

Olga Balema

Computer

21 May/29 August 2021

Computer is Olga Balema's (b. 1984 Ukraine) first solo exhibition in the UK. It is centred around a single flat sculpture, created in her studio and the surrounding streets in New York, consisting of a large digital print of a domestic carpet repeated in a grid-like arrangement, manipulated first through the 'banner buzz' digital printing interface and later with different movements and incisions.

This new work reflects Balema's approach to making art that deliberately de-stabilises her own practice and in this case proposes a tenuous and uncertain relationship between the artwork and its defining structures. Participating in an inquiry into form that does not offer easy viewing pleasure, Balema has elected her sculpture as a note-taker of sorts, and refers to it as 'a form that gathered up a lot of impulses from my recently fragile cranky psyche'. A protocol of actions has imbued the piece with a 'worked' quality – a site where marks are propagated with such passive gestures as walking back and forth, hoping for ideas to 'appear' and allowing the work to produce itself by 'working without working'. The accumulation of impressions produced by this ambulatory impulse includes hairs traced with a pencil, dirt and the frottage of New York pavements, appearing in dirty greys or browns like a rash on the work's surface.

As Balema describes, what is '...presented here is an attempt to make a weird line between objects, an associative alliance between my personal belongings and works I have made. A realisation about the different grains of the street.' Visitors to the gallery are invited to move on top of the work, incorporating their own imprints with the existing composition of marks.

Responding to specific sites, Balema's works often take as a starting point the physical and psychological characteristics of the gallery, playing with, exaggerating or contradicting them. Where a print of a domestic carpet may once have felt at home in the gallery, this calmness is distorted by the abject appearance of the installation. Stylistically the work touches on the genre of installation art and contains a post internet impulse, both of which can provide forms of escapism while still resting on the more austere precedents of conceptual art and minimalism. Situated in the sculptural present, *Computer* does not fully indulge any of these movements yet nevertheless, it opens up a portal to a few other places at once.

A File Note with a new essay by Matilde Guidelli-Guidi is available from the Shop for £1.

With special thanks to Bridget Donahue, New York; Croy Nielsen, Vienna; Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam; Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles; High Art, Paris.