

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

REVIEWS

NEW YORK

Tatiana Trouvé
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In a text accompanying her long-overdue US debut, at Gagosian uptown, Tatiana Trouvé remarks that “the body is simply of no use” when encountering her sculptures. Though referring to her tendency to play with scale, her comment also offered a potential theoretical frame for the entire show. Staging interventions throughout the space (graphic embellishments on the floors and walls, rogue scraps of building systems, and irruptions such as portals, blockages, and cuts punctuating the spatial logic of the rooms), Trouvé intended to disorient viewers—to put them out of their comfort zone, literally and figuratively. And while the unease she generated initially emerged from the material register of objects and space and viewers’ attempts to bodily navigate both, it rapidly spread from the realm of the physical to the province of the metaphysical.

Born in Italy and currently based in Paris, Trouvé—whose work has been the subject of numerous shows in Europe over the past decade, including a monographic exhibition at Kunsthaus Graz, Austria, this spring—first garnered attention with her *Bureau of Implicit Activities*, 1997–2007. A sprawling archival/sculptural project that started as a means of processing, both actually and symbolically, the bureaucratic ephemera associated with her relocation to France in the mid-1990s (the numerous rejection letters, for instance, that she received when applying for day jobs), the *B.I.A.* also functioned as a laboratory for the fascinations that would come to inform her practice—an engagement with systems of administration and infrastructure, and an attempt to harness the sensory oomph of immersive installation while maintaining a critical distance from its melodramatic excesses. Elaborated and refined over the years, these interests have coalesced into a kind of spatial parafiction—one in which forms and environments are poetically skewed, just close enough to “right” that their subtle “wrongness,” once discovered, produces uncanny effects.

Trouvé’s work was organized here into a series of discrete scenarios that each occupied one of the “rooms” into which the gallery had been divided. From the cast-concrete *Radiators*, 2010, complete with metal “plumbing” that hugged the contours of the very first space, it was clear that the show would be playing a kind of bait-and-switch game in which familiar forms were estranged from their conventional meaning by shifts in material or placement. Individual works were usually given only simple descriptive tags, as with Room 1’s *Men’s Shoes* and *Women’s Shoes*, both 2009, whose creases spoke of leather instead of the bronze they were, and the concrete *Cushion 1*, *Cushion 2*, and *Mattress*, all 2010, which were interspersed among a disconcerting

gauntlet of black columns in Room 4. In a neat twist, the three rock-like objects that occupied Room 2 were, as if in acknowledgment of the illusionism of the surrounding architecturally themed wall drawings, actually made of . . . rock.

Yet for all the appeal of Trouvé’s artifactual sleight of hand, the show was most persuasive in the way in which her charged spatial installation added narrative warp and distortion to the echoes of her “real” objects. The oddly familiar but utterly inexplicable arrangement of Room 5—the centerpiece of which was titled *The Fridges*, 2010, a jumble of half-scale sawhorses and strips of laminate pierced with tiny rings, set around a narrow channel cut in the floor and presided over by a strangely placid pair of veneered boxes that emitted a faint bluish neon glow—was almost fully in the mode of dreamscape. So, too, was the show’s most elaborate scenario, staged as *Untitled*, 2010, in Room 3. Here, in a few hundred square feet of space sandwiched between walls of thick greenish glass, Trouvé orchestrated a highly theatrical tableau via a cryptically evocative arrangement of sculptures, found objects, scorch marks, paint drips and pours, and a spill of sand, set within a space theoretically but not actually accessible via a trio of high Robert Gober-esque windows or two small doors, the keys to which were hung well out of reach in the adjacent room. The installation provided yet more evidence that while the body may be of limited use in Trouvé’s work, it’s never entirely gone, and certainly not forgotten.

—Jeffrey Kastner

Tatiana Trouvé,
Untitled, 2010.
2 sculptures, 2 found
objects, wood,
Plexiglas, mirror,
paint, leather,
stone, sand.
Installation view.

