

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*For Piet's Sake—Old and New
Paintings: Robert Storr*

31 October 2025 – 31 January, 2026

OPENING RECEPTION

31 October, 5 – 7 PM, 2nd floor



ROBERT STORR | *Untitled*, 1982. Oil on canvas, 12 x 12 x 1 in (30.5 x 30.5 x 2.5 cm).
Photo by Marylene Mey, courtesy of Zane Bennett Contemporary Art

(Santa Fe, NM) Renowned curator, writer, and artist Robert Storr presents works from his early painting career and new panels alongside ZB Editions inaugural print portfolio based on eight drawings by Storr and printed by Santa Fe-based master printer, James Bourland.

(October 2025) ***For Piet's Sake* is an exhibition of oil paintings from the late 1970s to the 1980s, more recent and new panels by Robert Storr, along with the inaugural print portfolio of ZB Editions, which features eight prints based on drawings by Storr and produced by master printer James Bourland.** This exhibition pays homage to Piet Mondrian, whose works and ideas about painting significantly influenced 20th-century modern art and continue to influence disciplines such as design and architecture to this day. The early works in this exhibition date from 1979, a year after Storr lived in the Hague, spending long hours immersed in the large and comprehensive collection of Mondrian paintings there, to 1988, two years before Storr became curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Storr would subsequently serve as Senior Curator at MoMA, Dean at Yale School of Art, and Artistic Director of the Venice Biennale. These early paintings—little known to Storr's public—and the paintings and drawings from 2020-2025 bracket the decades of exceptional curatorial and professorial influence, over which he has now privileged his artistic lifework. Storr refers to the practice of painting as a "barrier reef" against the times we have to endure or a means of carving out space not as "a compensation for chaos" but as "an alternative," echoing Meyer Schapiro's *On the Humanity of Abstract Painting*—Schapiro's defense of abstraction in general and of Mondrian in particular. Schapiro wrote, "It is the painter's constructive activity, his power of impressing a work with feeling and the qualities of thought that gives humanity to art." ***For Piet's Sake* opens on October 31 from 5 to 7 PM on the gallery's second floor.**

If Storr's curatorial range includes exhibitions such as *Disparities and Deformations: Our Grotesque* (the SITE Santa Fe International) and *Retinal Hysteria* (at Venus Over Manhattan), his own artistic output has leaned spare and abstract. The early works comprise small canvases that begin with gestural marks. Painterly and atmospheric, Storr's earliest two paintings suggest spring and winter landscapes, calling to mind Mondrian's own roots in landscape painting before natural forms served as armature for what Mondrian distilled and reduced into what Mondrian referred to as "aesthetically purified abstract form." These two paintings by Storr led to compositions so spare that they're mostly geometric figure on ground in predominantly neutral colors. The occasional chromatic pop is orange, red-orange, or the particular yellow over orange punctuated with a black circle inspired by the scumbling of red-orange paint that forms the titular *De rode wolk* (The Red Cloud) painted by Mondrian in 1907, and studied by Storr at the Kunstmuseum Den Haag.

Fast forward to 2020, the oil on canvas mounted on wood panel paintings have lost figure altogether but retain the subdued color palette of the 1980s—leavened here and there with thin strips or small bands of yellow, orange, red, or sienna. Zane Bennett gallery director Carina Evangelista writes, "These minimal abstractions reveal predetermined compositions of rectangles, bars, and strips but the surfaces sport a range of textures—how the brushstrokes are applied, how thick paint dried or congealed, how less viscous paint might have been allowed to be pulled by gravity, or how some painted surfaces are abraded to reveal other colors underneath. Borders might be breached with the tips of the paintbrush. Misalignment between frame and color fill is intentional. Thin paint is given permission to weep. The strokes evidence the artist's hand, and the materiality—even the vulnerability—of the medium is manifest. The quiver of imperfection within or beyond the geometry of lines is embraced."

