

## *Foncteur d'oubli*

*Le Plateau, Paris 19 September – 8 December*

A wide-ranging collection of art, design and architectural objects from the early twentieth century to the present, featuring the work of 35 practitioners, *Foncteur d'oubli* (or 'Forgetful Functor') begins before you enter the gallery building. Artist Tarik Kiswanson has removed the tubular metal handle on the front door and attached it to the gallery's front desk, where it resituates the latter as sculpture, providing an introductory allegory for the exhibition.

Displacement and recontextualisation are central to artist-curator Benoît Maire's premise: the title refers to a mathematical operation that, according to the show's press release, 'shifts objects from one category to another by "forgetting" certain properties'. Accordingly, the exhibition is subtly designed in a series of overlapping styles. While paintings are hung on white walls, 'decorative' objects are laid on tables and chairs but also on platforms, as in design museums; narrow, wall-to-wall shelves display small sculptures, ceramics and artefacts; eccentric assemblages sit on custom-designed plinths that echo shapes in the artworks themselves; works in darkened spaces are lit by theatrical spotlights, creating a cabinet-of-curiosities atmosphere.

The gallery space is divided by arched entryways that, in turn, refer specifically to Raphaël Zarka's striking architecturelike models. Circles,

ellipses and other rounded shapes echo through the works in the exhibition (especially those of architects Studio Anne Holtrop), in solid plinth shapes and ephemeral lighting geometries, to create a rhyming of frame and form in which the display architecture refers to, and recontextualises, the shapes on display.

The chair is often a designer's opportunity to lean into sculpture, and the 'forgetful functor' is strikingly evident in the artist/designer duo OrtaMiklos's hard and jagged *Iceberg Throne* (2018) and the shredded Marcel Breuer Wassily Chair (*Untitled*, 2015) by artist Mélanie Matranga – both of which reject comfort. These artists arrive at an object through a performative process, shifting the focus from function (or even aesthetics) to the evocation of action. Expectations of function are likewise upended by reconfigurations of everyday consumer objects relocated to the gallery and estranged: Nina Beier's *Automobile* (2017), for example, 'weirds' a remote-controlled car by stuffing it with human hair.

But function is not the only attribute forgotten so that the works here slip disciplinary categories. Take, for example, Simon Dybbroe Møller's *Negative Plate* (2013–14) series of ceramics, depicting dishes of leftover food, that strip the charm from Instagram 'food porn'. This contemporary focus on disciplinary disruption is

balanced by the presentation of the elegant and minimal furnishings of Robert Mallet Stevens and also Eileen Gray, whose tubular-metal style criticised functionalism for not being sensual enough. These bespoke examples of the early modernist aspiration towards the 'total artwork' provide a surprisingly enriching historical touchstone by exemplifying a utopian disregard for professional boundaries.

By recasting the tricky ontological relations between the disciplines of art, design and architecture in terms of an algebraic process, *Foncteur d'oubli's* immersive exhibition design (conceived by Maire with Marie Corbin) preserves the physical autonomy of individual works while emphasising interrelations and overlaps. The move beyond categorical distinctions is further articulated by the inclusion of ceramic pieces throughout the exhibition, as well as the presentation of minerals, crystals and other natural artefacts that expand the timescale beyond the human. Too often this 'interdisciplinary' territory is conceived in simplistic terms of 'hybridity' or an 'on or off' relation to 'functionality', but these fluid poetics suggest a shared process of creation. Beyond the aspirations of individual makers, the creative process is driven by a common fascination with materials and gestures. *Rodney LaTourelle*



Simon Dybbroe Møller, *Negative Plate (Dorade poêlée)*, 2013, porcelain plate, resin, polyurethane varnish and silicone, 28 × 28 cm. Courtesy the artist and Francesca Minini, Milan. © the artist