



16 **Guido Molinari**

AANFM LP QMG RCA SAPQ 1933 – 2004

Sériel bleu-ocre

acrylic on canvas, on verso signed twice,
dated October 1967 and inscribed variously
78 x 63 in, 198.1 x 160 cm

PROVENANCE

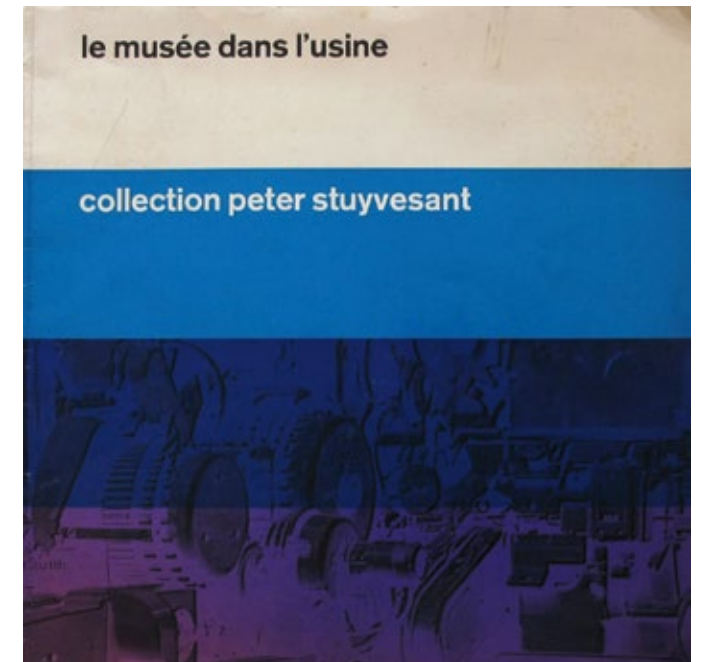
Acquired directly from the Artist, 1968
Peter Stuyvesant Collection, Netherlands
The BAT Artventure Collection, formerly known as
the Peter Stuyvesant Collection
The BAT Artventure Collection, Part II, Sotheby's Amsterdam,
April 19, 2011, lot 118
Museum of Contemporary Art of Buenos Aires,
Aldo Rubino Foundation

LITERATURE

The Art Gallery in the Factory, Peter Stuyvesant Foundation
and the National Gallery of Canada, 1967, listed and
reproduced, unpaginated
Kay Kritzwiser, "Canadian Included in Show in Stratford,"
Globe and Mail, June 11, 1968, page 16
Barry Lord, "Major Works 'Turn On' Stratford Gallery's Fake
Factory," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, June 15, 1968, page 9
*Ulysse Comtois | Guido Molinari: XXXIV International Biennial
Exhibition of Art*, National Gallery of Canada, 1968, essay
by Pierre Théberge, page 18
Alex J. Taylor, *Forms of Persuasion: Art and Corporate Image in the
1960s*, 2022, page 161

EXHIBITED

Rothman Art Gallery, Stratford, *The Art Gallery in the Factory*,
June 11 – August 30, 1968, traveling in 1968 – 1969 to the Mon-
treal Museum of Fine Arts; Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon; Art
Gallery of Greater Victoria; Edmonton Art Gallery; Musée
national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City; London
Library and Art Museum; Memorial University of Newfound-
land, St. John's; Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum,
Charlottetown; Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's
University, Kingston; Calgary Allied Arts Council; and
Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville
Provinciaal Museum, Hasselt, Belgium, *A Choice within a Choice*,
December 15, 1981 – January 24, 1982
De Bijenkorf, Eindhoven, *Kunst over de drempel*, 1985, traveling
throughout the Netherlands



Front cover of *The Art Gallery in the Factory* exhibition catalogue



Interior of the Peter Stuyvesant factory in Zevenaar with works by Karel Appel, Kenneth Noland, and Robert Mangold
Photographer unknown



Interior of the Peter Stuyvesant factory in Zevenaar with works by Toxic and Robert Combas
Photographer unknown

