

A floorscape of carpets with floral and abstract ornamental patterns in soft pastel shades is spread out in the Secession's light-flooded white cube. The large-format asymmetric carpets lie on bases of different heights whose vertical and horizontal surfaces are at crooked angles, calling into question the functionality of the tufted carpets at the same time as elevating them to the status of autonomous artworks. A multitude of parasols in variously patterned fabrics are arranged on and beside the carpets. Wall designs which filigree patterns and colour palette indicate the artist's style decorate the side walls. A theater curtain and Curtain (For MvdR) from the last Berlin Biennale (dedicated to Mies van der Rohe, 2008) give the show a vertical dimension. A few furniture pieces and a painting in ten parts are scattered within the space ...

This environment created especially for the Secession out of primarily new works contains the quintessence of a multi-faceted artistic oeuvre. Over the past four decades, from performances and installations in the 1970s through designs for furniture, ceramics, and patterns for mass-produced consumer items, Marc Camille Chaimowicz has developed an unmistakable formal idiom and signature style. His belief in beauty and lightness, elegance and cultivation is expressed in his preference for graceful curves, delicate forms, and a characteristic palette of pastel shades. This nuanced approach reflects the ambiguity of the artwork, which is always situated somehow "in-between".

In what he terms "choreographies", Chaimowicz takes pleasure in breaking down the hierarchy of applied and fine art. His pattern designs appear rooted in the painterly vocabulary of modernism, especially that of French painting, to whose legacy he feels attached. They are used as patterns for wallpaper, carpets, and textiles. As at the Secession, however, they may also cover entire walls or feature as components in the artist's publications. His furniture pieces tread the often indistinct line between consumer item and art object. In this exhibition, this is made especially clear by the two dressing tables *Deux coiffeuses* (peut-être pour adolescents), *l'une habillée, l'une pas* (2008), but also in *Dual*, a kind of reversible chair combining a recliner and, when turned through 90 degrees, an armchair.

In his exhibition at the Secession, Chaimowicz refers specifically to a long stay in Vienna in 1982 as part of the Humanic-Artist-in-Residence-Programme. At this time, his engagement with the craft products of the Wiener Werkstätte and with Viennese architecture provided him with important stimuli. With its formal reduction to a two-dimensional plane, *Vienna Tryptich, Leaning ...* and *Surrounded by Chorus Girls and Sentinels ...* (1982), a work from this period included in the show, is paradigmatic for his development towards works and spatial compositions characterized by a condensed formal aesthetic.

In the 1970s, Chaimowicz made environments whose formal idiom drew on art history and the popcultural repertoire of glam rock: disco balls, spot-lights, fairy lights, and pop music on the one hand, on the other symbolically loaded elements from art history such as mirrors and flowers, used in works including *Celebration? Realife* and *Enough Tiranny* (both 1972). Together with his performances, these works stood in contrast to the purism of Conceptual and Minimal Art, making the artist one of the most important figures in the British high-subculture of the 1970s.

His artistic development is closely linked to the political and societal changes of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The student revolt of 1968, which Chaimowicz experienced directly in Paris, was a major influence. His main sources of inspiration were not the political left in Britain, which he initially observed with interest but soon rejected as authoritarian and dogmatic, but feminism and the gay liberation movement. His artistic focus in the early 1970s on the private/public divide and the domestic domain, with its traditionally female connotation, can be read as a radical emancipatory step.

To underline the fact that even in the exhibition context, artists do not find themselves in a sociopolitical vacuum sealed off from the outside world, Chaimowicz occasionally invites guest artists. For his show at the Secession, he has invited the Viennese architect Hermann Czech, whom he holds in high esteem, and the young British artist Simon Thompson.

Marc Camille Chaimowicz, born in postwar Paris, lives and works in London and Burgundy.

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