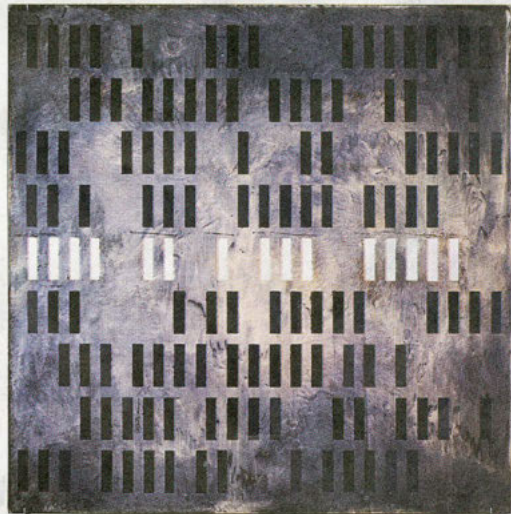


THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2017

Galleries



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, P! AND SIMONE SUBAL GALLERY

Clockwise from top: An installation view of Matt Keegan's show "Generation," at Participant Inc.; Benny Andrews's "Study for Portrait of Oppression (Homage to Black South Africans)," from 1985; and Brian O'Doherty's "The Late Show" (1968).

dematerialized ideas. The late-1960s and early-1970s work in Mr. O'Doherty's fine-grained solo show at Simone Subal — organized with Prem Krishnamurthy, founder of the art project P! — combines these essences. Four six-foot-tall wall sculptures are as narrow and plain as a carpenter's level, their sides painted with flat Mondrian colors: yellow, red-orange, blue. Their recessed interiors, though, are lined with sheets of reflective aluminum that meet at sharp 45-degree angles and are incised with horizontal lines. Two large canvases, dating to 1975, appear from a distance to be empty, as if they were waiting for paintings to happen. Closer up you see that they're marked with faint, wavelike tangles of colored lines.

These paintings have an organic source: They're magnified versions of small earlier collages made from hairs the artist plucked from his head. The incised lines in the sculptures have an unexpected source too: They're based on the written form of Ogham, an ancient Celtic language dating at least to the first century. It has an alphabet comprising lines of different lengths and combinations, and many of the earliest surviving

Ogham inscriptions spell people's names.

So Mr. O'Doherty has merged two modern art styles often defined as fundamentally **objective** — the one about unmetaphorical matter, the other about abstract concepts — and personalized them, even turned them into vehicles of self-portraiture: physical, in one case; cultural, in the other. And he's done so without abandoning the multitasking complications that make art an invaluable speculative tool. My guess is that the full study of those complications in Mr. O'Doherty's nearly 60 years of work has just begun.

HOLLAND COTTER

BRIAN O'DOHERTY

Through Feb. 19. Simone Subal Gallery, 131 Bowery, second floor, Manhattan; 917-409-0612, simonesubal.com.

Brian O'Doherty is one of contemporary art's notable polymaths. Born in 1928 in Ireland, he studied medicine there and, already an artist, moved to the United States in 1957. Here he took on many roles, including that of editor in chief of *Art in America* magazine and part-time director of the visual arts and the film and media programs at the National Endowment for the Arts. He has written epoch-shaping criticism, published novels, and produced a body of art poised on a line between Minimalism and Conceptualism.

Strictly speaking, Minimalism is about blank matter, Conceptualism about

The New York Times
"Brian O'Doherty"
by Holland Cotter
10 February 2017