

# frieze

## Christoph Weber

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

Christoph Weber's second solo exhibition at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff comprises just three new works, created on-site during a short stint working in both the gallery and the surrounding streets of the largely immigrant working-class community of Belleville. The subtitle of the first work encountered when entering the gallery, *Untitled (Ramponeau)*, refers to the neighbouring street from which Weber plucked a *pavé*, or cobblestone, which was used as a mould for a series of *papier maché* copies that are arranged in three groups on the floor.

Although the benign putty-coloured, pulpy-textured stones squat there harmlessly, their light ersatz nature conceals a weighty symbolism. One the eve of the fortieth anniversary of May '68, Weber's installation reminds us that the Parisian cobblestone was a building block and weapon of dissent during the Commune of 1871, when the rue Ramponeau barricade held strong (up until the Commune's final 'Bloody Week', anyway), and during the May '68 student and worker revolts, when the legendary slogan *Sous les pavés la plage!* (Beneath the cobblestones, the beach!) was coined.

Weber's stones are fabricated out of mulched newspapers printed before the Commune; their scraps and the empty, mottled covers that once protected the antiquated papers are tossed in an easy-to-overlook cardboard box near the door (*Untitled*, 2008). But even this gesture toward a revolutionary prehistory, which may be read as a plea to some moment when cobblestones were simply quaint, does not diminish the neat impact of his installation. Releasing the mute stone object from its material context emphasizes how it has become endowed with strata of historical meaning.

Whereas violence lies dormant in *Untitled (Ramponeau)*, it is perhaps too literally enacted in *Trauma*. Seven off-white painted doors with brushed steel handles are inserted into the walls of a rectangular room, but only one of them gives onto the preceding space and allows a glimpse of the others.

### About this review

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Each wooden door has been assaulted at about eye level with a sharp instrument. The hacked shards of wood that obtrude into the room are strictly identical. Close inspection reveals tiny dots of silicone, minute evidence that the doors are in fact cast duplicates of an original. Inside the room, eerily reminiscent of a blank dreamscape, one senses, with looming dismay, that those doors open onto nowhere.

In the first instance, trauma signifies a physical wound. But the repetition of the gash in Weber's doors leads us to the less surgical, more Freudian, signification he claims to be teasing out, whereby trauma is designated not by an initial event or experience, but by its phantasmatic repetition according to a deferred temporal logic. Trauma is therefore constituted by the relationship between events. One could follow Weber's lead into that fertile psychoanalytic territory or think further about how these works together conjure two founding figures obsessed with the movement and repetition of history and memory. Oddly, it wasn't Freud who came to mind, but Marx: 'the history of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.'

**Vivian Rehberg**

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