

Lucy McKenzie & Laurent Dupont

Cukrovarnická 39, Prag

27.4. – 2.6. 2016

Laurent Dupont and Lucy McKenzie are artists based in Brussels, showing together for the first time in Vienna at Galerie Meyer Kainer with the exhibition *Cukrovarnická 39, Prag*. In this they present a series of collaborative works in which they link their different approaches to uniting painting, sculpture and the applied arts.

The title refers to the address of SVIT, the gallery in Prague in which the works were made and exhibited in early 2015. Located at that time in a suburban villa, the artists designed for it a series of ornamental features. Applying their painted 'skins' to mundane objects and improvised mdf structures they transformed the domestic space into an architectural folly.

Reinstalled in Vienna, the group of decorative elements are stripped of their original context. But they are reactivated by the monumentality of the Meyer Kainer gallery rooms; their configuration is here close in atmosphere to an applied arts museum or showroom. The display creates an experimental zone which both elevates and detaches, and new meaning is generated by their dislocation from the original narrative. This, it should be remembered, is in a city where historic design is both venerated and expected to perform the demanding task of ventriloquizing a lost milieu.

Laurent Dupont initiated his series of Objects in 2012, and since then the expanding project has been shown in many cities, including Los Angeles, Brussels, Vienna and Vilnius. Inexpensive ornaments and household items are bought from places like flea markets and second-hand shops, then altered and exhibited in the cities in which they are found. The multiple layers of acrylic paint with which they are transformed act as a cultural envelope, turning the objects into artworks. The singular materiality of each object disappears in favour of visual standardization, often looking misleadingly like casts or 3D digital prints. By being covered, the original objects lose their utility and become all surface presence, and it is circulation and context that now determine their value. Their reflective quality meant that their placement in the villa in Prague enabled them to loop back to the domestic world for which many of them were originally manufactured. Here in Vienna they respond to the specific consumer and design culture of the city.

Lucy McKenzie studied at a private school for decorative painting in Brussels in 2007- 2008, and the commercial techniques she learned there have been central to her work ever since. With its traditional mode of production, and its alignment of skill with value, trompe l'oeil is an innately conservative idiom; but it is precisely this conservatism that facilitates a tense relationship between form and content. Decorative painting has its own history, one that remains independent of prevailing art discourse. Marble can symbolise authority, evoking interiors constructed in an age when those in power had limitless means at their disposal. It also represents the prized status of natural resources. This, for McKenzie, has parallels with the contemporary cult of the authentic, mimicking the way political and ecological alternatives, subcultures and the historic avant-garde are often embraced as mere content to be mined and polished, instrumentalised through appropriation into works of contemporary art.