ALMINE RECH

Tom Burr
felt under fingers

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The Almine Rech Gallery is pleased to present *felt under fingers*, the first solo exhibition in Brussels by New York artist Tom Burr.

I'm concerned, highly concerned (or maybe obsessed is the right way to put it) with the way built spaces bind and control people as well as allow them degrees of comfort and security., the artist explains.

When visiting an exhibition by Tom Burr, one enters a room filled with a wide range of scattered objects, many of which seem to have been abandoned suddenly. The space seems almost familiar, yet the layout and selection of these objects remain a mystery, as does the identity of their former owners. It is as if the staging of these objects had been interrupted at the moment visitors entered the room. By choosing these objects for their symbolic value, Burr has created sculptures which question visitors and bring to the surface new or buried emotions.

The artist has compared his sculptural approach to acts in a play, or film stills, underlining their theatricality and his allegorical use of forms that are specific to theatre: platforms, radiators, curtains, lighting and personal items function as vertical sculptural supports.

In this exhibition, Tom Burr reveals the physical presence of these anonymous, everyday objects. The artist insists on connecting notions of heat and nudity and the envelopment of different sculptures, the whole taking the form of a narrative that will tell a story and trigger an emotional response.

Thus, radiators, normally relegated to the lower corners of rooms, are here exhibited in the centre of the space, as if they were huddling together. Although these pieces have lost their specific function, the memory of their use will remain intact. They were all designed for heating, an indispensable form of security.

The panels are covered with wool blankets, which are folded, unfolded, and arranged across the surface in a manner that is both spontaneous and carefully planned, then secured in place. Burr thus deconstructs the space and strips it bare before appropriating it once more. The walls take possession of the space, like actors or extras moving freely about. But these walls also envelop the space, enclosing it in order to demonstrate the physical constraints imposed on the actions and freedom of identity.

The artist also decided to work on a joint project with a young New York artist, Mary Simpson. Captivated by her short film "RR", which consists of sequential and methodical shots of the old "Vulcan" stove from Robert Rauschenberg's studio, Burr decided to include it in one of his works. He framed it to underline the importance of this type of object, objects which not only have a physical presence but which also tell a story.

Currently based in New York, Tom Burr was born in 1963 in New Haven, Connecticut. His work has been shown widely in Europe and the United States. Recent shows include *Mixed Use, Manhattan: Photography and Related Practices, 1970s to the Present (2010)* at the Reina Sofia Centre of Art in Madrid, and *Gravity Moves Me (2010)* at FRAC Champagne-Ardenne in Reims.

[1] Mark Rappolt, "Tom Burr. The Man Who Wasn't There," *Art Review* no. 10 (April 2007), p. 71.