

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Elly Parsons, *Imagined objects: Jean-Luc Moulène's 'Larvae and Ghosts' at Thomas Dane, Wallpaper, 18 APR 2016*



At 3 Duke Street, we find kitsch garden sculptures that Moulène sanded great chunks from, in a process he calls 'cutting', and painted purple. Pictured left: *Bending*, 2016. Right: *Purple Graces*, 2016

West London's Thomas Dane Gallery has been filled with a quirky mix of concrete pig's heads, delicate watercolours and assorted garden furniture. The idea, insists Jean-Luc Moulène, the artist behind it all, is simple. 'If you objectify your floating mental images, they no longer float, they become legible.' In 'Larvae and Ghosts', which opened last week, Moulène gives 'concrete existence' to this wonderfully weird internal world. Split between Thomas Dane's two galleries, the viewer is encouraged to meander through the eccentric mind of the French provocateur and 'artist's-artist', ahead of an extended survey at Centre Pompidou this autumn.

At 3 Duke Street, we find kitsch garden sculptures (think long-haired goddesses and faux-classical nymphs) that Moulène has severed from their lawn-bound narratives, by sanding great chunks from them and painting them purple. In doing so, he gives new meaning to their forlorn, gushing expressions. The accompanying watercolours (a new medium for Moulène) are just as visceral. Pigs stand headless, and an ant is caught half way through some form of metamorphoses. This interest in broken bodies recalls Moulène's early performative work with French 'body-artist' Michel Journiac, during the late 1970s, where the human form became the subject of intense, almost medical inspection.

Moulène's boundary-pushing past is also apparent in Thomas Dane's second gallery at 11 Duke Street. Up a narrow, winding staircase, we are transported into another corner of Moulène's mind. Here, we leave the 'sobriety of concrete and stone' in place of 'household objects, found objects', Moulène explains. A stand-out piece is La Faucheuse, which comprises an enormous scythe attached to a disturbingly vibrant plastic garden chair, as if the Grim Reaper is invisibly sitting, waiting to pounce.

Moulène has evaded critical categorisation for most of his career, and in doing so become a bit of a renegade. This new exhibition only adds to his mythic persona. We look forward to the Pompidou installment, for which Moulène promises 'more highly unusual materials', along with 'new works, many digitally generated from original sources such as the body, commercial, industrial and medical products'.

<http://www.wallpaper.com/art/jean-luc-moulene-larvae-and-ghosts-at-thomas-dane-london#154469>