

## Embellished landscapes: Isabelle Cornaro's transformation of La Verriere

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The tenth and final part of Isabelle Cornaro's three-year long exhibition series, 'Gesture, and thought', has opened at La Verrière in Brussels

At first sight, Isabelle Cornaro's installation *Paysage IX* seems to be, simply, a configuration of grey-scale blocks; a minimalist presence in a square space enclosed by white walls. And that's what it is – but there's also much more to it.

'It looks a bit like a landscape but not too much,' said Cornaro before the show opened last Thursday, understating her visually arresting way of reinterpreting

classical naturalistic landscape paintings. In this installation, too, she breaks them down into abstract elements, but adds decorative details that disrupt the gaze.

As the tenth and final part of the three-year long exhibition series 'Gesture, and thought' at La Verrière – an art space behind sliding wooden doors at the back of the Hermès boutique in Brussels – her solo show departs from the preceding exhibitions there, that tend to bask in the light of the space's imposing steel and glass dome. 'The space is very architectural and I was fighting a bit with that', explains Cornaro. She toned it down with a white fabric ceiling that decreases the incidence of daylight, therefore creating a more intimate, immersive experience. 'The idea is that you're a bit crushed by the space,' she adds.

*Paysage IX* combines two of her practice's trademark features: landscapes rendered via minimal forms and spray paintings on walls. 'I was interested in superimposing the blurred aspect of the paintings with something that is very geometric,' Cornaro states.

The French artist frequently references art theory in her work, often both commenting on and employing its tenets. That made her an ideal candidate to take part in this artistic cycle hosted by the Fondation d'Entreprise Hermès, who appointed Guillaume Désanges to curate the series. He took Marcel Duchamp, an equally critical artist, as the conceptual origin of 'Gestures, and thought'.

'We usually consider Duchamp as a pure spirit, very conceptual – which of course he is – but not only,' says Désanges. He sees in Duchamp a kind of 'deviant craftsman, who dealt with the question of value with a lot of humour and subversion'. This connects him with Cornaro, who added coins, chains, stones, rings and other ephemera to her minimal blocks, a parallel to the consummate master of the ready-made, assemblage and collage.