



SIMONE TEN HOMPEL
THREE DIMENSIONAL TRACES

5 FEBRUARY – 5 APRIL 2015

Simone ten Hompel speaks of the co-dependence of memory and trace: memory that recalls footprints in the sand; while seeing footprints in the sand elicits memories of past events. She speaks of the importance of impression, indentation, mark and track, and this is evident in her latest body of work. Horizontal planes evoke landscape, and her works bear the trace of her childhood, spent cycling through the semi-industrial landscapes of Nordrhein-Westfalen in Germany.

Trained in the strong German apprentice system as a locksmith, then in Jewellery and Silversmithing, she has an intimate knowledge of the behaviour of metals, and promotes the notion of 'thinking through making'. Metal and making are her primary language. She has produced for this exhibition a suite of shallow vessels, dished panels with a strong family resemblance, in a range of metals and with a breadth of colours and finishes. She speaks of 'finding' colour within metal: drawing it out through repeated processes of heat and manipulation; allowing new colour to form on the surface, then flaking or partially wearing it away; using chemical baths to extract certain elements from alloys to achieve finely modulated colour. She chooses to reinstate a trace of the making in the patinated surface of a dish in gilding metal, to share the memory of making with the viewer: a vivid red, normally seen only during the soldering process and thereafter hidden, is rendered in a flash of enamel.

Simone borrows imagery from geometry: the square; the circle overlaying the square; the cylinder. But she works around the strictures of geometry in favour of intuition and the ability of the hand, in its practised relationship with the eye, to draw recognisable shapes without guide or measurement. Eccentricities of the resulting shapes offer a very direct communication between artist and viewer; they are emphatically not geometrically perfect, but they are compelling and full of life. A hand-drawn circle joins up in a small outward gesture that suggests tear-drop or speech-bubble – alternating between tragedy and comic-strip comedy. Another, joined with a stepped hiatus, evokes a balloon. Another tips right off the edge of the dish, and the interior vessel spills in its incompleteness.

The works raise questions about intent. One perfectly imperfect silver square supports a gently dished circular impression; the insistent brutality of a second circle in red enamel seeping in from the corner emphasizes the quiet of the rest. But wait; what has happened near the edge? There is an imperfection, a tiny speck of gold. Who makes a mistake with gold? This is a provocation from the artist, who asserts that through this trace, so deliberately and preciously rendered, the viewer can establish a more intimate rapport, and begin to speak directly with the work.

Sara Roberts, December 2014