

Été / Summer 2012 Revue d'art contemporain trimestrielle et gratuite

MORGANE TSCHIEMBER
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En couverture / Cover

MORGANE TSCHIEMBER
Bubbles (détail), 2012.
Photo: Morgane Tschiember.
Courtesy de l'artiste
et galerie Loevenbruck, Paris.

Relecture/Proofreading
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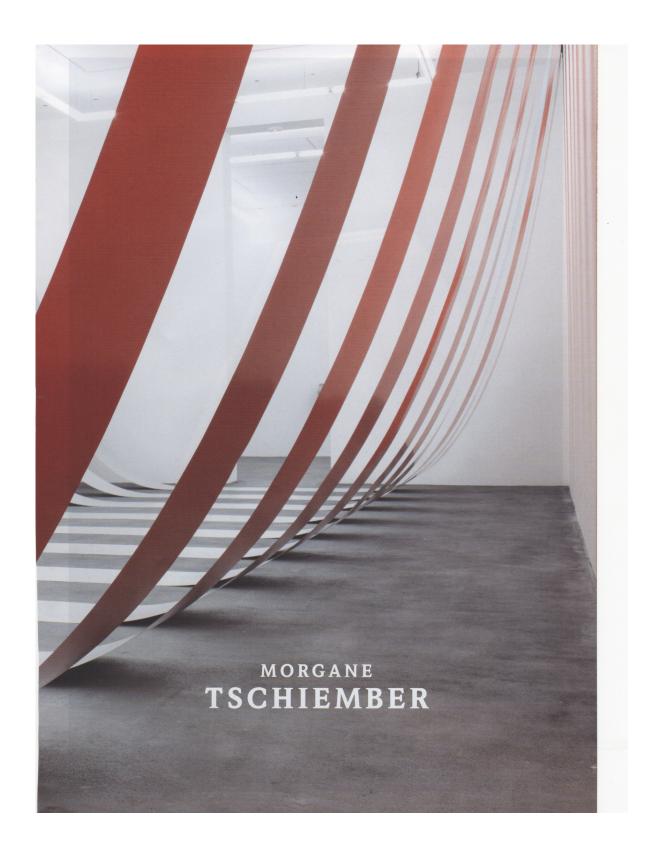
Carte blanche au peuple qui manque Parc Saint Léger, Pougues-les-Eaux

L'entre-deux: des savoirs bouleversés
La Kunsthalle, Mulhouse

... J'ai oublié ce que j'avais fait la veille. Mais c'était sûrement des merveilles Transpalette, Bourges

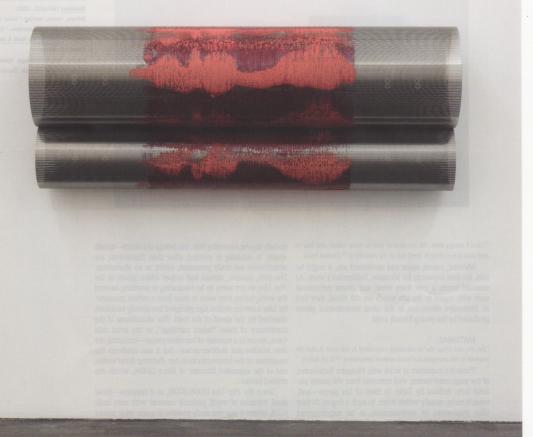
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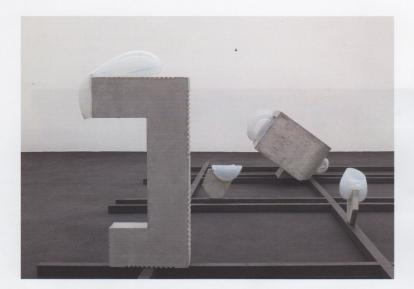


Counter-study of Concreteness



06.04-28.05.2012: Swing nd Roll & Bubbles, CRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Sète.
05.06-30.06.2012: Seulls, Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris.
09.06-28.07.2012: Rolls & Bubbles, galerie Loevenbruck, Paris.

Counter-study of Concreteness



Morgane Tschiember Bubbles (détail), 2012. Béton, verre, métal / Glass, concrete, steel. Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition Swing'nd Roll & Bubbles, CRAC LR. Sète. Photo: Marc Domage. Courtesy galerie Loevenbruck, Paris.

"There's always been this problem of how to make colour and how to quently appear, emerging from the deluge of colours—motifs deal with it as a thing in itself, just as the material is." (Donald Judd)

Material, colour, space and movement are, it might be said, the four keywords for Morgane Tschiember's work. As essential issues, if ever there were, and almost definitional ones with regard to the arts which we call visual, they find an immersive dimension in the often monumental pieces produced by the young French artist.

