

# ARTFORUM

## Emmanuel Van der Meulen

GALERIE ALLEN

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Created in situ at Villa de Medici in Rome, Emmanuel Van der Meulen's nearly twelve-foot-long, unstretched canvases hang from a gallery wall like mysterious scrolls. Removed from their original context, the three earth-toned geometric abstractions—part of a series comprising six paintings, entitled "Cosmica Sidera," 2012—are now nomadic rather than site-specific, narrating their own physical, conceptual, and historical context.

The intimate gallery setting emphasizes the monumentality of the unfurled canvases while encouraging a closer look at the painted surfaces. Environmental residues such as a faint diamond-pattern imprint in *Cosmica Sidera I*—left by the floor tiles on which the works were painted—connect the works' circular motifs to architecture. The series's title, meanwhile, prompts an astronomical interpretation. Referencing Galileo's discovery of four of Jupiter's moons, which he notably named after his patron Cosimo de Medici, with this title Van der Meulen further links his works to a tradition of Medici patronage.

In addition to the sixteenth-century Roman villa, the artist's past exhibition sites have included a thirteenth-century Cistercian building (Collège des Bernardins, Paris) and a nineteenth-century water tower (Galerie du Château d'Eau, Toulouse). Though the white-cube gallery is ordinary by comparison, Van der Meulen is no less attuned to its architecture. Using the narrow space strategically, he sparks a visual dialogue between the "Cosmica Sidera" works and a selection of more recent, smaller paintings featuring similar formal shapes. The next chapter, then, full of painterly connections and references, is written.



Emmanuel Van der Meulen, *Cosmica Sidera I*, 2012, mixed media on unstretched canvas, 143 x 71".

— Mara Hoberman

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