

Alan Schmalz
Appareils de récréation

Geneva, 15th September 2017

It's back to school time. Forde presents a monographic exhibition by young Geneva artist Alan Schmalz (b. 1987). His work is based on a modest and resourceful economy, through both the salvaged materials he uses and the poetic fantasies of the travelling trades—tinkers, peddlers, and artisans of all kinds—that his work touches upon. Beyond the aesthetic effect, the time-worn, the reclaimed wood, the old paper and the used in all its forms lay bare anti-modernist attitudes and their relationship to the grotesque. This sense of the out-dated mocks the conditioning used in a democratic society where the obsessive management of the environment aims to produce normal citizens.

Appareils de récréation (Recreational devices) is a large assemblage replaying at various interwoven levels—and right up to representation—belonging, culture, property, education. An arrangement of lamps, obstructions and fences calls for fun and regulates movement. The environment reveals the architectures of domestication and segregation: a large wall divides the space in two, calling in the topicality of borders being erected, of the archaic violence of territorial domination, of legalised exclusion. With their uncomfortable geometric arrangement, stools and benches made of slats offer reception and teach the body its place. Sensitivity is invited to participate but, once caught up in it, intentionality flirts with perversion. It's back to school time: here is the opportunity for new schedules, new classes, new invitations to go out for break.

The artist, like the author, has his characters. There would be a ventriloquist visual artist, an architect of used concepts, a puppeteer deprived of an audience, a cyclothymic pedagogue. The device established by a mind of failed vices can be read as a metaphor for interiority; that of the artist, that of this intermediary figure which turn by turn acts as meditation for the artist and as projection for us. When facing the hegemony of the figure of authority, doubt is permitted: who gives rhythm to moving bodies, who decides where to sit, what to look at, who find themselves in the weakness they offer in return?

The filter of restrictive education will divide the world into the nice and the brats. Enchantments of a distant childhood, memories of constrained leisure. Wants and fears polluted by literary and cinematographic narratives. The clown's theatricality. The cruel edification of Hamelin's flute player. *Appareils de récréation* is the parable of a future curriculum.

The exhibition presents the opportunity for the artist to pursue collaborations, most notably in the creation of a soundtrack with musician Rémi Briquet.