

MSSNDCLRCQ
Meessen De Clercq

ALEK O.

On Parasols, Jumpers and Balls

8 November – 7 December

Rue de l'abbaye 2a, B 1000 Brussels
meessendeclercq.com

After having been invited last year to participate in the exhibition "*Without (Jonathan Monk)*", Alek O. (born 1981) is back for a solo exhibition. In the right-hand room, *Tangrams* combine the banality of a manufactured object (parasols in faded colours, taken from a Chinese restaurant in Milan) with the hand-crafted work of the artist. The tangram is a Chinese puzzle, a sort of jigsaw where you have to create or re-assemble figures by combining seven shapes. The positioning of the triangles here suggests different postures that a dog might adopt, but there are underlying references to minimalism or Euclidean principles. While playing with the strict codes of minimal art (serial aspect, repetitive geometric shapes, solid colours), Alek O. has given us here a work combining pictorial logic and sculptural effect. Looking over the canvas surface, the eye perceives changes in the red colour due to the sunlight or showers endured by the parasol, and one cannot help thinking about the past life of these objects, their journey from the factory until they were discarded as junk. On the ground, the artist has arranged several works by his artist friend Mauro Vignando. The casual visitor will recognize balls used in the game of Boccia, a sort of Italian pétanque, which were rebuilt like a jigsaw puzzle from several cut-up balls.

In the left-hand room, another shift in meaning is embodied in two series of works. Some, hanging on the wall, are sweatshirts that the artist has completely unpicked, to sew them back into a rectangular format. Full of sensibility, humour and nostalgia, these embroideries become unique pieces, one is tempted to say paintings, referring to much of the art of the twentieth century (monochromes in abstract art, but also works of Arte Povera or Pop Art). Finally, devices with real objects hidden beneath plaster evoke the notion of still life (reminiscent of Morandi) while questioning the art of digital composition with the famous technique of bluescreening used so extensively in films. This technique allows actors to be filmed in the studio against a uniform-coloured background before inserting them into a completely fabricated context. By positioning these objects, Alek O. talks to us about the confrontation between melancholy emanating from abandoned objects and the falsity of a virtual world that increasingly defines our lives.