

## DATEBOOK

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Shore, 2015,  
by Christopher  
Le Brun.

NEW YORK

## Christopher Le Brun

"Composer," a two-venue exhibition of works made over the past two years by British painter Christopher Le Brun, offers a rare opportunity for American audiences to familiarize themselves with one of Europe's most important artists. One half of the show is on view at the Gallery at Windsor in Vero Beach, Florida, through April 27; the second half runs March 2 through April 15 at New York's Albertz Benda. Despite serving as president of the Royal Academy since 2011 and garnering praise from figures including art historian Barbara Rose and architect David Chipperfield—both of whom offer contributions to the exhibition's accompanying catalogue—Le Brun has remained largely below the radar in North America.

Understandably then, collectors in the United States have responded fairly differently to his work than their European counterparts. "American audiences react very immediately and emotionally to his paintings, even if they know nothing of the artist," explains Thorsten Albertz of Albertz Benda. "Often in the art world, it's equally important for collectors to know more about artists, where they stand in the auction market, and which galleries represent them. With Christopher's work—especially here in the United States—it's much more immediate."

That immediacy is perhaps most clearly attributable to the way in which Le Brun deals with color. Speaking at a lunch in advance of the openings, he explained that "color is one of those things that is curiously unavailable to the intellect. It's extremely accessible to feeling, but not necessarily to analysis. After decades of

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Le Brun's  
*Composer*,  
2016.

painting," he continued, "I think I've fully reached the stage of being rather tired of my own analysis of my work, but what I do love now is color, so I strip the word down to its basics—touch, scale, size, hue, light, layers—and try to make a painting out of that."

In the exhibition

catalogue, Rose describes "Composer" as an homage to Le Brun's "love of music that also implies parallels between the structure and mood of painting and that of music," and places him in the direct lineage of Wassily Kandinsky, the father of abstraction who similarly extolled the relationship

between music and painting. Le Brun traces his own musical awakening to composers such as Claude Debussy, Olivier Messiaen, Arnold Schoenberg, and Igor Stravinsky—or, as he describes it, "anything from that period where late Romanticism starts to break

up the oppressive weight of cultural baggage." He says his first experiences listening to music made him see mental pictures that he then tried to carry out, and he has moved into making abstract paintings only in the past several years in a natural evolution away from earlier, figurative works.

What has remained consistent in Le Brun's art, however, is his fierce commitment to beauty. "My job isn't necessarily to enter the world of politics," he says. "My job is to put the red there and the blue there and make them so beautiful it makes you cry."

—SARA ROFFINO

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