

domus



The Flat Field Works

The Antwerp Middelheim Museum hosts the American artist Andrea Zittel's first solo exhibition in Belgium, with a site specific installation in the Hortiflora area.

Andrea Zittel's work often traverses the boundaries between art and architecture.

In the Hortiflora area at the Middelheim Museum, Zittel's newest work consists of an installation that examines the roles and potential of flat "panels", or "fields" – in reference to the horizontal and vertical panels that comprise the most basic elements of our domestic and urban environments.



Top: Andrea Zittel, *Flat Field Works (Middelheim Variant #1 and #2)*, 2015 Middelheim Museum, Antwerp . Courtesy of the artist, Sadie Coles HQ, London and Andrea Rosen. **Above:** Andrea Zittel, *Flat Field Works (Middelheim Variant #2)*, 2015 Middelheim Museum, Antwerp. Courtesy of the artist, Sadie Coles HQ, London and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

Zittel believes that our surrounding realities are made up of panels that exist both as literal and in a psychological field of reality: *The Dynamic Essay about a Panel* explains how we attribute meaning and use to these surfaces depending on their position or orientation in space. Panels can be rigid or flexible, they can provide shelter or divide rooms, and they can delineate certain areas.

Horizontal panels naturally function as platforms for actions and behaviour – these are the sites where life happens (floors, tables, benches, fields, streets). She terms these: “energetic accumulators”. Vertical panels privilege the eye and are the carriers of messages and ideologies (walls, screens, paintings, billboards). Zittel calls these “ideological resonators”.

Sometimes, panels traverse both dimensions and become three-dimensional (e.g. cloth draped over an object or on the body). She now more frequently exchanges the word panel with the terms 'field' or 'plane' as these words suggest both physical and psychological dimensions.



Andrea Zittel, *Flat Field Works (Middelheim Variant #1)*, 2015. Middelheim Museum, Antwerp. Courtesy of the artist, Sadie Coles HQ, London and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

Ultimately however, Zittel's interest lies not so much in the architecture or structures themselves, so much as in how they are experienced both physically and psychologically. In a culture where we are increasingly being fed an endless stream of stimuli that we are never able to fully process or utilize, she hopes that these platforms, boundaries and divisions will create moments of pause, and a heightened attention to the sometimes fleeing nature of the realities that we construct around ourselves.

Rather than being functional in a ‘literal’ sense – these structures reflect on issues of space, context, and the physicality of how we experience things in the world: Why do we attribute the role of ‘seat’ to a horizontal plane at a height of 45 cm, and the role of ‘table’ to a horizontal plane at a height of 75 cm? Does every vertical plane function as a separator or boundary? Why shouldn’t we be allowed to stand on these ‘table planes’ or eat on the ‘seating surface’? These spatial contexts can be interpreted objectively in an unlimited number of ways. The artist quietly undermines our assumptions.



Andrea Zittel, *Dynamic Essay About the Panel*, 2014 (powerpoint presentation on screen), Middelheim Museum, Antwerp. Courtesy of the artist, Sadie Coles HQ, London and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

This delicate push and pull, titillation and hesitation, is felt throughout the exhibition, not only amidst the installation but also in the connection between the Hortiflora area and the Braem Pavilion. This two-part exhibition traverses from the extraversion of the open field to the introversion of the biomorphic pavilion.

The works installed in the Braem Pavilion represent a selection of pieces executed over the last several years. Similar to the *Flat Field* works – these also explore the format of a rectilinear 'panel'. Hand woven textiles, carpets, steel and sculptural works point to the distinctions that we make between art (a conceptual object) and design (a functional object), painting (two-dimensional) and sculpture (three-dimensional), and representation (illusion) and reality (the actual object).



Andrea Zittel, *Hard Carpet #1* and *Hard Carpet #2*, 2014. Middelheim Museum, Antwerp. Courtesy of the artist, Sadie Coles HQ, London and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

until 27 September 2015

Andrea Zittel

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Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 61, Antwerp