MATERIAL

"But the one thing that is absolutely consistent in my work is that the material is the strongest and most evident component." 2 (Carl Andre)

There is a matierism at work with Morgane Tschiember, of the pragmatist variety, well removed from the purely pictorial form defined by Tapié. In front of her pieces-and, what is more, usually within them, to such a degree do they offer themselves as environments to be experimented with—we find ourselves facing, and thus also at the heart of, the material being used. It is the intrinsic qualities of the materials which she is attached to and which inspire her. "With her, it is the execution which always proceeds from the conception." She has made this empiricism the driving force behind her research, as well as the primary sensation on receiving her work. Here, no theory is imposed on the spectator; we are guided by a sensorial, visual, formal datum, and only the issues inherent in our presence in front of metal visible; Swing (2012) lets the raw surface of its steel the work spring to mind: relations of weight, force, surfaces, coloured connections, links between light and shadow...

We might thus readily talk of a concrete art—"because nothing is more concrete, more real than a line, a colour, a surface"4—, if there were not so many precepts lurking behind this term. No image comes to disturb this immediate physical understanding, even if "motifs" sometimes subse- (and thereby opaque) works.

which, in referring to nothing other than themselves, are nevertheless not really presented, either, as an abstraction. The stars, squares, streaks and stripes which gleam in the Pop Ups do not seem to be beckoning at anything beyond the work; rather, they seem to issue from a certain spontaneity. Like a service station sign glimpsed but already vanished, dissolved by the speed of the road. The smoothness of the consistency of these "baked paintings", as the artist calls them, recurs in a number of her other pieces—including the Iron Maiden and Bubbles series—but it also confronts the roughness of the breeze-blocks in her Running Bond works, and of the expanded bitumen of Block (2009), which she created herself..

Since the Pop Ups (2006-2008), as it happens—those small volumes of wood perfectly covered with auto body paint, where it was not really possible to guess what matter they were made of, to such a degree did they glorify the colour which seemed to literally spurt from the wall they were hung on-and her slide shows which projected a diffuse and evanescent colour, there has been a "material turn" in Morgane Tschiember's work. Thenceforth, and this even in the pieces with strong pictorial connotations like the *Iron* Maiden series (2007), she invariably lets the material show through: the edges of these maidens are sanded to make the strips reflect the light of the place, while the other surface is painted minium orange to recall the colour of anti-rust paint. The "folds" of the Folded Space (2010) and Unspecific Space (2011) series, white sheets of metal, are accentuated by welds which suture the varnished monochrome with black burns, thus revealing the making of seemingly minimal

 Donald Judd in an interview with Michael Archer conducted in Londor in 1987 and published in Speaking of Art, Four decades of art in conversation, London, Phaidon, 2010, p. 85.
 Carl Andre, in an interview with William Europe conducted in Oxfor 2. Carl Andre, in an interview with William Furiong conducted in Oxford in 1996 and published in Speaking of Art, Four decades of art in conversation, London, Phadion, 2010, p. 166.

3. Jean-Charles Agboton-Jumeau in the interview with Morgane Tschiember, Fabrice Michel and Noelle Tissier, Facting as the press release for the Morgane Tschiember exhibition at the Crac in Sete. "Swhing" in Roll 5. Bubbles", in April-May 2012.

4. Theo Van Doesburg, Otto Gustav Carlsund, Jean Hélion, Léon Tutundjian and Marcel Wantz, "Manifeste de l'art concret', Paris, 1930. l'art concret". Paris. 1930.



"I think of colour as being the structured material I use to build the forms I am interested in."5 (John McCracken)

Morgane Tschiember Iron Maiden (détail), 2007. Deux feuilles d'aluminium laqué / Lacquered aluminum, 270 x 180 x 53 cm. Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition Iron Maiden, galerie Loevenbruck, Paris, 2007. Collection privée, Paris. Photo: Fabrice Gousset. Courtesy galerie Loevenbruck, Paris.

In the beginning there was painting, in art history as in the (hi)story of Morgane Tschiember's work. Painting, and yet neither canvases nor brushes have ever made their appearance in the artist's studio. "I fight against painting, but it's there", she says. Pure colours, glossiness, mattness, transparentness, opaqueness, bold and shaded contrasts, all are mixed together in this many-facetted œuvre which, in the end, talks only of this. What are the Iron Maiden works if not the affirmation of paint(ing), in all its splendour? Seductive and winning, they assault the surrounding space like Herculean brush strokes made in the void. Likewise, the Wrapboards (2008), sheets of wood painted and cellophaned with a plastic film tautologically containing their title, play on the idea of a painting ready to be consumed, like any old item in the market. And what about the Bubbles (2012), those glass objects with their organic languidness during whose manufacture the young woman said she had the impression of blowing colour? In them transparent glass and coloured glass (white or pink, depending) are joined together during the fusion, to produce shadings that are as subtle as water colours. Each time, the colour merges with the surface of the object.

