

Artist Statement – Ma Toile

A Room Upstairs Gallery

The works on show are Steyaert's re-visitation to her most known works based off her previous series "Latex", where she stretched and put the material to its near breaking point on the canvas frame. Ma Toile, being a French word describing a piece of artwork or canvas like material, not having a direct translation into English. This inspired her to challenge her ideas towards her paintings and sculptural paintings, taking past inspiration from her last solo show "Misbehaving Surfaces" where wrapping and pleating works enhanced the surfaces of her paintings. Whilst these series are different in their aesthetics and unique forms their themes tackle very similar or the same topics, questioning the structure of the materials she uses, building them from scratch to effect their final make up.

"Canvas Separation" being her oldest work in this show creates an anchor to the show, not only in its size but being the first piece that instigated Steyaert's curiosity towards separating colours through layering, this being an underlying theme throughout her whole practice. This work has a visible break in the middle, made by rolled canvas, divided by its own material and structure. Creating a sculptural painting, this idea kick started her practice to think of the surface of her work and how they are effected with her touch and the support (canvas stretcher).

"Ma Toile" series of three is an extension of her first series: "Latex", here she took away the canvas to allow the latex to stand on its own and wrap around itself. Using metallic inks to blend into the latex, paying homage to her previous works where she used iridescent cellophane to incite playfulness into the work, referencing wrappings and promises. The cellophane danced when viewers walked by, allowing them to see their effect towards the work and the space. For this series Steyaert's work has matured and focalises more on changing the surface from within the material, rather than adding on afterwards. The crinkled and pleated surface reflects the light shone upon it, creating an interesting dynamic between works and space in a playful manner. Steyaert has enjoyed working with this material and the challenges that come with this, its difficulty in pouring and applying onto a frame as it misbehaves in the handling, sticking to itself and ripping under slightest stretch. Its imperfections lift up the work and how it seduces the viewers gaze, playing around with how it wants to be seen, this smooth texture almost forces the viewer to investigate its surface by coming close, creating curiosity as to what it is they are looking at.

"Silicone Toile", series of two, is another development of her past latex works, where Steyaert has poured her own silicone to create these large sheets to wrap her paintings in. This is also an evolution to her maturing work, it may contain a canvas background but Steyaert relates to these work being sculptures the most and fulfil her ideas to what the medium of sculpture is or may be. The way the silicone behaves on the surface, having a more pristine and sleek presence, enveloping the frame and taking on its own life. Choosing a similar colour palate to "Canvas Separation" was important for Steyaert, to allow the viewer to see their connection in from being the eldest and newest works in her practice, showing colour separation in a new light.