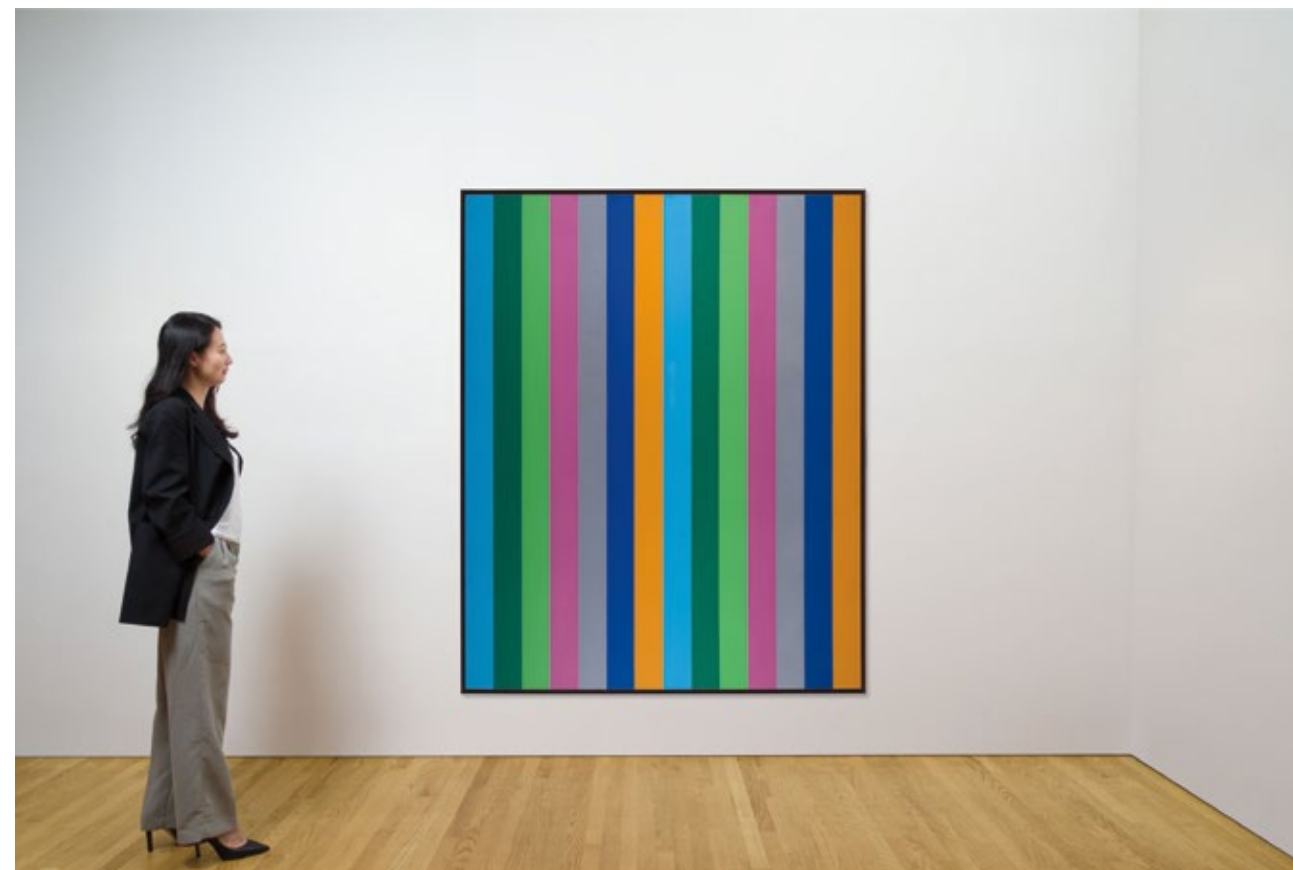
SÉRIEL BLEU-OCRE (1967) comes from a year of outstanding productivity for Guido Molinari. Ensnared in his newly enlarged studio, Molinari was buoyed by the recognition of exhibiting again at MOMA in *Canada '67*, at the Guggenheim and at Expo 67, as well as his selection by the National Gallery to represent Canada at the *Venice Biennale* the following year. In 1968, at the biennale, he won the coveted David F. Bright Foundation Prize. This accolade brought Molinari's ever renewing colour/space paintings a greatly expanded international audience, including Alexander Orlow, who, guided by the expertise of the Netherlands' most influential art museum directors, was developing one of the world's most innovative and inspirational corporate collections, the Peter Stuyvesant Collection.