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Two long horizontal panels made this year are abstractions in paint applied so thinly and spontaneously they're titled *Incompiuto* (Italian for "incomplete" or "unfinished"). Although still featuring rectangular forms, they somehow call to mind how buildings might have been painted by Philip Guston, whose biography *A Life Spent Painting*, published in 2020, was authored by Storr. These anticipate the paintings in Storr's solo exhibition at Vito Schnabel Gallery in New York concurrent with his exhibition at Zane Bennett.

In Ekin Erkan's *Brooklyn Rail* review of Storr's 2025 paintings (three of which travel here from their debut at Peninsula in New York), Erkan quotes Storr whose 2020 essay, "Typologies and Twists," asserted, "Modernism has not concluded with the onset of postmodernism." Erkan adds, "Storr's paintings are demonstrative of his conviction that modernism remains a historically incomplete (and perhaps incompletable) endeavor."

A gifted writer and eloquent speaker whose analyses of other artists' works have been thorough and exquisite, Storr has produced voluminous text, both written and spoken. Evangelista notes, "The drawings in this exhibition—all made in 2024 and on which the prints published by ZB Editions this year are based—suggest wordless diaristic entries that explore the infinite variations of line- and mark-making." The print portfolio is titled *Celebesstraat*, after the street where Storr had a studio in the Netherlands in the late 1970s. Having *cherché la femme* (classical musician Rosamund Morley, who would become his wife), Storr chased her when she took further music studies at the Royal Conservatoire in the Hague. Evangelista adds, "These marks build a visual register of transcribed psychic movement—a staff of notational ciphers. A record of codes that defy decoding. A calligraphy that evades legibility but intuitively how mind and hand might tread the tabula rasa that each sheet of paper offers. *Celebesstraat* unfolds with the cumulative and serial effect from the lone band in the first print to the most visually polyphonic last."

This capsule retrospective is accompanied by an Artist/Curator talk, **Robert Storr: Painting Despite Everything**, in conversation with Zane Bennett Director Carina Evangelista at SITE SANTA FE on Saturday, November 1, at 2 P.M.

About the Artist

Robert Storr is a painter living in Brooklyn, NY. Born in Portland, Maine, he was educated at the University of Chicago Laboratory School and Le Collège Cévenol near Lyon, France. His undergraduate studies in History and Art History at Swarthmore College sponsored his stint as an assistant to David Alfaro Siqueiros on his final mural project at The Polyforum Cultural Siqueiros in Mexico City, Mexico. Later, he took courses at the School of The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and received his MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago. He has exhibited in museums and galleries in the US and Europe. His work is in numerous private collections, as well as Buffalo AKG Museum, Buffalo, NY; Kansas City Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; Mead Museum, Amherst College, MA; Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), New York; Portland Museum of Art, ME; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT. He served as Dean of the Yale School of Art [2006-2016]; Artistic Director, Venice Biennale [2007]; Rosalie Solow Professor of Modern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, NY [2002-2006]; and Curator then Senior Curator at the Museum of Modern Art, NY [1990-2002].

Artist Statement

Literature and discourse say things. Art makes them visible. In some instances, be they inherently material or immaterial, it even makes them palpable. The artist is free to choose the subject matter and the means to concentrate on. Nothing that a committed artist selects is out of bounds—be it in terms of imagery or medium, be it in terms of existing conventions or previously uncoded or unexplored ones.

Art history is always starting over. That process is often jumpstarted by hitherto undervalued intuitions about, and direct connections to, the past. In and of itself, no way of making holds the key to the future, and none is universally obsolete or forever anachronistic. Artists can be opportunists, and they are to be commended for it when they succeed in sharing that opportunity with others who have too casually bypassed or too ardently disparaged it, all the while reminding the general public that possibilities are always open if you can find a way to breathe life into them. There is no end of painting nor of any set of options related to it. There is just painting. Fast and furious or slow and steady, and not infrequently both in alternating currents. These panels were realized in fits and starts during the arduous course of the past years. They have been my fragile barrier reef against the tsunami of negativity we've all endured.

—Robert Storr

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