

# NEW GALERIE

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## MAIKEN BENT - TRANSATLANTIQUE

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Exhibition February 16 - March 23, 2013

The works of the first solo exhibition of Maiken Bent at the New Galerie - *Transatlantic* - are defined by various fastening systems. For the series *Hoist*, a rope is first attached to the ceiling by a fastener and then to the wall by another one: a «classic» suspension and termination system. Each *Hoist* is then made of tubular structures (rods) connected or attached by chains. The status or the exact role of each component – rod, string and rope - is ambiguous. Chains hold the rods, but the rods put tension on the chains. The set of components maintains a relationship of interdependence. Sculpturally, a piece in the *Hoist* series can only exist when it is attached.

A similar activation system is present in the wall pieces of the *Cargo* series. A tubular or spherical structure is held against the wall by bungee cords hooked to pitons. The «free standing» works of the *Cargo* series are strapped to their own supports, which act as a base but also as a mode of transport/presentation/design that recalls the profound transformation that «containers» have made in maritime transportation. For the entire series, when the object is not held by tension, a reserve mechanism (strap, rope ...) comes to stand for the process of being held in place.

In the work of Maiken Bent, these fastenings are not a staging of preexisting works, but the necessarily on-site coming together of a number of components, like so many fatally autonomous scenes.

Systems of restraint are present everywhere: they materially make up the main part of the *Hoist* series. Similarly, bungee cords or straps are supernumerary for the *Cargo* series, and their arrangement is unstructured.

This break with what is useful evokes fetishism: historically, an «excessive» attachment to material objects, giving them an emotional or intellectual power. The question of this «undue» power that objects have is what animates African fetishes, works of art, certain consumer products and certain desires. Culturally and formally, Maiken Bent's works echo the practices of Japanese bondage. The use of leather and of the sewing technique reinforces this evocation.

However, attached forms - cylinders, spheres, triangles - are geometric shapes. Maiken Bent's works are not useable – no body can be part of them - and the objects themselves are what is subject to constraint. They are in this sense abstract and autonomous.

The materials (textiles, precious or decorative), techniques (sewing) and colors (bright) she uses evoke a sensitivity that is historically associated with the feminine or with decoration. These « clichés » are counterbalanced by the injection into her works of a system of constraints that can only be associated with the use of force. In this sense, Maiken Bent draws implicitly an alternative to the history of Western abstraction. From this alternative point of view, the viewer is led to consider how the black square on a white background or black leather and modernist design using aluminum are linked in a forceful affirmation and how geometrically restrictive shapes in a «feminine» abstract work draw on gender ambiguity.

*Maiken Bent is born in 1980. She lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.*