

Absorb the place, Georgia Holz, 2019, Drawing Lab Paris

Petra Gell's interest lies in the interconnection of graphic media, space and architecture. She has developed a formal language that expands the boundaries of the medium and the space in order to simultaneously relate and merge them into one another. Following from her ever-present interest in architecture, which was a recurring motif in earlier paintings and photographs, the artist has in recent works reduced spatial compositions to essential elements – liberating, fragmenting, abstracting and rearranging lines, areas and geometrical forms. These graphic elements have started a contrast movement, separating from the sheet or carrier material and conquering the space, or using it directly as a background. As a result of her intense engagement with architecture, it seemed natural for the artist to extend her study to materials used in architecture and construction and adapt them to her installations. Throughout the entire designed installation for the Drawing Lab, materials from model construction as well as insulation boards used in house building can be found. Pastel colors resulting from industrial production can also be read as "objets trouvés" like insulation boards or a plant. The surface texture of the objects and materials plays an equally decisive role for the artist as formal and color criteria.

Petra Gell's working method is particularly well suited to the architecture of the Drawing Lab, utilizing it as a starting point for expansive compositions based on the dimensions of the architectural conditions. The artist has developed a site-specific setting of graphic and installation elements, changing between materials, line, surface, space and color, experimenting with different materials in order to concretize linear and graphic forms and let them directly impact on given architecture. Using adhesive tapes and similar materials, she brings lines directly onto the wall, emphasizing their haptic quality. Coming from the stairwell, the visitor can immediately pick up the trail of the expansive drawings in the form of a white band that spans the rooms on the blue-colored floor. The flooring of blue linoleum acts as a bracket for the room- and wall drawings distributed across the three rooms.

Objects are playfully being put into relation: nothing has to be added to the leaves of a rubber tree, they seem perfect as they are; as a counter-point, the artist placed a wall-filling collage of various material and color combinations in the same room. In the main room, colored forms and surfaces condense into an installation drawing. Textile materials are integrated into the spatial structure as well, due to their graphic quality, acting as a separating and connecting element, and as an organic contrast to the punctually applied minimalist screening of individual walls. Like a tipping picture, the large-format blue grid sometimes appears as a background for the graphic and installation elements only to become an image again.

The visitors are invited to become co-authors of the spatial composition. By moving in different directions and along different courses, Gell's "spacial-picture" opens up new perspectives and combinations.