernard Ceysson featured the artists in a major traveling painting exhibition that originated in Saint-Étienne, where he was the director. But by 1973, four members of the group had already resigned from the movement. The reasons were complex. As articulated by noted Supports/Surfaces scholar Raphael Rubinstein: “The group rapidly splintered, dividing into what Dezeuze labeled the ‘theoreticians’ in Paris and the ‘materiologists’ in the South of France. For the former, Freud (filtered through Lacan and through writer Marcelin Pleyne’s psychoanalytic interpretations of Matisse) was as important as Marx and Mao,” (Rubinstein 2014). Pleyne was also a great admirer of Clement Greenberg’s writings, in particular his 1955 essay “American-Style Painting” in which Greenberg stated that “... painting has turned out to have a greater number of expendable conventions embedded in it, or at least a greater number of conventions that are difficult to isolate in order to expend,” (Greenberg 1955). Pleyne pushed Greenberg’s formalism further, using it to theorize Supports/Surfaces’ move beyond opticality into the linings, hidden spaces, and constituent elements of painting.

Though the official Supports/Surfaces collective dissolved just a few years after it was born, the artists continued – and continue – to work together. In Claude Viallat’s words, the group “... was formed through friendship and mutual confidence in the work which was being made, or that one thought could be done. This was both the weakness and the greatness of the group ...” (Laks 2010). Over the



above: Claude Viallat (right) at Argelès-Sur-Mer, Été, 1970 © the artists and Claude Viallat Archives. opposite: Patrick Saytour, Installation views, Été, 1970 © the artist and Claude Viallat Archives.

years, no one did more to support the group than Bernard Ceysson, who curated their work and eventually opened a gallery that represents them to this day. In a 2014 interview Ceysson reflected on the legacy of Supports/Surfaces: “By adopting strategies of esthetic and political action, they were able to invest their work with conceptual rigor. The early explorations of the limits of materials, the liberating process of doing, the transgression of boundaries between the event and the public became situations where the works formed links with each other,” (Ceysson 2014). Supports/Surfaces’ unique marriage of political conviction and material exploration possesses invaluable considerations for the present.

Stephanie Snyder

Anne and John Hauberg Curator and Director,
Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College

Bernard Ceysson, “Interview: Bernard Ceysson/Rachel Stella,” *Supports/Surfaces: A Moment/A Movement* (Paris: Ceysson Éditions d’Art, 2014) p. 12.

Daniel Dezeuze, “Pour un Programme Théorique Pictorial,” *Peinture: cahiers théoriques*, June 1971, no. 1.

Clement Greenberg, “American-style Painting,” *Art and Culture, Critical Essays by Clement Greenberg* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), p. 208.

Deborah Laks, “A History of Supports/Surfaces,” *Le Moment Supports/Surfaces* (Paris: Ceysson Éditions d’Art, 2010) p. 12.

Raphael Rubinstein, “The Painting Undone: Supports/Surfaces,” *Art Critical*, February 1, 2004: artcritical.com

———, “Theory and Matter,” *Art in America*, September 2014, p. 114.



