

Marcel Bova

Biography and Statement

My close friend and sometime studio-mate Marcel Bova couldn't be bothered to write his own statement. On the condition that he no longer freely "borrow" my paints and art materials, I've agreed to compose this sketchy profile on his behalf. I say sketchy because considering that I've now known Marcel for over twenty years, his life remains more or less a mystery to me.

In the fall of 1990, I was introduced to Marcel on the corner of Salem and Prince streets in Boston's North End at 4:00 in the morning. We bonded immediately over fresh baked bread and espresso, discussing chance operations and improvised jazz as the sun rose over Copp's Hill. The Swiss passport that I saw him use in those early days as ID confirms that Marcel was born in Zurich. Ominous envelopes from international rent collectors reveal that he has spent extended periods holed-up in Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, Paris, and New York City. But no matter the locale, and although largely self-taught, Marcel's instincts, along with sheer dumb luck, have granted him access to some of the world's greatest art centers and museums, where he seems never to have been a stranger.

While I've come to regard Marcel as one of my favorite artists, he's also one of the laziest I've ever known. For Marcel, several months can pass between bursts of manic creativity. His work almost always emerges in fully formed, cohesive series. The only sketchbook I've ever seen him open contains no actual drawings or notations regarding the shape or content of the physical works; there's just an ongoing list of potential titles. Marcel is also an adept recycler. Finished pieces are typically constructed from scavenged scraps and leftover supplies swept from the corners of my own studio, the keys to which Marcel took the liberty of copying for himself. He never hesitates to revive outdated design styles, forgotten modernist elements, or to pick up the loose ends left in the wake of post-painterly abstraction. And he will always make allowances for a kind of controlled chaos, often courting the happy accident. His series might appear to be technologically simple visual experiments, but they never lack his utterly unique sophistication.

Perhaps what I admire most in Marcel's work is his near total freedom from the urge to carry a work to its formal conclusion. On several occasions, Marcel has referenced Artaud's essay "No More Masterpieces" as a guidepost to his own irreverent process. More than once, he has responded to my insistent questions about his artistic motivation with a nonchalant, *S'amusant* ("It amuses me"). As I said, Marcel borrows freely; he is a master of serious play, and on occasion, a player of serious mastery. With time I've come to look forward to his periodic visits and creative outbursts. Ruined brushes and vanishing tubes of paint seem a small price to pay for his friendship.

—Michael McKay, June 2012