

DEVALS

FAUX PLAT

The French expression “*faux plat*” (“false flat”) commonly qualifies a road that appears flat but reveals its soft incline only once strolled. Here, it characterizes an ambivalent engagement with planar surfaces in works by artists of varied generations and geographic origins, from a major private Parisian collection. From one object to another, our gaze enters a perceptual exploration shaped by equivocal forms—protruding or recessed, they interweave multiple imaginaries, they emerge or fade as they reflect, absorb, or transform ambient light. Over the course of observation, their seismic and unstable nature subverts our perceptual habits.

In this way, two glass panels by Belgian artist Ann Veronica Janssens—supported delicately both on a thin plinth and the surrounding picture rail—undergo a subtle chromatic metamorphosis as we move around them. The work by Swedish artist Tarik Kiswanson is generating physical and semantic tension, resulting from the arrangement of brass plates in high relief—jutting from the wall toward the observer—and simultaneously suggesting a warrior’s helmet, a veil, or an open book. From the very first ensemble of masks created by the artist, back in 2014, this work deliberately retains visible traces, accidents, and residues from its making. German artist Heinz Mack, a founding member of the ZERO group, captures luminous phenomena through painted relief.

Unlike the static monochromes of his friend Yves Klein, Mack’s thick material spans the edges of its support, animated by a regular, undulating rhythm, enhanced by an iridescent nacreous surface, and finally set within a wooden and plexiglass box added by the artist a later stage. French duo Florian and Michael Quistrebert follows on from this materially rich and dynamic abstraction, shaping organic-industrial reliefs in plasticine. Their work presents a surface with irregular planes, bumps, and recesses that are all uniformly coated in gleaming chrome, alternating with a gray reserve on a thick wood-mounted canvas. Brazilian artist Lucia Koch presents a photographic print that, at first glance—due to its architectural proportions—resembles a monastic cell pierced by a window; in fact, the image originates from the interior of a common spaghetti package.

Also Brazilian, Juan Parada brings an unpredictable rhythm to his ceramic relief, combining it with a subtle palette derived from a painterly chemical process. His powerful non-figurative geometry evokes mountain ranges, pyramids, and yet feels organic, reminiscent of lizard skin; the myriad spikes rising toward the eye also carry this tactile graphic quality.

In the annex space, Argentine artist Luis Tomasello explores a “black light” that both emerges from and dissolves into the shadows of cavities, fissures, and recesses carved into a blue relief. Following an essentialist geometry, French artist Hugo Schüwer-Boss rejects the flat plane with minimal material, fully utilizing the gray-brown reserve of a jute canvas. Within this framework, he paints a *trompe-l’œil* oculus floating in an ethereal atmosphere—in effect, opening a window onto the void.

Our gaze projects itself—and projects us mentally—into the abstract space of these works. It wanders through visual pathways paced by these *faux plats*, misleading appearances, and other planar modulations. In a constant play between transparency and opacity, we are thus invited to an unfamiliar exercise of the eye and to the liberation of some visual and imaginative energetic exercise—one that resonates with Claude Parent’s theory of the “oblique function,” which advocated the end of horizontal monotony in favor of the inclined or “oriented” plane.

Matthieu Poirier