

The new exhibition at Fondation Speerstra is the occasion for an encounter between Martine Bedin (*Bordeaux 1957) and Mai-Thu Perret (*Geneva 1976). While the first is one of the rare women designers who have been part of the Memphis group, the second has over the last years played continuously with forms and histories of the modernity. If their meeting is unexpected, it seems nevertheless almost natural.

Martine Bedin has always drawn her ideas. In black notebooks, she carefully outlines her reflections on objects and their influence on everyday life. Page after page, one can visualize the continuous and joyful creative evolution of the young student, randomly arriving in late-seventies Italy. From politics to family life, from art to industry, from Antiquity to the Future, the peninsula is at that very moment shaken by creative and revolutionary convulsions. The world seems within reach as all doors are wide open. Through common interests and affinity Martine Bedin gets to join the proliferating group around Ettore Sottsass named Memphis, after a song by Bob Dylan, on the occasion of the Milan Furniture Fair in September 1981.

Even though all the objects designed by Martine Bedin have first been drawn in her notebooks, many have never been realized. Faithful to the funny and voluntarily loud-mouthed optimism of her beginnings, Martine Bedin has developed the idea to bring up some of her first projects thus re-activating the daring and joyful freshness of different periods of her work.

It is in this perspective that an important number of pieces, presented for the first time at Fondation Speerstra, have been realized. While the objects of the Memphis group are usually produced in non-numbered series in order to mock the fetishism of consumer society, Martine Bedin in her way, through this chronological gap, scoffs at the codes of the vintage object. The drawing maintains its own relation to time, which is briefly interrupted only during the realization of the objects.

Martine Bedin has created many lamps. According to her, design is meant to change the relation between people and their space; and light fulfills this purpose perfectly. Her lamp "Super" has become emblematic for its designer's playful wish to conceive a lighting device that goes beyond function. Even when it is turned off, the small luminous vehicle keeps driving around.

In her own way, Mai-Thu Perret has often adopted formal sequences of the modernity, translating them into ceramics, small paintings on wood, wallpapers, developing them into patterns or recreating them in neon. The artist plays with notions of know-how, as well as with the etheric vision of the Avant-garde. Former radical and heroic forms will become decorative elements of a possible narrative structure. The narrations of modernity become filters for fiction and delight, often

supported by feminine figures.

For this exhibition, Mai-Thu Perret presents two series of large neon works. In a first room, an apparently strict grid interferes with the jointing of the brick wall, while a net of interacting and confusing circles is bewildering the second room.

Both artists also challenge the usual hierarchic relation that suggests that one should develop appropriate spaces for the other. Pleasantly and joyfully, they sew together the metaphors of their common interests.

Week-End à Rome is as deliciously haunted as certain rooms of our palace of memories.

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