

PIERRE MALPHETTES TERRAIN VAGUE

12 march - 24 april 2010

Kamel Mennour is pleased to present Pierre Malphettes' second solo exhibition at the gallery.

On a morning such as this, you follow the path that leads to the clearing...

Arriving in the heart of the old city, you enter a white cube where you find fragments of the world. There, you are offered an insight into a landscape.

In this unstoppable process, where the whole of civilisation sees the city taken over by wilderness, Pierre Malphettes invites you on a walk through a wasteland - an in-between urban zone, where nature seems to claim back some of its rights. A land rich with possibilities. An equivocal place. A realm of adventure within four walls. An unspecified place, in the heart of the city, that conjures up the idea of nature mixed with artifice.

The artist once again manipulates the paradoxes of mimicry: inspired by fragments of nature, Pierre Malphettes' sculptures assert their artificiality. His insights into the landscape take the form of metonyms. As with his installation *Un arbre, un rocher, une source* (2006), one element stands for the whole; one instance of a thing evokes the vastness of the family to which it belongs. In this wasteland there is thus a tree, a stone, an apple, a miniature landscape... And then, in direct contrast to that which they evoke, the sculptures are formed from industrial materials: steel, glass, stainless steel, concrete...

The sculptural principle that is reformulated in each of Pierre Malphettes' sculptures is based on the interplay of paradoxical material tautologies. The elusive lability of white smoke is made solid by fluorescent tubes. A mould is made of a found stone and its form precisely reproduced in cast aluminium. The image of a tree is reconstituted using composite pieces of machined timber. Or, to put it another way, processed timber is employed in the three-dimensional representation of a tree from which, metaphorically, it was born. A neon creeper clings to its trunk and branches in a dialogue that reinforces the poetry of a fake vitality.

Here, the importance of Japan for Pierre Malphettes' art must be mentioned. The memory of Zen gardens informs his *Deux plaques (Crozon)* and his *Trois pierres*. The device of arranging select stones, in a reconstitution of an unchanging cosmology, has been reinterpreted. Through a deliberate anachronism, the artist recognises in the art of Japanese gardens the language of installation art, and reintegrates them. His evocations of landscape are informed by the sobriety of the Japanese aesthetic and its desire to symbolise nature. Each of the elements in this *Wasteland* asserts its individuality, and yet they remain linked through the common ground of manmade nature. An example is the instant haiku, produced by a line of orange neon, that describes a falling apple, reminding us of the importance of the *trajectory* in the Japanese creation of space.

Pursuing an exploration of the fecund paradoxes of his art, the sculptor indulges in a game of tension: the reproduction in cast aluminium of a large rock, its welding visible, is suspended at eye-level by straps attached to the four walls of the room. As if levitating, this *Meteorite* nevertheless contradicts the magic keeping it aloft. A steel *Beam* is set inside a block of glass, through a subtle calculation of forces between its weight and the apparent fragility of the glass, turning on its head the balance usual in the architectural dialogue between these materials. A girder is incised using a plasma cutter until it is rendered fragile and useless, its primary function hijacked. As if eaten away bit by bit, it acquires an organic delicacy.

Où nulle feuille ne tombe with the help of a model-like structure made of three Plexiglas panels and an electric lamp that projects horizons and gradations of overlapping greens onto the wall, a mountain landscape appears. The lamp switches on and off, reciting in Morse code a poem by Jacques Roubaud, based on a classic Japanese original:

Where no leaf falls

On the mountain of green pines

Lives the deer

That will know autumn has come

Only upon its own cry

It is a borrowed landscape, in the style of the *Shakkei* a faraway landscape is integrated into the one constructed by the gardener, creating, according to the words of Augustin Berque, "an aperture of dreams".

Pascal Beausse

Pierre Malphettes « Terrain vague » is on show at galerie kamel mennour Tuesdays to Saturdays, 9am to 7pm.

For further information, please contact Jessy Mansuy-Leydier, Marie-Sophie Eiché, and Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin.

Born in 1970, Pierre Malphettes lives and works in Marseille. His work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions: at the Centre Pompidou, at the Ricard Foundation and at the Jeu de Paume in Paris, at the Frac Provence-Alpes-Côtes-d'Azur, at the Parc Saint Léger in Pougues-les-Eaux, at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux, at the Villa Arson in Nice, at the CCC in Tours, as part of the 2007 Lyon Biennale, as well as the MUZZ Program Space in Kyoto (Japan) and the Villa Bernasconi in Lancy (Switzerland).