

Baronian Xippas

Press release

Stéphane Dafflon
2 rue Isidore Verheyden

06.09 - 26.10.2019

Opening
05.09 from 5 - 9pm
during the
Brussels Gallery Weekend

Stéphane Dafflon

« The ziggurated frameworks that contain certain windows show a keen awareness of the window—as ‘a thing in itself’ »
Robert Smithson, « Ultramoderne », 1967¹

Every exhibition of Stéphane Dafflon is unique. This time, he has chosen to present a series of paintings with an average height of 70 cm and with regular intervals. These new works have many different forms, ranging from square to *shaped canvas*, and received their names according to the usual nomenclature: they were titled *AST387* up to *AST387*. Rearranging the sequence of the paintings in the exhibition makes a chronophotography possible, a linear dissection of a form which evolves from a stable square to a complex form. The first few compositions are made up of square shapes, followed by constructions of triangles, parallelograms and trapezes. These orthogonal and un-orthogonal constructions have a stable and dynamic relation to the space they are in, respectively. The ensemble playfully alternates centrifugal with centripetal forces, as a result of which some works seem to revolve around their own centre, while others radiate beyond the painted surface towards the exhibition space. With their designs and colours, the compositions evoke historical narratives, ranging from the Italian Memphis design to American abstraction and concrete art.

Many of the works tend to go back to the definition of concrete art as proposed in 1944 by Max Bill, who mainly stressed principles like orthogonal composition, simple forms and plain colours. We should not, however, reduce the movement to Bill's manifest, because he himself later rejected this orthodoxy to make dynamic compositions and diamond shaped square paintings. If the orthogonal principle refers to the classic painting, understood as a window to the world, a fixed point of view with a stable perspective, then Dafflon's works, which should be appreciated in their diversity, represent a new definition of the painting as a window without a transparent view. In 1967, artist Robert Smithson observed the New York art deco building called 'Master Building' for a long period of time. In his article 'Ultramoderne', he writes about the ziggurat design of the building and the famous corner windows, their expansion of architecture, simultaneously opening and closing, and the balanced framework for the landscape and the passing of time they provide. Smithson calls this type of window the 'split window', a term that is usually used for a two-part sports car window, like the rear window of the Corvette Stingray. By doing

¹ Robert Smithson 'Ultramoderne', Arts Magazine, September-October 1967; quoted in Jack Flam (ed.), *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1996, pp. 62-65

this, he associates the “ultramodern” architectural window with that of a sports car. This aerodynamic metaphor spoke to Stéphane Dafflon, whose paintings are specific objects with a dynamic relationship to the exhibition space, forming a comprehensive temporal-spatial system in constant transformation.

Julien Fronsacq, Summer 2019.

Julien Fronsacq is chief curator at MAMCO, the museum for modern and contemporary art in Geneva.

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Stéphane Dafflon was born in 1972 in Neyruz (CH). After graduating in visual arts from the Art School of Lausanne (ECAL) in 1999, he became an associate professor at that same school in 2001. His solo exhibitions include: *U + 25A6* at Plateau FRAC Ile de France in Paris (2018), *Blue in Green*, a facility designed for the festival Le Printemps de Septembre in Toulouse (2018), Fri-Art Center for contemporary art in Fribourg (2011), *Turnaround* at the Mamco (2009), *Statik Dancin'* at the Frac Aquitaine (2007) and at the Villa Arson in Nice (2002). He took part in numerous group exhibitions in institutions such as: the MBA in Rennes, the Kunstmuseum in Lucerne, the Kunsthaus Aarau, La Maison Rouge in Paris, the Kunsthalle Bern, the Centre Culturel Suisse in Paris and the Grand Palais à Paris, to name a few.