

MATHIEU MERCIER **Part 1, 2014**

09.13.14 – 10.18.14

TORRI and Mathieu Mercier (1970), winner of the 2003 Duchamp Prize, are pleased to inaugurate their collaboration with a solo exhibition entitled *Part 1*, conceived as the first movement of a future suite. Exploring the permanent tension between reality and abstraction, *Part 1* presents a set of new works from various series in progress.

A new *Sublimation* occupies the gallery's central space. The name of this series, which began in 2012 and now includes some fifteen works, is a reference to the technique that Mathieu Mercier uses to inlay on-the-spot schematic tools for understanding the space or the range of colours on white pedestals made of Corian, a smooth, resistant material. Each sublimated sign is connected with an object from ordinary life or a natural product, as is the case here. A piece of raw steatite, that tender rock commonly placed in the service of traditional training in rock sculpture, is brought face-to-face with a diagram borrowed from the theory of colours, slightly simplified to facilitate perception. The work places its own reception at the heart of the project. It is an equation presented for the benefit of the viewer, whose imagination is stimulated by the relationships established between its constituent parts.

On the walls of the gallery, acrylics on canvas with patterns inspired by textiles offer their own take on the great formal principles of modern painting, particularly parallel-stripe painting. The traditional vocabulary of their triptych composition is compromised by differences in their thickness as well as in the formats of the stretchers, whose irregular, almost rhythmical arrangements give the paintings a sculptural, if not object-like value. Although they easily lend themselves to mental projections, by appealing to viewers' visual memories and their mixed representations of the great abstractions of modernity, they also reflect a dense field of problems, from the decorative possibility demanded by Buren to the dialogical complexities of forms and objects. In the work of Mathieu Mercier, a painted work on canvas is rare, but not new. A previous set of kaleidoscopic tondi distorting the image of a diamond revealed, in a critical spirit, the artificiality of certain pictorial codes. This new series also and especially recalls the recent photographic series *Scans*, through the historically referenced patterns and the traditional reflexes of pictorial analysis that he knowingly brings into play.

Trois axes, trois sphères [Three Axes, Three Spheres] (2014), a final isolated mural work, detaches in the space. It consists of plays of balance, made up of lines and spheres, a geometric satellite-like construction, preserving within itself the memory of El Lissitzky's Prouns, those "interchange stations" born of the spatial experiments of abstract painting.

The works assembled at TORRI bear the palpable mark of Mathieu Mercier's attention to the historical avant-garde, as well as his deep interest in a work of art's ultimate ability to synthesise. They also reveal his attachment to the real circumstances of the meeting between the work and its viewers, who are invited, by his thought and by his displacements, to activate the work in an experiment that is resolutely situated in time. Every work by Mathieu Mercier can in fact be understood as the synthetic materialisation of all of the data relating to a problem that he has long confronted; to the viewer he submits a solution, one that is open, fundamentally ambiguous, smacks of obviousness and yet is irreducible to analysis.

Marie Chênél