

# Baronian Xippas

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## Press release

### James Siena

Vergence

2 rue Isidore Verheyden

10.06-17.07.2021

### Opening

Thursday 10.06.2021  
from 6 - 9 pm

## James Siena

Vergence

Baronian Xippas Gallery is pleased to be hosting *Vergence*, the first solo exhibition of James Siena in Brussels.

James Siena was born in 1957 in Oceanside, California. He studied at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York where he received his Bachelor of Fine Arts. Siena is a pivotal artist in the New York art scene, where he works with a diverse range of media, such as lithography, etching, drawing, painting, and woodcut. For this exhibition, Siena presents a series of paintings and works on paper.

Siena's artworks are characterized by his graphical and calligraphic way of working. He started his career by making abstract paintings from an aesthetic angle, from which he later became inspired by artificial intelligence. Therefore, he often refers to his works as visual algorithms. As he himself says: "I don't make marks, I make moves. The reality of abstraction is my primary point of engagement. When I make a painting, I respond to a set of parameters, like a visual algorithm."

In the process of painting, Siena starts with a shape or a set of lines, which he allows to guide the evolution of the work. The geometric patterns which are displayed in his works, sometimes regular, sometimes irregular, produce an overall intensified and complex structure which expresses a methodological control.

Siena's works appear to be puzzles or labyrinths, but he makes sure that there is a rational base in each of them. He explains: "At a certain point I wanted to make works that act as machines. The way they act as machines is you have to find your way into them and find your way out of them. As you undo the making of them, they come to life".

*Vergence* displays a variety of works which are chosen thoroughly by the artist. There are works with earth-tone colors, mostly made with brown, black, red, and orange paint which can be referred to as organic structures with natural elements. Two examples of these two paintings are *Aoxomoxoa, second version* (2021) in which it looks as if a fire is spreading on the linen and *Sessile Amissae* (2020) in which it looks like a river is meandering and floating on the linen.

Siena's works make reference to ancient civilizations. They make us think of aboriginal drawings, African textiles, and Maori tattoos. Additionally, of African bark paintings, Persian screens, calligraphy and Chinese bronzes in which the shapes and colors that Siena uses can also be found. The fact that the works have these references provokes a feeling of temporality.

However, not all the exhibited works can be classified as the works described above. In *Vergence*, there are also works on paper and paintings, made with bright yellow, red and blue colors. These works can also be seen to be in line with natural elements, such as blue waves moving on the paper, for example, in *Shaehft* (2020).

Siena's way of working with repetition, which becomes a web of lines and color, produces a labyrinth in which the spectator can get lost. His works are characterized by small spaces, totems and icons. The spectator chooses a path between all of these and allows himself to be hereby absorbed by the work which produces a unique and hypnotic energy. It can be said that his compositions produce psychological and sometimes even meditative and spiritual effects, although the artist claims no credit for such responses.

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James Siena (b.1957, Oceanside, California) lives and works in New York (US). Recent solo exhibitions include *James Siena: Painting*, Pace Gallery, New York (2019), *James Siena: Resonance Under Pressure*, The Print Center, Philadelphia (2019), *James Siena, Pockets of Wheat*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2016) and *Works by Master Artist James Siena*, Atlantic Center for the Arts, New Smyrna Beach, Florida (2009). Recent group exhibitions include *New Typographics: Typewriter Art as Print*, The Print Center, Philadelphia (2019), *Drawings and Prints, Selections from the permanent Collection*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2015), *Abstract Generation: Now in Print*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013) and *All for Art! Great Private Collections Among Us*, Musée des Beaux Arts de Montréal, Canada (2007).