

**ATTALAI Gábor****RED**

2016. January 26 – February 26

The colour red frequently returns in Gábor Attalai's art, even in those instances where it is absent. The five-point star created by a shovel in the snow – considered an emblematic work of the artist's oeuvre – appears as a negative form; an ephemeral shape of absence that prompts us, however involuntarily, to envisage the missing red hue that is associated with it. In other cases, rather than making the red disappear, Attalai goes for an "overdose": he paints over and dips everyday objects in paint, thus declaring them – to use the artist's phrase – "red-y made". In one of his conceptual texts, Attalai alludes to the vanishing of an object under red paint as resembling the disappearance of the canvas under the painting. Attalai's "red-y made" series can be thought of as an Eastern European take – and an ironic one at that – on Marcel Duchamp's readymades and Yves Klein's monochromes. At the same time, the red objects also reflect the artist's everyday experiences. As he once put it: "everything was red here, you went out on the first of May and anywhere you went, everything was red, red, red".

The exhibition at the Vintage Galéria presents the various manifestations of red as the dominant colour in Attalai's oeuvre by showing a selection of his works from the seventies. While the conceptual text series on display appears to examine the "natural" contexts of black and red, it nevertheless hints at the cultural historical and ideological implications of the ancient colour pair of red and black. It invokes the colour schemes of folkloric art – which the artist had studied – as well as the red hues of the Russian avant-garde and the code systems of various political structures and dictatorships, similarly to how Mladen Stilinović and Raša Todosijević turned the props of political propaganda into a subject of critical analysis.

Attalai's point of departure is not political design, however, but an abstract system of forms more characteristic of minimal art – his red and black felt-environments are primarily comparable with Robert Morris' works. While the shapes, which sag in some places and stand taut in others, explore the movement of matter bound by the laws of gravity, in certain instances, they also become imbued with additional content. It is as if the "corner object" entitled Rosario (1969) were a minimalist variant of Tatlin's counter-reliefs designed for room corners. The shape can also be interpreted as a stylized, "soft" blow-up of an ordinary ammunition belt reminiscent of Claes Oldenburg, while the title (and the dominating red colour) refers to the rosary, calling to mind ambivalent historical and social experiences.

The felt-environments and "spatial textiles" can be considered together with the red bands designed for – and painted on the wall of – Gallery Loa in Haarlem for Attalai's solo exhibition in 1977, which functioned as imaginary objects that divided space. While the space-specific installation was painted over and dismantled, the works continue to exist on painted-over photo sketches.

Gábor Attalai's internationally noted – and later undeservingly forgotten – oeuvre has been the subject of increasingly great and widespread interest. The present exhibition at the Vintage Galéria can serve as a long overdue step towards once again placing Gábor Attalai's red objects within their appropriate (art) historical context.

Dávid Fehér