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Meessen De Clercq

**IGNASI ABALLI**  
*Double Readings*

June 6 – July 12, 2014

2a Rue de l'Abbaye B 1000 Brussels  
[meessendeclercq.com](http://meessendeclercq.com)

One could say that with the exhibition *Double Readings*, his third at the gallery, Ignasi Aballí (b. 1958) is reminiscing about his artistic beginnings, the time when he was a painter. He has long since abandoned painting to move into other fields of expression such as photography, video and installation. Yet one of these centres of interest remains understanding what colour is, as well as observing what is invisible, which is not the least of the paradoxes. The works exhibited represent the chromatic circle and could symbolize the colours found on the painter's palette. They are arranged in such a way that a gradation is seen with the exception of the grey colour which is shown on its own, in the alcove. The metaphysical colour par excellence, it symbolizes time as well as dust. *Double readings*, in the plural, because there are several levels of reading in these twelve works. Each work is composed of a colourful background and a glass on which fragments of text are printed. Some words are legible and turn out to be references or names of colours extracted from *Ulysses* by James Joyce. It is not illogical that Aballí, whose work and reflection on language are constant and culminated at the Venice Biennale in 2007, where he exhibited an inventory of all the world's languages, focuses on one of the books that caused the greatest stir in the literature of the 20th century. He adopted Joyce's text, retaining the typography and layout of the original text without becoming trapped in mere quotation. He invites visitors to look at his own work as we look at a painting; by exploring the details, the imperfections and the silences. Joyce's writing is, in a sense, very pictorial and the fictional material of *Ulysses* is abundant, complex, fertile and gives Aballí the opportunity to incorporate these high-quality materials into his own research.

In Joyce, *the language is drunk* as Beckett wrote in a beautiful text. *The very words are tilted and effervescent . . . we cannot hope to snare the sense which is for ever rising to the surface of the form and becoming the form itself.*

Deciphering the mundane, everyday life is a constant in Aballí's artistic work. Or maybe it would be better to say "re-encrypt" insofar as he recharges his "source images" with meaning. The coloured backgrounds are scans of specific picture selections, details of press photos from the Spanish daily newspaper *El País* which are then greatly enlarged, causing the effect of blur and pixelation. Although taken from real data, however, these images lose all their informative content. What remains is the chromatic vibration or the few watermarked letters that bring to life certain colours like white.

There is a beautiful connection between the dissolution of language that makes way for silence and loss of the informative character of the press photo. By seeking to go beyond what is usually shown, 'what is fodder for the viewer', Aballí seeks to uncover what may be concealed and deleted. The questions posed by Aballí concern the complex relationship between figurative and abstract image, between photography and painting, between reality and fiction.

Ignasi Aballí lives and works in Barcelona. Selected solo shows *This is not The End*, Artium, (Vitoria, Spain), *Teoria*, Pinacoteca (Sao Paulo), *Nothing or Something*, Suitcase Art Projects, Today Art Museum (Beijing), *0-24h*, Foundation Serralves (Porto), Ikon Gallery (Birmingham, UK) and Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (Karlsruhe), *0-24h*, MACBA (Barcelona).

Selected group exhibitions: 8th Sharjah Biennial (UAE), 52nd Venice Biennale, 11th Biennale of Sydney.