

Didier Marcel

GALERIE MICHEL REIN

The color white has been an essential component of the art of Didier Marcel from the start, a formidably effective means of drawing attention to the form of an object while transforming the way it is perceived—at once exhibiting it and marking its absence. White is embodied in this new exhibition in the form of drawings photographed very close up and in sculptures made of synthetic materials like polyester resin, looking something like frost-covered or sugarcoated tree trunks. The particularity of this particular white, in relation to the plaster or paint the artist usually uses, has to do with its downy texture, which transforms the rough into the soft; its ability to absorb and rediffuse light; and ultimately its fineness, which allows for the preservation of surface details: The underlying structures are asserted with the greatest clarity, in spite of the sense of erasure created by the elimination of colors. This etiolation is even more striking because in certain instances some colors have been preserved, such as the yellow of a lemon in *Untitled (Lemon)*, 2006. And in other cases, Marcel has removed a color only to restore it artificially, as in the case of a plot of plowed earth that has been cast and then colored its original brown, in *Untitled (Plowings)*, 2006.

More than a process of purification, as it was for Kurt Schwitters in his *Merzbau*, this passage to white is a matter of producing templates of objects, organizing a ceaseless flow between their schematic representation and their physical presence, between drawing and sculpture: Because just as the small designs on paper are mediated by photography, the objects present in the gallery loom forth as projects, as scale models of themselves. Here lies the specificity of Marcel's position in the vast range of post-Duchampian explorations of the object. Combining the rigor of an engineer with the tautological absurdity that consists of duplicating the real identically, he offers a nuanced definition of the nature of contemporary creation: not only to give the most common objects the power of surprise, but to cross the boundary between presence and memory, between thing and idea, and, above all, between natural and artificial.

Seen together in the context of their relationships, these works suggest a new genre, a sort of sculpture of landscape.

An explorer of cities and countrysides, Marcel brings back samples, which he reconstitutes through various processes (printing, casting) and modes of presentation (pedestals, frames) into subjects of observation. In them, he invariably reveals the traces, even the imperceptible ones, of the work of construction and destruction: that of nature, which shapes and differentiates forms, and that of man, who selects, constructs, or cuts. In this antiseptic atmosphere and in this suspended time, the presence of a "real" lemon has the ability to surprise; yet while it never stops being itself, its fine metallic display unit isolates it as an archetype and allows for every association.

—Guitemie Maldonado

Translated from French by Jeanine Herman.

View of "Didier Marcel," 2006.