In addition to being exhibited in the cigarette manufacturer's production halls, the Peter Stuyvesant Collection toured the world. *The Art Gallery in the Factory* toured to 12 cities across Canada in 1968. As was his practice, Orlow (1918–2009) featured paintings by Canadian artists Marcelle Ferron, Jacques Hurtubise, Guido Molinari, Jean Paul Riopelle, and Claude Tousignant to create a unique selection of works for the exhibition circulated by the National Gallery of Canada. All the Canadian paintings, including *Sériel bleu-ocre*, were purchased directly by Orlow and became part of the esteemed Peter Stuyvesant Collection, destined on their return to Europe to surprise and inspire his employees.

The managing director of Turkish-Macedonian Tobacco, Orlow put his love for cutting-edge abstract art to industrial use, decorating the shop floor with art by contemporary artists. The

aim was to improve the work environment, motivate employees and over time create, with astute acquisitions, a collection renowned for its quality. The factory art installations of colourful contemporary art changed every few months, often to the vocal displeasure of employees who may have grown fond of a particular artist. The Peter Stuyvesant Collection would eventually number over 1,500 works of art. Its practical origins and its effectiveness as a brand internationally mean it remains unparalleled as an exemplary instance of corporate patronage in the arts. The art collection was on display and available to the public at the British American Tobacco head office and by appointment in their factories until the early 2000s, by which time it was known as the BAT Artventure Collection.

Widely regarded as the first Dutch corporate art collection, it is renowned for its radicalness, its collaborations with the Nederlandse Kunststichting (Dutch Art Foundation), and for the expert advice received across four decades from distinguished former directors of the Stedelijk Museum. The eventual sale by Sotheby's in 2010–2011 that dispersed the collection exceeded even the most optimistic estimates, enshrining the Peter Stuyvesant Collection as not only visionary in artistic quality and utilitarian purpose, but equally for corporate investment. Barry Lord's 1968 review of *The Art Gallery in the Factory* proved prescient, suggesting, "Canadian industrialists look long and hard at the Stuyvesant show as it travels across the country," while extolling the internationalism of the collection and the perceptive addition of new works by Canadian painters Hurtubise, Molinari and Tousignant.



Sériel bleu-ocre has a distinguished pedigree, initially as part of the Peter Stuyvesant Collection and since 2011 held in the Museum of Contemporary Art of Buenos Aires, Aldo Rubino Foundation. The painting has been in only these two collections from its inception, both admired internationally for their commitment to contemporary art.

Fifty-five years ago, Pierre Théberge described the constant optical motion of Molinari's pictorial surface as "a synthesis of chromatic mutations. The entire surface transformed: [coloured] bands vibrate, undulate, and emerge from the surface." Large in scale, the narrow vertical stripes of *Sériel bleu-ocre* represent an outstanding example of Molinari's colour harmonies in constant motion. Like all of Molinari's paintings from 1967, *Sériel bleu-ocre* uses a simplified compositional strategy of vertical bands each of equal width across a completely flat picture plane. Paradoxically, this simplicity creates the optical variations that emanate from the conjunction of abutting stripes, each just one of many amongst neighbours, with the resulting mutations in colour and movement emphasized by this unique visual interdependence.

Sériel bleu-ocre is slightly taller than it is wide, with two identical sequential groupings of seven narrow bands of colour, repeated twice. Molinari liked the verticality of slender bands of colour, something that he felt gave a vectorial quality to each of the stripes. He also liked the viewer to see the whole painting at

once, to see the end-beginning, an open invitation for spectators to scan the pictorial area in a single horizontal sweep, left to right, or in reverse. His basic unit, stanza if you will, can vary in number, width, order and obviously colour, but without compromise each is juxtaposed to its twin on the opposing side of the canvas just across a central division he has called "no man's land." This strategy of repeating colour stanzas is what sets the picture plane in motion visually, crucially without resorting to any form of figure/ground relationship—something Molinari saw as a backwards step. Instead, the rhythmic sequences of repeating colours, notwithstanding the individual intensity and saturation of each, mutate in colour and shift in position, a response to the movement of each spectator and to the influence adjoining colours have on their neighbours. Throughout, the self-identity of each individual stripe remains intact—each unique, each pristine—and all applied with precision to deliver the retinal excitement that is the hallmark of iconic works by Molinari.

We thank Gary Dufour, an art historian based in Mount Claremont, Australia, for contributing the above essay. Dufour curated the exhibition *Guido Molinari, 1951–1961: The Black and White Paintings*, shown at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Windsor and Art Gallery of Ontario in 1989–1990.

ESTIMATE: \$200,000 – 300,000