

2024

"I'm walking. There is a totally gray place where words are written: community, difference, wellbeing, employment, identity, future, quality, happiness, cohesion, experience, success... There is also the violence of the white lie... / an ironic, self-destructive whiteness, already filthy and falling apart, the blank page on which they want to write the history of their world, a future world that's already going bad / And there are these early 21st-century objects, absurd fantasy decorations, just industrial waste, the neo-free market fundamentalist trinkets that makes it seem as though life could be beautiful and luxurious for everyone, that if we decorate our homes with these knick-knacks all will be well.

"And this date, 2024, as the context for all that. The official lies about false collective desires to transform everything.

"And then there is this space where I try to understand what it means to be in today's life and today's city, our relationship with objects, money, time... and to see what can still last other than these future urban architectural megaprojects that are already obsolete even as they spring up overnight."

E.A.

Ethan Assouline depicts an almost disembodied urban landscape where he might seem to have regained confidence in modernism, judging by his reappropriation of its industrial lines, its signature architecture and its furniture, whether in offices and other public spaces or at home. This landscape is punctuated by decorative elements that give the illusion that life can be beautiful and luxurious if we buy the right stuff.

His restricted palette - slightly old-fashioned white, light or silvery gray, transparency and a bit of black - help give the ensemble a dry, generic look. Assouline heightens these characteristics by applying a flat white tint to some of his objects, deliberately giving them a veiled appearance, to produce a fake air of homogeneity and harmony.

This vision of modernity deliberately recalls the smooth aesthetics of the early 2000s promising a radiant future, thus ironically emphasizing the gap between the promise and its actualization.

The title 2024 could be considered a utopian reference, but the date's imminence precludes such possibilities because that future is already written. The title serves as both a deadline and a symbol. It refers to the preparations for the upcoming Paris Olympics, particularly in terms of the places appropriated for that purpose, with intentions that remain offscreen yet determine the transformations, territorial reorganization, competition and adaptations.

The cityscape is so small that it looks like an architectural scale model through which visitors can stroll. He shows us a space undergoing transformation, as always a game of power and domination that he transposes onto a more human, manageable scale, without, however, offering any solutions.

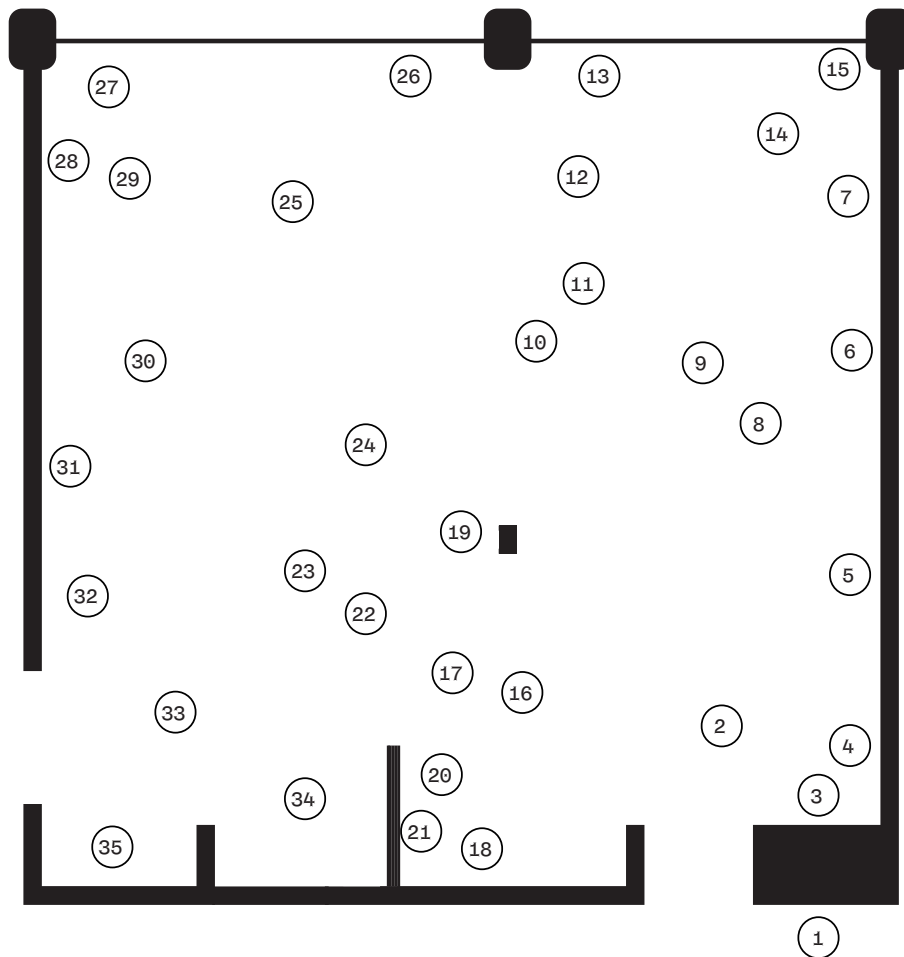
The stance Assouline adopts in interrogating and confronting social and political contexts brings out the violence and tensions infusing the contemporary city. It evinces a strategy of infiltration and imitation insofar as he reappropriates the concepts, values and symbols that, he believes, constitute a simulacrum of an idealized society overlaid on a sterile reality, and reverses the two so as to emphasize their antagonistic character in formal terms. In choosing objects considered trash, he brings out the absurdity of their production in the first place. He makes them so white to thwart our expectations by revealing their chips and stains, their planned obsolescence and decrepitude, like the dark side of their promise and a prophecy of their abandonment.

