

# ESPACE LIBRE @ GALERIE WEISSER ELEFANT, BERLIN

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As the site of the former teacher's house of the Koppenplatz school on Berlin Mitte's Auguststrasse, this past iteration remains etched into the contours of Galerie Weisser Elefant: unfurling along its corridor, which is punctuated at intervals by a series of smaller rooms. In the current exhibition, 'espace libre' – a group show that brings together works by Jofroi Amaral, Cécile Dupaquier, Barbara Cousin, Alice Baillaud, Pascal Brateau, Marion Andrieu and Aurélie Pertusot under the expansive theme of 'free space' – these smaller, more intimate settings bring focus to the work of the individual artists and give emphasis to the relationship between the spaces themselves.

Through varied materialisations of open space – as the malleability of memory or the structural flexibility of architecture – splitting, layering and disorientation emerge as prominent, intersecting modes of exploration within this framework. In the gallery's largest space, painting installations by Jofroi Amaral literally spill out from wall-based canvases onto the floor: the objects with which his abstract paintings are expressively articulated form still lifes, the dried-up drips of paint on their surfaces signaling their role in the event. Through these traces of the painting gesture, the flat surface is expanded into physical space – into alternate formal and substantive possibilities. Facilitating a further extension of his paintings, Amaral opened space up within the installation – allowing a curator to directly interact with his working process – through which flat prints have been introduced, layered and partially hidden behind the canvases to which they have both a physical and visual connection.

Sharing a space with Amaral's installations, meanwhile, Alice Baillaud's works on paper seem to draw into the closeness and intimacy of surface. Close-cropped views of organic objects illuminate the space of uncertainty, and the drastic ways in which our proximity to an object can alter our perception and the nature of our relationship to it. In her plant-life illustration – in which the organism's sensuality evokes forms of the human body, while ultimately remaining ungraspable, as though the uncharted surface of a distant planet – ambiguity is concretised in the interplay of distance and scale.

Such gaps in our perceptual capabilities – spaces wherein objects hover between recognition and doubt, appearance and disappearance, fading and emergence – materialize in another set of surfaces. Cécile Dupaquier's two wall-based sculptures bleed not only into the walls that they come into physical contact with, but the space itself: their geometric forms, all in white, and their textures marking their presence as materials of construction – fiberboard, chipboard, plywood, etc. As they are not entirely flat and are of disparate thicknesses – which produce varying degrees of protrusion from the wall – changes in shadow further allude to a transitional process, with the stagnant objects appearing to heave as though living elements of the space. Leaning, unfixed, against the adjacent wall, Dupaquier's second sculpture – a sheet of plywood, its white coating of paint disguising the nature of its materiality – similarly engages in subtle motion, at once peeling away from, and flattening out against, the gallery's static surface.

Occupying two adjacent rooms of the same size and layout at the end of the corridor, Marion Andrieu's installation, Doppelgänger, enacts a doubling of surface, with slight manipulations and unexpected idiosyncrasies, offering a simultaneous peek into parallel dimensions. These coexisting alternate realities contain the same five objects, for which a different color palette is used; almost the same, but not quite, both can be viewed from the same, direct vantage point – a warped mirror image. The precise nature of these environments remains elusive, however, as the peculiar objects rest in a state of suspension, waiting to be activated. With their seemingly ritualistic, yet uncertain functions, the objects in wood, fiberboard, Plexiglas and ceramic communicate via their own coded visual language. Given titles that vaguely hint at their purpose – such as tool and Sockel (plinth) – one perhaps more organic object, titled Einwohner (inhabitant), is suggestive of the chamber's sole occupant. Placed in much the same position within each room, almost turning toward each other, the partially flattened, rounded forms exist as though a single entity, split in two – compounding the disorienting effect of seeing double.

This sense of disconnect and disorientation – a splitting of vision – extends outward, to the room across the hall. With unpinned sheets of A4 paper apparently haphazardly thrown to the floor – with the latent potential to rearrange at any moment, at the whim of even the slightest breeze – Aurélie Pertusot's installation induces a destabilising effect. This is compounded by the destabilisation of our vision, as we alternately perceive the gaps, or voids, between papers and the blank paper sheets themselves. Tangible forms momentarily emerge from the disorder – sparking awareness that the papers are not scattered, but deliberately placed to form arrows that chaotically point in all directions – only to collapse again into the confusion of mixed signals, dissolving in a rush of indecipherability.

In layering surfaces to produce depth, the in-between spaces are materialised by interruptions, wherein the seamless and bounded image is undermined: its shifting physicality – between flatness and volume – both manipulates perception and underscores its processes.