

ARTFORUM



View of “Olga Balema: None of the beauty of the landscape can reach her pupils anymore,” 2017.

PARIS

Olga Balema

HIGH ART

1 rue Fromentin

October 19–November 23

Fifteen of Olga Balema’s modular foam-and-vinyl sculptures—bubble-gum pink, mint green, gender-neutral yellow—form a dissembled matrix spanning the rococo molding of this gallery’s walls. Composed to first draw the eye to discrete spaces and then cohere, the attenuated shapes recall the pixilation of a degraded image, producing the illusion of a big picture but offering up instead the reality of missing information. The works function not unlike Richard Artschwager’s “blips”—sculptural lozenges that reconfigure space into the viewer’s vertical and horizontal coordinates. But where Artschwager used smooth, inoffensive black vinyl or playfully teased and rubberized horsehair for his blips, Balema seems to have scavenged her stuff from a junkyard of late-’70s prom limos. They are seamy, distressed.

Artschwager’s materials were meant to hone the optic; Balema’s return the viewer from the optic to the body. A tear in vinyl forms a puckering, sallow mouth, like a cigarette burn in a school-bus seat (all works *Untitled*, 2017), while creases in the printed scales of pink faux-alligator leather evoke the skin cells collected there. Like the artist’s earlier biomorphic work, these objects are corporeal without being explicitly so.

In a second room we find suspended from the ceiling a double-ply length of transparent vinyl in orange and green. The effect is something like that of a filmstrip. Its final cel takes the form of a sculptural pocket. (A pillow sits just below this pocket, as though the cel had

ballooned into space.) With each of these works, Balema returns touch—or memories of touch—to images. Recourse, perhaps, to the problem of her show's title: "None of the beauty of the landscape can reach her pupils anymore."
— Annie Godfrey Larmon