"When you use colour with sculpture it gives you something that is immediately abstract; sculpture is made of red, it's abstract because it's not made of wood or stone. Colour tends to be an abstract quality"6 (John McCracken)

And when colour is literally present, meaning for itself, in the Rolls, those rolls of woven stainless steel which perhaps represent the canvas in a sculptural way, it is to be tortured, squeezed between the two rolls activated by a machine which attempts the impossible and unthinkable mixture, that of acrylic paint and oil paint. After mechanics has been at work, all that remains are the traces of this unnatural struggle; the colour, spread over the steel, remains bold, despite the superpositions caused by not just that; the terminology for describing them is inadefriction. By not letting itself be falsified by technique, it quate, words fail us. asserts its predominance.

If, for Morgane Tschiember, painting is above all a relation to light and shadow, in the manner of the minium orange of Swing being reflected on the walls in a coloured halo, it is also a relation to architecture. Setting herself in the direct tradition of Richard Serra, with regard to the use of industrial materials and processes, she also involves site-specificity within the white cube, making, inside, pieces which seem meant for outside. The monumentality of the Iron Maidens $(2.70 \times 1.80 \times 2.70 \text{ m})$ for the largest, Swing (twelve steel strips, each one 20 metres in length), and Parallèlesthat road that is 38 metres long and 2.80 metres wide which passed through the Lieu Unique in Nantes in 2006—develops the pictorial quality in space. We are at once in a relation of scales—of the space and the work—and in a reduction to the essential. The above-mentioned works, which are abstract and yet very concrete, create a space within another space, including their own space in that of the exhibition, and not by imposing themselves on this latter. Positioned equidistant from each other, the blades of Swing leave as much free space as they occupy. The Bubbles do the same at the CRAC in Sète, blown directly against the concrete which acts as their support and buttress, they rest on a stand which, in the form of a grid, contains more free space than solid. This confrontation between glass and concrete on the small scale of the bubbles is the perfect analogy of the confrontation between Morgane Tschiember's works and the white cube. Contradicting, with relish, Brian O'Doherty, who explains that our "presence before a work of art means that we absent ourselves in favour of the Eye and the Spectator", the young artist places the body at the centre of the perceptive experience. The figure of the wall is a radical example of this: with her Running Bond pieces (so named after possibly the most classic type of wall that exists), she blocks the window of her Paris gallery,7 constrains passage into a group show,8 or else presents it as such, head-on.9 The pink mortar, at times glittery, which joins the raw breeze-blocks, sows confusion and raises this recurrent question when looking at the artist's work: is it painting or sculpture?

MOVEMENT

The plane and the volume are usually resolved in movement: movement of the Iron Maiden pieces which bend beneath their own weight, and are rolled over on themselves: movement of the blades of Swing, which are curved in order to follow the lines of the walls and the floor: the implicit movement of the Rolls, which has created the traces of this pictorial struggle; the movement inside the Bubbles, that of the blowing which has given them their shape; the movement of the Pop Ups, even, which seem to loom from the walls; the movement, last of all, of the artist's body, in an improvised danced performance at the MoMA in New York in front of Ellsworth Kelly's Three Panels. At once very anchored in the world by their physicality, Morgane Tschiember's works seem to belong to another world, like John McCracken's Planks. "Their presence is a clear and strong one, asserted and beautiful [...] It's both Minimalist and the opposite."10

Perhaps these "'painterly' abstract sculptures" l, as Clement Greenberg might have described them, simply defy the definition of painting because we think we know it too well. At once volumetric paintings and painted volumes, but

- 5. John McCracken, quoted by Marianna Vecellio in an interview with the artist, "How does one go all the way? One keeps going" in John McCracken. Turin, Castello di Rivoli, Mlan, Skira, 2011, p. 57.
- Running Bond 1, exhibition "Friends" galerie Loevenbruck, Paris, 2007. Curated by: Olivier Mosset. 8. Running Bond 4, exhibition "Sculpteurs
- 8. Ruming Bond 4. exhibition "Sculpteurs de trottoirs", Le Quartier, Quimper, 2009. Curated by: Marion Daniel. 9. Ruming Bond 3. exhibition "Zones Arides", MOCA, Tucson, Arizona, 2008. Curated by: Patrice Joly. 10. Daniel Baumann, in an interview with John Armileder about John McCracken, in John McCracken, on cit. n. 69.
- McCracken, In John McCracken, op. cit., p. 69.

 11. Clement Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture", in Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 180.