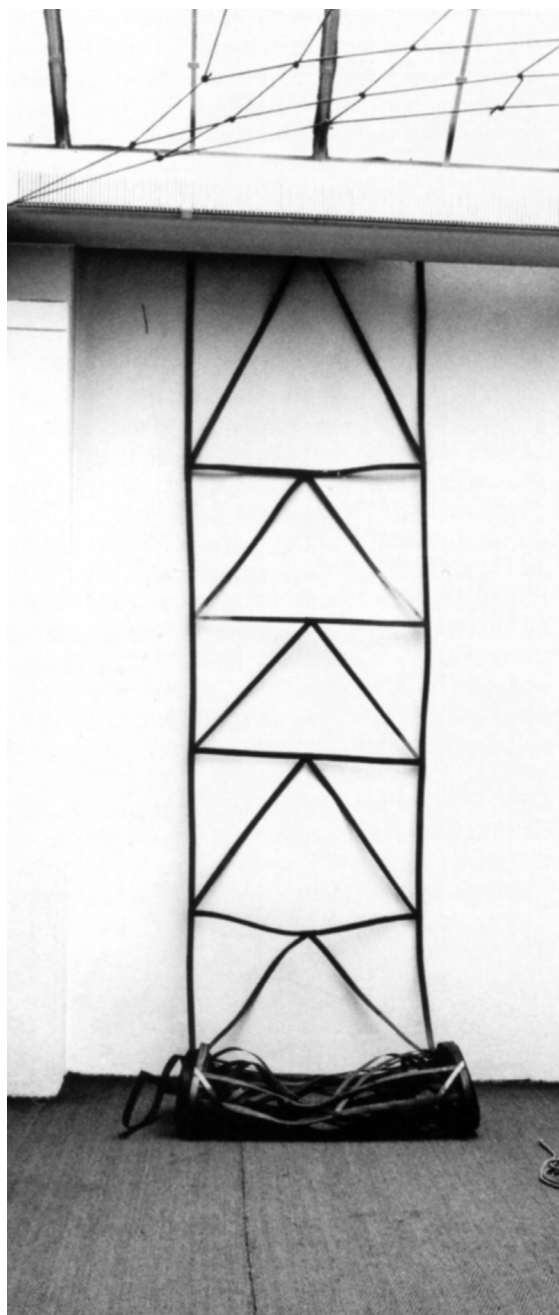
2



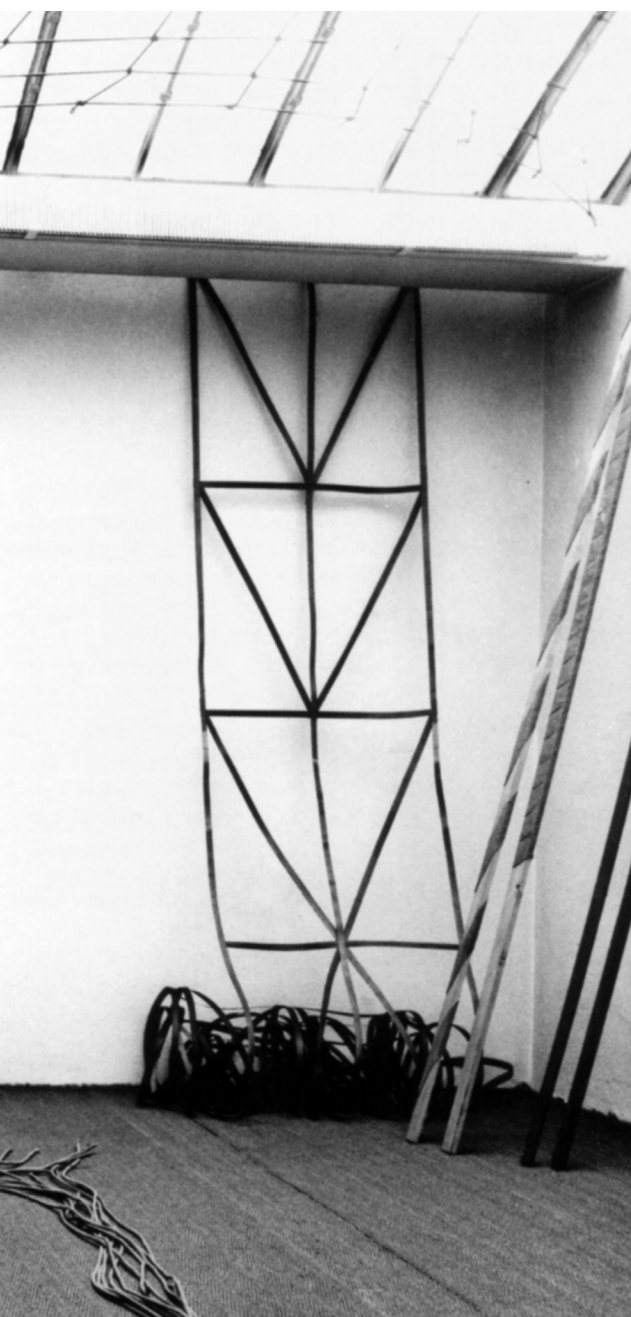
3



1



1 André Valensi, *Formes Peintes*, 1969, Installation view, ARC, 1970 © the artist. 2 Claude Viallat installing his work at the VII Biennial de Paris, 1971 © the artists and Claude Viallat Archives. 3 Noël Dolla, *Restructuration Spatiale*, La Tinée, 1971 © the artist. 4 Supports/Surfaces exhibition view, Jean Fournier Gallery, Paris, 1971 © the artists and Claude Viallat Archives. 5 Installation view, *12 Ans d'Art Contemporain en France*, Grand Palais, 1972 © the artists and Claude Viallat Archives. 6 Noël Dolla, Studio view, 1970 © the artist. 7 Supports/Surfaces exhibition view, Théâtre de Nice, 1971 © the artists and Claude Viallat Archives. 8 Claude Viallat installing his work, Rennes, 1974 © Claude Viallat Archives.



