

Praz-Delavallade is pleased to announce the second solo show devoted to Mai-Thu Perret. The Crack-Up will present new works in both spaces of the gallery.

The work of Mai-Thu Perret relates to Modernism and to the different forms of embodiment of Utopias. With the production of manufactured objects that she often locates within an elaborate fictional scenario, Mai-Thu Perret investigates the status of the artwork and its context of production.

Since 1999 Mai-Thu Perret has been writing a story entitled "The Crystal Frontier." This ongoing story follows a group of women disillusioned with capitalist society and patriarchal convention, who set up an autonomous community in the desert of New Mexico. This community called "New Ponderosa" is dedicated to the invention of a new, non-alienated relation to labor and nature. Mai-Thu Perret related the story of these women in the form of fragments from diaries, letters, or activity schedules written by commune members. In addition to this narrative, she creates objects, which she describes as the "hypothetical production" of the commune.

Referring to Sol Lewitt's phrase "the idea is the machine that makes the art", Mai-Thu Perret resorts to fiction as a generative mechanism, "a way of creating a machine to make the art." With this strategy, she aims to free herself from the subjectivity of authorship while questioning the position of the author in the production of artworks.

Perret's works, in a variety of media, from ceramics and textiles to paintings, sculptures or film, have all in common a hand-made aesthetic and use the formal vocabulary of modernism. References to Russian constructivism, 19th-century Arts & Crafts Movement, early-20th-century mysticism, Minimalism, and various other modern art movements can be found all over her work. By interweaving historical movement and her own fiction, Mai-Thu Perret questions utopias and how they could be a context for the production of objects and especially works of art. Within the production of both utilitarian and decorative objects, she's interested in the status of artworks. What the artist questions is the additional value, the supplementary aura those objects might have when they are extracted from a utopian context.

Perret's exhibition at Praz-Delavallade, presents a series of stained carpets hanging on the walls like paintings that evoke Rorschach's inkblots and seem to convoke the projections of the spectator. They are also the expression of the free creativity and fun of children's play that the women of New Ponderosa look for in their return to nature and craft, which they believe to be repressed in patriarchal society.

Two large-scale, rectilinear sculptures recalling Robert Morris's famous L-Beams from the 1960s will also be on view. These emblematic works attempted to triangulate the relationship between the sculpture, the exhibition space and the spectator. Perret's version of these minimalist works are based on a rhomboid rather than a rectangular section, and are upholstered in a geometrically patterned jacquard fabric, thus infusing an element of domesticity and craft into these otherwise austere, modernist forms.

The 3 spheres in cast concrete are also minimalist forms, but with the introduction of a function. Indeed, they are inspired by balls of exercise used in Pilates or gymnastics.

In addition to these works, the exhibition will also include two new text panels written by the artist. One of these text discusses repetition and fatigue.

Through the exhibition are many references to physical gesture, dance or ritual. But this movement remains missing. The carpets are like traces of a performance, the sculptures evoke scenic elements left out and the spheres exercise instruments. All the works of this exhibition are like vestiges of an action which happened before.

The title of the exhibition "The Crack-Up," refers to F. Scott Fitzgerald's book of the same name, which brings together apparently unfinished or unconnected fragments, notes for stories, letters to friends, and the eponymous essay, written in 1935, where Fitzgerald describes his own state of depletion, both economic and spiritual. For the artist, the Crack-Up also refers to the rift between artwork and interpretation, or between an object and the narrative it allegedly refers to.

Mai-Thu Perret was born in 1976 in Geneva, Switzerland and currently lives in Geneva and New York. She studied at Cambridge University, and at the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York (2004). In addition to several group exhibitions Perret's recent solo exhibitions have included: New Works in San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in November 2008, An Evening of the Book and Other Stories at The Kitchen in New York, 2008, The Crystal Frontier at Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen, Switzerland, 2008; and Maastricht's Bonnefanten Museum, 2007. In 2006 she was also the subject of a major solo exhibition at The Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, and in 2005 at the Centre d'art contemporain, Geneva. In 2007 she participated in the Lyon Biennale and in Eurocentric at the Rubell Family Collection in Miami. In 2008 a monography about her work was published by JRP Ringier and moreover she is featured in the last Parkett, Issue 84.

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