

Derosia

Jenny Wu, Artforum, March, 2024

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Clémence de La Tour du Pin

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Clémence de La Tour du Pin, *Test Card #2*, 2024, umbrella rib, paper, pencil, oil, pigment, and ink-jet print on wood, 7½ x 16½ x 3⅞, From the series “Test Cards” 2021–

It may have surprised some to find that “T-Rex,” Clémence de La Tour du Pin’s exhibition here, featured only four wall-mounted assemblages. *Test card #1*, #2, and #3, modestly sized diorama-like boxes, were hung alongside *SPLIT* (all works 2024), a thin wooden board unevenly bisected and treated with waxed oil and pigments. Each piece was marked by a black X crafted from intersecting umbrella ribs adorned with snippets of fabric and skeins of twine, tangled into the structures like blades of grass in a metal fence. De La Tour du Pin, known for her use of found objects—such as vintage umbrellas, which she collects near her hometown of Roanne, France—demonstrates a practiced attunement to the pathos of the discarded. She lightly manipulates her materials—cutting, collaging, arranging, and conjoining them—to produce quiet, temporally elusive objects that simultaneously evoke and foreclose the possibility of historical knowledge.



The work that best demonstrated this attunement was the show’s outlier, *SPLIT*, which looked like something that had been dredged through wet earth. A gummy white ribbon studded with metal buttons girdled the left end of the sculpture, and five pearly thumbtacks, all painted white, were pressed into the wood at seemingly random points. Two of them sported tiny capital letters—an A and an E—perhaps the initials of a name, a clue to a story unfolding in medias res. The interplay of assorted bric-a-brac added a palpable tension to the work. Precariously affixed, these elements induced the

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sort of uneasiness one might feel brushing past Yuji Agematsu's cellophane-enshrined zips. For both artists, the process of collecting and assembling an assortment of debris indexes a kind of milieu. Yet de La Tour du Pin's *SPLIT* is more of an auxiliary than a containment—it suggests an earnest, though futile, effort to fix the loose matter of history in place.

While assemblage boxes are often associated with Joseph Cornell, whose collections of vernacular objects inspire readily accessible nostalgia, de La Tour du Pin's abstruse "Test cards" series, 2021–, displayed a decidedly anti-Cornell, anti-narrative sensibility. On the walls, they resembled paintings hung backward, their umbrella ribs crisscrossed as if to nullify any relationship between the viewer and the works' interiors. In place of accumulated abundance, these objects evinced a worldly emptiness. Their insides even appeared from a distance to be bare, their backings made of knotted wood, untouched by the artist's hand.

However, as is to be expected with de La Tour du Pin, these surfaces were in fact carefully manipulated. The boxes were not bare but lined with ink-jet prints featuring an organically patterned design sampled from a 1920s silk shawl: The artist had printed this design on cotton paper, cut it into strips, and scaled the bands on wooden substrates with layers of acrylic and oil to soften the image. Despite the subtle homage to the garment industry that once flourished in Lower Manhattan, where the gallery is located, history here was spectral and devoid of nostalgia. As if to further preclude sentimentality, de La Tour du Pin spread a chalky-gray compound across the center of *Test card #3* and in the upper-right corner of *Test card #2*, burying significant swaths of the intricate patterning. Her low-tech reproduction methods, coupled with her openness to chance and even destruction, attest to the ways in which the living consume and recompose images of the past. Hinging on this body of work that leaves little intact, "T-Rex," like history itself, offered fewer artifacts than mysteries.

-Jenny Wu