

Galerie Francesca Pia

PRESS RELEASE

Mai-Thu Perret

The Prairie

31 August – 12 October, 2013

Opening reception: Friday, 30 August, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Galerie Francesca Pia is pleased to announce its fourth solo exhibition with Mai-Thu Perret entitled *The Prairie*.

This exhibition features new ceramic works as well as a stuffed fabric whale and a sculpture realized in collaboration with Olivier Mosset. The new works are mainly inspired by Herman Melville's classic novel *Moby Dick*, and its evocation of the underwater world. Mai-Thu Perret plays with the idea of the formless and amorphous—the ceramic islands in the main exhibition space can be understood as coral reefs or underwater landscapes, but also as examples of primal and regressive sculpture. In the same room, the sperm whale executed in blank canvas shares this toy like quality.

These works are set in contrast to a second room of starkly minimal ceramic pieces featuring simple line compositions, like a hazy reminiscence of Mondrian's early abstract works also inspired by the sea, the Pier and Ocean paintings. The geometric genealogy continues with the inclusion of a collaborative sculpture with Swiss artist Olivier Mosset, who is famous for his reductive approach to painting. A blue and orange lacquered aluminium box, *Judd's Reject* is a reconstruction from memory of a failed Donald Judd artwork the two artists saw in Marfa, Texas. In the context of the show, it functions like a swimming pool, but it also serves to highlight a complex relationship to the notion of authorship.

This is a show where contrast and contradiction play a central part. Opposites—such as aluminium sheeting and soft fabric, or glistening, fragile sandcastles and hard geometric lines—meet and are not resolved.

Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish brilliance and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes, as the dainty embellished shape of many species of sharks. Consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began.

Consider all this; and then turn to this green, gentle, and most docile earth; consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return!

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, 1851