



View of "Isabelle Cornaro," 2018.
PARIS

Isabelle Cornaro

BALICE HERTLING | 239 RUE SAINT-MARTIN
239 Rue Saint-Martin
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At first glance, the works in Isabelle Cornaro's current exhibition could be mistaken for Minimalist paintings and sculptures. Pairing large wooden rectangles redolent of Robert Morris's cubes and beams with paintings whose rusty tones evoke Richard Serra's signature slabs of oxidized steel, Cornaro flirts with notions of objectivity and monumentality. Ultimately, however, the artist is less concerned with these Minimalist tropes than with subverting conventional modes of display and studio practice.

Of the five gray or mauve spray-painted plinths here, one is left bare while the rest are adorned with small found objects. In addition to conjuring art historical debates about pedestal/sculpture dynamics, Cornaro's sculptures literally and figuratively elevate quotidian items—chains, buttons, coins, keys—to new statures. *Untitled (P#15)* (all works 2018) is an erect gray plinth draped with three delicate metal chains. At nearly four-feet tall and almost half as wide, the wooden structure dwarfs the dainty chains whose very existence relegate it to a functional role. In *Untitled (P#7)*, a low horizontal rectangle holding two metal rods, a thick chain, and a pair of identical plastic dog masks invites viewers to mull over the relationship between manual labor (symbolized by the heavy metals) and mechanical reproduction, the process responsible for these cheap novelties.

The paintings on view, from a series titled “Golden Memories,” 2015–, are excised sections of paint-drenched carpeting used as a drop-cloth while Cornaro made her sculptures. Dadaist in spirit, these automated artworks—byproducts, really—epitomize the importance of context and perspective in Cornaro’s oeuvre. Similar to how the plinth sculptures blur the distinction between display modes and artworks, the *Golden Memories* paintings—amorphous and moody compositions of dark purples, umbers, and forest greens with golden highlights—warrant both functional and formal appreciation. Hung on the wall in elegant brass frames, the carpets become intimate portraits. Matte though they are, they perfectly reflect the artist at work.

—Mara Hoberman

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