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Art Asia Pacific

'REVIEW: Again, Again and Again Eric Baudart' by Emma O'Neill

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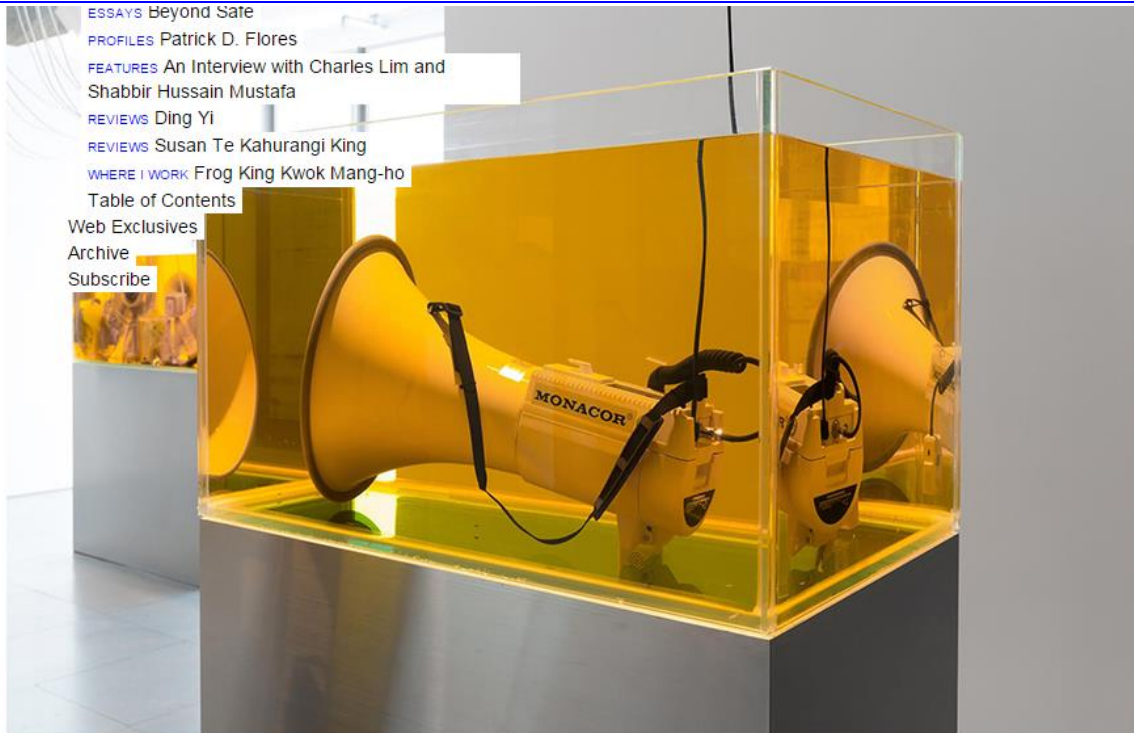
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ERIC BAUDART, *Atmosphère*, 2015, aquarium, oil and megaphone, 47 × 80 × 50 cm. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong.

ERIC BAUDART

EMMA O'NEILL
EDOUARD MALINGUE GALLERY

HONG KONG FRANCE



ERIC BAUDART, *Atmosphère*, 2015, aquarium, oil and electric fan, 62 × 121 × 61 cm. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong.

It is difficult to describe the hypnotic effect of watching the sluggish turn of electric fans in a plexiglass tank full of viscous, amber-colored aquarium oil. In a testament to the liquid's thickness, the blades of ten active fans fail to stir the oil. With the duality of motion and stasis at play, combined with the opposing signifiers of hot and cold, and the incompatible pairing of electricity and liquid, the juxtaposing forces on show captivate the artwork's audience. Eric Baudart's striking work, entitled *Atmosphère* (2015), greets viewers upon entrance to "Again, Again and Again" at Edouard Malingue Gallery—the Parisian artist's first solo exhibition in Asia.

Like the exhibition's title, *Atmosphère* explores the concept of repetition, featuring electric fans of various designs and sizes cluttered in a transparent tank. White wires charging the fans neatly loop out of the container and are visibly plugged into the gallery ceiling, anchoring the piece within the present. The installation also comprises a megaphone submerged in a slightly smaller tank, filled to the brim with the same thick, tawny oil. Here, again, the viewer becomes transfixed with the oil-filled container, which the artist refers to as the "space of quasi-meditation." The installation suggests the notion of voices muted by the passing of time, with the vintage megaphone appearing as a relic trapped in Baudart's own rendering of fossilized amber.



ERIC BAUDART. *Solarium*. 2015. sunbed and washing powder. 200 x 85 x 75 cm. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hono Kona.

Displayed on the wall, *Concav* (2015) also plays with the past—simultaneously glorifying and tampering with the days of yore. Baudart conceals a seemingly innumerable number of old street posters, layered on top of one another, under a splendid, gold coating. With its parched, curled edges, the wall piece—which is roughly two meters high—threatens to fold in on viewers who are lured by its lustrous, spray-painted finish. Set in the corner of the exhibition space, *Solarium* (2015) also glamorizes the ordinary, with empty containers of bleaching agents wedged under the neon glow of a functioning tanning bed. Here, symbols of normalness and indulgence are wittingly overlaid.



ERIC BAUDART, *Concav*, 2015, poster and spray paint, 230 x 162 x 46 cm. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong.

Elsewhere, *Cubikron 3.0* (2015), a cube made from a labyrinth of steel coils rests in the middle of the gallery. Though oversized, it does not overwhelm the space as it allows the gallery lighting to spiral through the installation. Not only does the artwork's transparency lessen the density of its three-dimensional form, it also creates an alternative filter through which to view Baudart's other works on display—distorting them beyond their original appearance. In contrast, the three works comprising *Papier Millimétré* (2015) absorb the light and compel the viewer to closely examine the work. In all three works, the fine gridlines of white-and-blue architecture paper have been methodically worn and scratched to create textured abrasions on the sheets' surface. The works convey Baudart's endeavor to defy the paper's mathematically perfect design and function.

Baudart describes light as “indisputably, the principle vehicle” of his work; and after taking in the exhibition's golden tones, luminous “time capsules” and *Solarium*'s neon glow, viewers will likely find that his statement rings true. The artist plays with an array of lights, everyday objects and contrasting materials. Though the mediums seen in the exhibition are incredibly varied—like the readymades of Marcel Duchamp, who is cited by Baudart as one of his artistic influences—all 11 pieces endeavor to displace common objects from their everyday purpose.

In his correspondence with *ArtAsiaPacific*, Baudart maintains that he never favors a particular material. “I seize things very close to me: my office and the objects that pass through it; the TV; and daily trajectories, such as bringing my son to school every morning and listening to his latest discoveries,” he remarks of his inspirations. Regarding his practice the artist explains that he endeavors to be forever attentive, emulating the sensitivity of a “seismograph that puts all of its energy into extracting parasitic reverberations.” And it is in “Again, again and again” that Baudart tunes in and makes poetry of the universe around him.