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'A Closer Look at Eric Baudart' by Christian Barlow

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Arts

A Closer Look at Eric Baudart

The Parisian artist speaks to us about his inaugural solo show in Hong Kong

By Christian Barlow

Apr 29, 2015



Image Courtesy of Edouard Malingue Gallery

I have the pleasure of meeting Eric Baudart at Edouard Malingue Gallery, where he is mid-installation – though from his initial demeanor there are signs he is frazzled. Baudart's work is contemporary and complex, an idea fed by the aesthetics of the materials around us, with sheets of glistening gold, or an imposing life-sized cube of wiring bound together. There is minimal chatter as he walks me through the exhibit, the tour more a time of observation. After, we discuss his inaugural exhibition and the rationale behind his work.

Again, again and again is the title of the exhibit, and this choice of name for the Parisian artist's first solo show serves as a clue to the nature of his refreshingly laid back, simple approach. "Sometimes I get inspired from the lyrics of a song, a piece of text, whatever I like the sound of - something that just fits," Baudart explains. "Someone once told me, with Marcel Duchamp's readymade, you cannot do it – you will not be the first, the second or the third. But I disagree with that. Yes, I think Duchamp is someone who is absolutely free. But I think now we are more free."

Baudart views Duchamp as breaking the mould of his time, but that the artist's work is not the be all and end all when it comes to readymade art. Duchamp has largely influenced Baudart's work but his point of difference stems in his creative ability to reconfigure objects thus changing their purpose and as a result, our perspective. Baudart's obvious link to Duchamp's readymade is on the basis of visual indifference, with Baudart's art a reflection of his sense of irony and humour.



Image Courtesy of Edouard Malingue Gallery

An example is *Paillasson* (2015) seen above, which much to my surprise is a large doormat, with standard wear and tear and the odd stain. Baudart explains that, "I would like people to find pleasure in seeing something common and everyday that's often taken for granted, in the context of art, looking at it differently." He invites the viewer to reconsider the aesthetics of the doormat by mounting and framing it on a wall, instead of it being under our feet where it is normally overlooked.

I confess that I didn't realise it was a doormat on first glance, and from the beaming smile across his face, it's clear Baudart is pleased. "I like it when people don't recognise the objects straight away," he admits. "I want people to find the humour in it."

Baudart peppers our talk with loaded statements about himself or his work, suddenly exclaiming, "I think my work is absolutely not important for art," or "I have something to say but not exclusively through my work. Perhaps it's more around the way I choose to be an artist and what you do with it."

The appeal of Baudart's work lies within the accessibility and simplicity of his craft. Upon realising the object, the understanding of the piece is immediate, whether it's layered poster paper, or a sculpture constructed from mattress-frames, and the simplicity of a doormat; it is the warmth felt from the familiarity and humour of Baudart's work that sets him apart.

Again, again and again at Edouard Malingue Gallery

Date: April 23 to May 30, 2015

Time: 10:00am to 7:00pm

Venue: Edouard Malingue Gallery, 6/F at 33 Des Voeux Road, Central