

Frieze : 'Review: Tatiana Trouvé at Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst', by Quinn Latimer, April 1, 2010.



Tatiana Trouvé
The Antechamber
2009
Mixed media
Dimensions variable

Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst,
Zürich, Switzerland

The title of Tatiana Trouvé's disarming exhibition, 'A Stay Between Enclosure and Space', is telling. The Paris-based artist has made her reputation on the architectonic modules and spatially sensitive sculptures she calls 'Polders', which transform the limits and latitudes of architectural and interior space. Her show at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst was the ostensible 'Stay' of the title, a word with a number of discrete (if related) meanings: while it can describe remaining in a single place or with one person, it can also mean to survive something, to give physical support to something or to turn a vessel around. This spate of meanings is indicative of Trouvé's exhibition and her work in general, which, from a selection of minimal materials (glass, copper tubing, fluorescent lighting, rocks, shoes), teases out abundant ideas about the possible psychological ramifications of physical spaces.

To that end, Trouvé transformed the museum's cavernous industrial space into a kind of minimalist and subtly harrowing *Alice in Wonderland*-like rabbit hole, complete with miniature doorways, narrow passages and hidden rooms featuring curious and curiouser objects. The exhibition opened seductively with the hush-inducing *350 Points Toward Infinity* (all works 2009), its hundreds of tiny pendulums suspended by wires just above the ground, like ballerinas poised on tiptoe. Controlled by an invisible magnetic field, the metallic pendulums gleamed with the muted shades of a beach

in winter. Beyond this work, more stringent arrangements lurked: copper cable set into the wall led to a smudged vitrine; brass tubing cut a curve through the air, leading to a dark room shadowed behind Perspex.

Next to this dark cove, two diminutive, waist-high doorways presented themselves. The one on the left (*From Here I Disappear*) opened onto a fluorescent-lit corridor of endless small doors (the effect achieved using a well-placed mirror). The doorway beckoned toward a vague white room beyond. As I contemplated whether I should duck down and enter, a toddler in a yellow sweater appeared out of nowhere, giggled, and disappeared inside. I followed. Titled *Inchoavity: The Room is Closing Down*, the installation revolved around a Beuys-esque object: a rolled mattress cinched to the room's central white column by two shiny black belts. Along the perimeter, metal wire ran down the walls, small black buckets sitting like punctuation marks underneath. Despite its near emptiness, the space emitted sordid intimations of violence, like a room in an old mental hospital. Near the small door, in a surrealist touch, a pair of unlaced black boots faced the wall, like a singular image distilled from an opaque nightmare.

Past more labyrinthine hallways, a glass wall separated the viewer from a series of large black weights hanging from metal tubing and lit by blaring fluorescent lights. A sizeable boulder sat in the corner, dark-yellow stains spilled down the glass and pooled at my feet, and a pair of black women's shoes was stuck underneath the glass wall, as though a witch had melted at the spot. This surreal set piece *par excellence*, campily titled *The Antechamber*, was chilly, obscure and full of unarticulated threats. Beyond it, another work - a narrow crevice between two walls →

- offered its opposite. The walls, perhaps half a metre apart, were studded with small black plates bolted with silver screws. A strong back-light turned the black plates into glowing, liquid rectangles of light, which patterned the walls in a spectral grid of weirdly generous beauty.

The large, last room broke the spell. Boulders veined with white quartz punctuated the floor, itself embedded with long, looping circles of copper wire. The delineation of space was lovely but the black crayon architectural drawings on the walls were almost defiantly not. These artless and dull illustrations featured human environments - apartment buildings, bedrooms, motorways, shrubbery - posited against some of the industrial objects that we fill them with (and which the artist herself obviously favours): car tyres, spools of cord, spiral heaters. What the flat and fruitless illustrations spelt out - that objects and environments have a way of describing our inner *and* outer states, like an ever-mutable vocabulary of forms - was ever more deftly handled in the slightly menacing fairytale rooms and corridors that came before.

Those previous rooms and their objects had the same character as Trouvé's inert pendulums: their strangeness comes from their stillness. Rooms that were meant for activity and materials that were meant for utility had been frozen so we might take their measure. What that measure might or could be remains the central question of Trouvé's practice. What would she have us understand of the odd offices in which we construct our lives? Perhaps it is enough that her works explore memory's marriage to architecture and its objects, and the way that time and space in these rooms becomes warped, exaggerated, stayed and finally stilled.

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