4



5



6



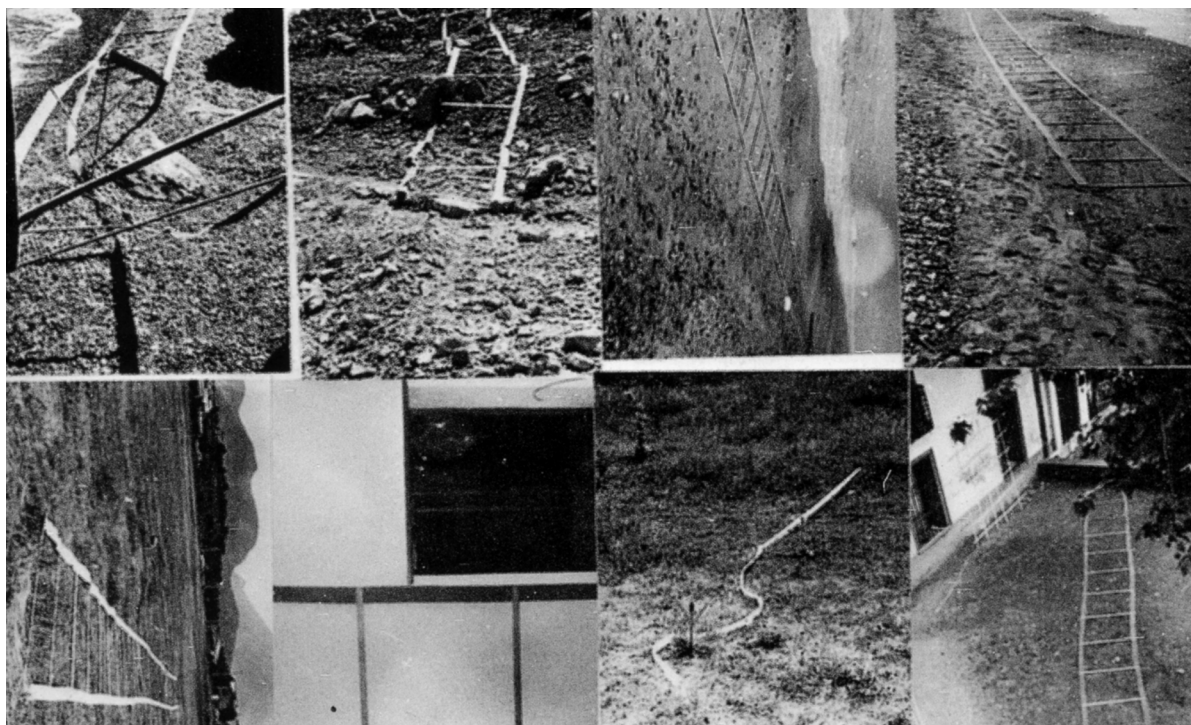
7



8

THEY AFTER
ANA HE S
BEFORE
THEY W
W NOT T





above: Patrick Saytour, Installation views, *Été*, 1970 © the artist and Claude Viallat Archives. opposite: Mahou and Claude Viallat (holding his work), *La Rochelle*, 1973 © the artists and Claude Viallat Archives.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

ANDRÉ-PIERRE ARNAL

Pliage, 1971

Spray paint on canvas
79 x 40 in.

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

PIERRE BURAGLIO

Masquage Vide, 1978

Masking tape on tracing paper
21.75 x 16 in.

Courtesy the artist and Cherry
and Martin, Los Angeles

PIERRE BURAGLIO

Masquage Vide, 1979

Masking tape on tracing paper
22 x 15.75 in.

Courtesy the artist and Cherry
and Martin, Los Angeles

PIERRE BURAGLIO

Montage, 1981

Mixed media
27 x 21 in.

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

LOUIS CANE

Toile découpée, 1970

Oil on canvas

133 x 74 in.

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

LOUIS CANE

Toile découpée, 1974

Oil on cut canvas

15.75 x 29.75 in.