By composing this desolate landscape and taking great care in making these decorative objects he reenacts the absurdity and crudeness of their context and shows that these attributes are two sides of the same coin. Deliberately positioned as precariously as possible and fully displaying the defects of their materials and assembly, these sculptures are meant to make us feel a "queasy incertitude." They are placed at the margins of any system of evaluation so as to test their capacity to be seen and understood, to "try to make things hold up / a little while longer / while everything else is falling apart."

The vulnerability of these sculptures implicitly transposes and underscores the latent violence reigning in our society. There is a certain delicacy in the attention he gives to these things that can be understood as a way of reacting against the context Assouline is critiquing. In the face of "the horrible poetry of everyday life (...) saturated with advertising, work life, official politics, money and administration," he brings back affect, especially through his writing, to complement his sculpture. His fanzine conjoins his texts and drawings to produce a subjective voice, an indirect presence that inhabits this cityscape. It's part of his effort to create a new way of talking about the city and its spaces so as to bring forward autonomy.

Sébastien Martins, exhibition curator.

ROOM 02



2024, 2022
Installation, mixed media

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1 | <i>Vitrines (Canapés), 2021</i> |
| 2 | <i>La Défense, 2022</i> |
| 3 | <i>Disparaître (hors série 2024, 2022, 800 editions)</i> |
| 4 | <i>33 rue de la roquette, Bâtiment A 75011 Paris, 2022</i> |
| 5, 6, 7, 13, 17, 20 | <i>Plans pour demain (autonomie) (contradictions), 2021-2022</i> |
| 8, 12, 15, 24 | <i>ma spéculation, 2022</i> |
| 9 | <i>Pleyel, 2024</i> |
| 10 | <i>Non (que faut-il vous dire), 2021-2022</i> |
| 11, 29 | <i>Treize, 2021</i> |
| 14 | <i>Porte de Paris (sexe), 2021</i> |
| 16 | <i>pauv' pomme, 2021</i> |
| 18 | <i>Joe Colombo, 1992</i> |
| 19 | <i>Ensemble, 1992</i> |
| 21 | <i>t'm</i> |
| 22 | <i>Mouton Blanc/Cristal Bar/le relais(...), 2022</i> |
| 23 | <i>Tour Duo, 2022</i> |
| 25 | <i>la fatigue, 2022</i> |
| 26 | <i>Porte de la Chapelle 75018, 2022</i> |
| 27 | <i>Bob</i> |
| 28 | <i>24/7 (fanny)</i> |
| 30 | <i>Autoportrait (Autonomie), 2021-2022</i> |
| 31 | <i>(Experience), 2021-2022</i> |
| 32 | <i>tu mens, 2022</i> |
| 33 | <i>(...), 2022</i> |
| 34 | <i>Autonomie, 2021</i> |
| 35 | <i>2032, 2022</i> |