

Ethan Assouline
Coquelicots

Sep 12 - Oct 26, 2024

Gauli Zitter presents the first solo exhibition in Belgium of ETHAN ASSOULINE. His practice unfolds through sculpture, installation, writing, publishing, drawing, and the organization of collective moments around reading and writing. For this exhibition, Assouline has created a body of new works, spanning mediums, techniques and ideas, often including elements sourced from a preparatory period spent in and around the exhibition venue. In his practice, Assouline takes a critical approach to architecture, neoliberal strategies and language, including how they relate to time, money, human interactions, and bodies. He tries to see how the policies that promote positivity are a way to conceal the social and political problems inherent to today's city, a sort of joy that is performed by current ideologies in order to normalize power relations and preserve a status quo.

In this regard, one of the tropes in the exhibition will be that of childhood as a way to address today's ideology of the modern city. Children are often dismissed as mere potential adults, empty recipients for dominant narratives. By incorporating design objects, toys and architecture elements for children into his works, Assouline turns this common expectation of innocence from the youth upside down, posing the child as a possible key to expose the shortcomings of today's urban mainstream politics. At the same time, world-building as a typical child's pastime – the use of blocks, drapes, and other toys to construct fictional architecture – dialogues with the all-too-real built environment around us.

Assouline's writing practice is often featured in his visual artwork through poems and written reflections present in the sculptures. A chapter from his upcoming book, *Lettre à Bébé* (Letter to Baby), an epistolary conversation between the artist and a Marxist baby is on view in the exhibition. In the chapter, one of the letters evokes Assouline's personal involvement against the backdrop of the modern city and its shortcomings. Writing to Baby, he says: "I am not paternalistic, I am just your friend, and I, too, have battles fought on my body and mind. I no longer know if I want a fair world or no world at all - but I stand up straight and revive in the back of my skull the chance to try to do things differently."

The title of the exhibition, *Coquelicots*, French for poppy flowers, refers to one of Assouline's recent obsessions. Poppies are generally unplanned plants, things out of human control. They can also be seen as occasions for happiness for the urban and suburban passerby that stumbles upon them. Assouline's artworks try to see how symbols like the poppy and others that appear in the city can signify something different from what is commonly intended or given to us, proposing a critical look on what is meant to be ignored.

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BIO

ETHAN ASSOULINE was born in 1994 in Paris where he lives and works. He has exhibited his work, among others, at SIS123 in La Chaux-de-Fonds (2024), Gaga in Guadalajara (2024), Fanta-MLN in Milan (2024), Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris (2023), Neuer Essener Kunstverein in Essen (2023), Le Grand Café in Saint-Nazaire (2023), Forde in Geneva (2023), La Tôlerie in Clermont-Ferrand (2022), Crédac in Ivry-sur-Seine (2022), BQ Gallery in Berlin (2021), Macao in Milan (2019). He is a member of Treize, an association for art production, exhibition and publishing.

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