

## Athina Ioannou

ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE – invited by Luk Lambrecht  
Things are what they are!

09 September – 23 October 2016  
Opening Thursday 8 September 2016, 5-9pm

Athina Ioannou (b. 1968 in Athens, Greece) currently lives and works in Düsseldorf. After studying painting at the academy of fine arts in Rome and Düsseldorf under Jannis Kounellis, David Rabinowich and Daniel Buren she established an artistic production in which minimal, pictorial interventions are linked to an extremely precise dialogue with the 'supporting' architecture/space. She does this with fervour and refrains from neutral objectivity. She interweaves her abstract work in thoughts about the world; thoughts that are swathed in colour, light and in a game with ever changing light.

She realised this with verve in the Basilica of Grimbergen (abbey church) with the exceptional *in situ* work entitled 'Onze Kerk' ('Our Church' on display until the end of September 2016). Athina Ioannou mounted small triangular works, in two different shades of yellow, crossways onto a 25-metre, vertical aluminium rod that is suspended from the light-diffusing dome in the Late Baroque abbey church.

The triangular paintings were soaked in linseed oil, an artistic touch that she has been adding for a long time, since 1997. The "imperceptible" result is that the colours transform into an indefinable glow when struck by natural light. It's as if the sunlight sets her paintings ablaze at specific times. It is a pretty piece to look at – never monotonous, ever-changing depending on the climatological moment of the visit/perception.

Following the authentic definition of Daniel Buren, the notion *in situ* implies that the work is connected to the location where it is displayed. The work gains its strength and ephemeral quality from the surrounding circumstances and from the situation in which it is mounted with extreme accuracy.

Athina regards her Window Project for Hopstreet Gallery in a similar fashion; the window/mini-kunsthalle is a 'tableau', a window on an abstract reality. The window leads to a concentrated, almost microscopic view of an intervention that uses several precise works 'twirled' in symbols.

Colour and shadow are very important; so too are the materials (textile and felt).

The material changes via a minimal pictorial procedure/process that uses linseed oil "all over" in a painting context.

Textile becomes transparent after being dipped in linseed oil and the artificial, internal light of the window casts a slightly soft shadow on the underlying side of the window.

The small textile and felt works – all deeply permeated with linseed oil – are attached to the wall of the window with thin nails and are hung "freely" in the space.

Athina Ioannou views the use of textile and felt from a still fresh point of view as explained in the publication "Mille Plateaux" by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. She makes an inspiring distinction between "l'espace strié" and "l'espace lisse" and links that to (mechanically) woven textile and felt respectively. Felt is generally considered the oldest textile of all.

"L'espace strié" is characterised by limitation and by an interweaving of horizontals with verticals. In a broader sense, "l'espace strié" is connected to everything in the world that is structured and limited, such as the organisation of fields, meadows and cities.

This vision of space always implies a stipulated route from point A to point B. In the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari, it is related to traditionally woven textile.

By contrast, "l'espace lisse" is linked to felt, a fabric that is pressed, unlimited yet experienced as smooth. For example, "l'espace lisse" is linked to the desert or the ocean. This space allows for nomadism because "l'espace lisse" remains open and unlimited; it doesn't imply a well-defined territory so there are no precise routes. The nomad can experience intercultural contacts that resulted in routes and caravans 'full' of trade and culture in the past.

In that sense, Athina Ioannou's Window Project entitled ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE is not only an aesthetic project, it's also a work of art that results in thoughts about our globally positive-problematical world via the dialectic use of materials.

That her overthought yet aesthetically attractive art can once again be seen in the semi-public, miniature context of a window in a former shopping arcade can only open the viewer's eyes to the nuances of a subtle (enjoyable) look.

Luk Lambrecht

Luk Lambrecht lives and works in Brussels. He is the coordinator of Museumcultuur Strombeek/Ghent.