

Passages

For her first solo exhibition in Europe, New York artist Sarah Bostwick (b. 1979) has executed a sweeping, yet subtle transformation of Meessen De Clercq's first floor galleries. Using scraps and vestiges from the building's original, (pre-renovation) architectural details, Bostwick has created a sculptural cross-roads through the first floor halls and galleries that calls into question the viewer's presumptions about function, access, history and place in art and public space. It is this multivalent take on the relationship between time, the body and physical space that lends the show its title: *Passages*.

Beginning with the building's original doors and doorframes, Bostwick deconstructs and reworks these materials (along with their semiotic ties to early 20th century European bourgeois aesthetics) to concurrently reference a panoply of historical design tropes and cultural reference points. This is accomplished in part through the inclusion of more typically American decorative configurations, including molding and paneling motifs most commonly featured in pre-war American architecture like that found in the Brooklyn apartment where the artist lives. Era-specific, North American aesthetic tastes are thus deftly grafted onto the architectural record of Brussels, eliciting an informal meditation on standards of authenticity, cultural specificity, and the architectural codes that accompany such acts of preservation, restoration and renovation.

It is noteworthy that the structure being constructed out of this architectural detritus is a *vestibule* connecting the central corridor of the gallery's first floor to one of two galleries featured in the installation. A monument to transience both literal and metaphorical emerges brightly from this gesture. And through this odd choice of sculptural subject matter, the artist has shrewdly elucidated one of the major themes of the show.

This sculptural preoccupation with transience is mirrored in a gracefully constructed balustrade across the hall, where the visitor confronts a low-slung barrier which channels the viewer's ingress into, and egress away from, the austere gallery space within. It is an intense, yet barely perceptible act of sculpture; the sculpture itself (the balustrade) looks like it has always been there despite the fact that it was meticulously hand-crafted by the artist and a team of highly skilled local artisans specifically for the show.

The site specificity of these corridor interventions is augmented sparsely, but potently by the inclusion of a single wall-hung work in each gallery. In *Grand Central*, a collaborative project with new media artist Jim Campbell, one of New York City's busiest transit thoroughfares is captured in the act of channeling foot traffic throughout the terminal's cavernous grand lobby—up and down the stairs. The ghostly forms precede the sculptural relief that contains them through an act of collaborative magic involving seamlessly rear-mounted LED boards projecting into the sculpture from behind. The effect is psychologically unnerving and visually arresting at the same time, with the viewer once again left to ponder on the commonplace miracle of bodies traveling through space.