

Esther Schipper

Etienne Chambaud

Prism Prison

February 2 – March 9, 2024

Esther Schipper, Seoul



Etienne Chambaud, **Untamed**, tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 49,2 x 37,8 x 4,9 cm, (detail). Photo @ Aurélien Mole

Esther Schipper is pleased to present Etienne Chambaud's solo exhibition **Prism Prison**, the artist's third with the gallery and his first in Korea. On view will be all new works, among them a neon, a series of modified found objects including icon paintings, and bronze sculptures.

Etienne Chambaud works across a wide spectrum of media, exploring the categories we impose on experiences, objects, and disciplines. His works, installations and exhibitions destabilize our notions of what art is and can be, how an artist conceptualizes and produces a work, and the form, function, and history of the exhibition. In 2022 the artist had a major solo exhibition at LaM, in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, France. Chambaud's work was included in the Okayama Art Summit 2019, curated by Pierre Huyghe.

Prism Prison, the title of the exhibition, links the prism to the prison, two entities of confinement and segmentation, one for individuals and the social body, the other for the trajectory of light and its spectrum. Crossing categories as diverse as optics, geometry, the animal body and politics, the exhibition functions as a reflection on constraints, producing both forms and the potential for their emancipation.

In the gallery's ground floor space *The Window*, a multipart neon illuminates the almost bare interior room, as well as the nearby street. Titled **Erasure**, it reproduces a handwritten cross-out gesture enlarged to the scale of the exhibition space. As both an X that marks a spot and a physical barrier at the entrance of the space, **Erasure** seems to delete nothing other than the space it occupies, while simultaneously providing the light to make it visible. In the background on the floor, a pair of socks appears to have been left behind. Reappearing throughout the different levels of the exhibition, it is in fact a work from a new series of sculptures, each titled **Topos**. Cast in bronze from folded, turned inside out, or twisted pairs of socks, the works are insistent in their unobtrusiveness. Although their placement on the floor recalls the banality of an abandoned piece of clothing, their forms also have an abstract quality akin to mathematical or cosmological models.

A new series of found and modified religious icons is presented on the second floor. The characteristic gilding of the background of the icons has been extended to cover the entire scene only sparing the bodies of the animals in it. Freed from the narrative into which they were painted, the horses, donkeys, oxen, and sheep seem to float off-world, **Untamed**, as the title suggests. To accentuate this sense of ethereal fragmentation, the artist devised special viewing conditions: visitors will be given flashlights to navigate in the otherwise dark space, like in a closed museum or a prehistoric cave.

On the top floor another process of segmentation can be seen in a group of animal sculptures. Created from found realist depictions of horses made in the nineteenth century, the bronze works are the result of a process of cutting, folding and reassembling. Split yet still connected, the horse's bodies are diffracted and occupy multiple perspectives at once. Entitled **Zebroids**, these works evoke the figure of the zebra, wild and untamable Equidae (the animal family of horses), and its famous stripes, which here have become permanent cuts.

Mirror, finally, consists of a found butcher's block that has been modified. Presented vertically on the wall, the surface of the object has been covered in aluminum, gold and palladium leaf, transforming the former cutting device into an optical one. Not only preserving but accentuating the visibility of the marks left in the wood by knives and bones, the surface now reflects and modulates its surrounding lights. **Mirror** acts as a plane of symmetry that is not only spatial, but also temporal: it reveals its past use in the manner of a negative portrait of fragmented gestures and bodies; and lets in the lights of the exhibition space, as well as the ghostly reflections of its visitors.

Etienne Chambaud was born 1980 in Mulhouse, France. He studied at Ecole Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL), Villa Arson, Nice, and Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts (ENBA), Lyon. In 2022, he received a Ph.D. from the SACRe program of PSL University, Ecole Normale Supérieure and Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris. The artist lives and works in Paris.

The artist participated in several residency programs: EMPAC, Troy, NY (2017), Fieldwork: Marfa, Marfa, TX (2014), International Studio & Curatorial Program, ISCP, Brooklyn, NY (2011) and Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (2003-2005).

Chambaud's solo exhibitions include: **Lâme**, LaM – Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, Villeneuve-d'Ascq (2022); **Negative Knots**, La Kunsthalle Mulhouse, Mulhouse (2018); **Undercuts**, Forde, Geneva (2012); **Contre-Histoire de la Séparation**, CIAP, Vassivière (2010); **The Sirens' Stage**, David Roberts Art Foundation, London (2010); **Le Stade des Sirènes**, Kadist Art Foundation, Paris (2010); **Lo stato delle sirene**, Nomas Foundation, Rome (2010), and **Color Suite**, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2009). Selected group exhibitions include: **Stories of Stone**, Villa Medici, Rome (2023); **Icônes**, Punta della Dogana, Venice (2023); **IF THE SNAKE**, Okayama Art Summit 2019, Okayama (2019).

Chambaud's work is held in the following collections: Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Fond National d'Art Contemporain (FNAC), Paris; Fond Municipal d'Art Contemporain (FMAC), Paris; FRAC Île-de-France, Paris, Languedoc Roussillon, Toulouse, Auvergne, and others; Pinault Collection, Paris; MACBA, Barcelona; Ishikawa Foundation, Okayama; Fondation Lafayette, Paris; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris / San Francisco; Nomas Foundation, Rome; David Robert Art Foundation (DRAF), London.