Courtesy the artist and Cherry
and Martin, Los Angeles

MARC DEVADE

Untitled paintings, 1967

Ink on canvas

16 x 31 in. each

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

DANIEL DEZEUZE

Échelle de bois souple, 1974

Paint on wood

149 x 47 x 16 in.

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

NOËL DOLLA

Toile Rouge (points blancs, 3 petits points noirs), 1970

Paint on canvas

116 x 6.25 in.

Courtesy the artist and Cherry
and Martin, Los Angeles

JEAN-MICHEL MEURICE

Toile trouée, 1964

Mixed media on canvas

32.75 x 25.5 in.

Courtesy the artist and Cherry
and Martin, Los Angeles

JEAN-MICHEL MEURICE

Vinyle, 1969

Assemblage of yellow and

pink vinyl

98 x 59 in.

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

JEAN-PIERRE PINCEMIN

Carrés collés, 1973

Acrylic on canvas

106 x 94 in.

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

PATRICK SAYTOUR

Pliage, 1973

Dye and mixed media on
canvas

91 x 98 in.

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

PATRICK SAYTOUR

Untitled, 1974

Mixed media

83 x 30 x 85 in.

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

CLAUDE VIALLAT

1970/056, 1970

Acrylic on fabric

85 x 234 in.

Courtesy the artist and
CANADA, New York

CLAUDE VIALLAT

1972/Co28, 1972

Rope and pigment

123 x 2 in.

Miller Meigs Collection



SUPPORTS/SURFACES

November 4 – December 14, 2014

Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College

Opening reception with CANADA, New York co-founder Wallace Whitney, November 10, 5:00–8:00 p.m.

The Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College is proud to present an exhibition of works by French artists from the Supports/Surfaces movement. The exhibition comprises works from 1964–1981 by ten of the twelve artists associated with the group: **André-Pierre Arnal** (b. Nîmes, 1939); **Vincent Bioulès** (b. 1938, Charenton); **Pierre Buraglio** (b. Charenton, 1939); **Louis Cane** (b. Beaulieu-sur-Mer, 1943); **Marc Devade** (b. Paris, 1943–1983); **Daniel Dezeuze** (b. Alès, 1942); **Noël Dolla** (b. Nice, 1945); **Jean-Michel Meurice** (b. Lille, 1938); **Bernard Pagès** (b. Cahors, 1940); **Jean-Pierre Pincemin** (b. Paris, 1944–2005); **Patrick Saytour** (b. Nice, 1935); **André Valensi** (b. Paris, 1949–1999); and **Claude Viallat** (b. Nîmes, 1936).

The first-ever U.S. survey of the Supports/Surfaces group debuted at CANADA, New York, in 2014, curated by CANADA co-founder Wallace Whitney. The current iteration of CANADA's exhibition has been curated for the Cooley by Stephanie Snyder, in partnership with Whitney and CANADA, New York. Additional loans to the exhibition have been made possible courtesy of Cherry and Martin, Los Angeles, and the Miller Meigs Collection.

Many heartfelt thanks to Wallace Whitney for his vision and tireless work in bringing this important work to the United States, and for his willingness to re-envision the original exhibition for the Cooley. The Cooley gratefully acknowledges Galerie Bernard Ceysson, France, for enabling Supports/Surfaces to travel to the United States. Many thanks to Allison Tepper and Chloe Truong-Jones for translation support, and to: Colleen Gotze, Gregory MacNaughton, Jeanine Jablonski, Heather Watkins, Container Corps, and Mark Johnson. A full-color catalog, co-published by Galerie Bernard Ceysson and CANADA, New York, is available at the Cooley.

**HOURS: NOON TO 5 P.M., TUESDAY – SUNDAY, FREE
LOCATED ON THE MAIN FLOOR OF THE REED LIBRARY**

The mission of the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery is to enhance the academic offerings of Reed College with a diverse range of scholarly exhibitions, lectures, and publications.

top left: Steiner, Vassart, Buraglio, and Pincemin, École des Beaux-Arts de Valence, 1976 © the artists and Pierre Buraglio Archives. *left:* Jean-Pierre Pincemin, Galerie Rencontres, Paris, 1973 © the artists and Marc Devade Archives. *cover:* Claude Viallat (right), installing at the Théâtre de Nice, 1971 © the artists and Claude Viallat Archives.

COOLEY

Douglas F. Cooley Memorial
Art Gallery, Reed College

3203 SE Woodstock Boulevard
Portland, OR 97202
Information: 503-517-7851
www.reed.edu/gallery

