

Reports from magnetic imaginary worlds, a review from www.omkonst.com

Matthias van Arkel, Relations

Galerie Forsblom, Stockholm February 16 – March 18, 2018

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Fingers furtively seek out the swarms of color and eyes are tempted and hungry. The mouth waters at the sight of the “honey biscuits” or hardened “peppermint sweets” presented in colossal format. The senses and desire are put to the test in the face of Matthias van Arkel’s silicone paintings. The colors float, remarkably free, and the tones are stuck together with no foundation. The technique of rolling the synthetic rubber material and hardening it with heat has been developed and refined gradually. In a way, it now surpasses the potential of oil painting to convey light, moisture and secrets. But this mode is not entirely risk-free: the special life-imitating character of silicone means it can swiftly intensify and open up to the playfulness of imaginary worlds to excess. Lyrically oriented paintings without narratives or secondary meanings are an especially delicate task due to the inherent character of the material.

Matthias van Arkel has been given free rein to create works suited to Galerie Forsblom’s various spatial conditions, which he has taken advantage of successfully. The jigsaw puzzle of crumpled book pages that run down the walls in solid form are a comment on the inner office area with shelves of books. The amorphous swathes growing outside the square and coils of color offer hints of further development. The centerpiece in the entryway is composed of the playfully placed, molded cubes, each of which contains a universe. The atmosphere feels pleasantly familiar from last year’s Venice Biennial, for example from Pakistani Rasheed Araeen’s inviting installation that observers could furnish freely.

The big central exhibition room has replaced the entire back short wall with a large, custom piece. The installation is supported by the more liberal “silicone drawing” along one long wall, which holds up the room. The more intense tones of drama emerge with the special technique of the black, fleshy piece “Diabolo.” It is reminiscent of Katrine Helmersson’s striking register which was featured at Kulturhuset a few years ago. The inner demon of impervious silicone usually craves enviously to be perishable, but here, it feels reliable. Matthias van Arkel shows the way to both dramatic and lyrical immersion: magnetic possibilities, in terms of imagery, poetry, and theater, to explore further.