

## CRITICS' PICKS



BERLIN

Violet Dennison and Peppi Bottrop

OPEN FORUM

Brunnenstraße 115

November 23 - February 1

Clustered in the gallery's elegant, domestic exhibition space, Violet Dennison's cement and office equipment sculptures resemble a group of stir-crazy white-collar workers as imagined by Eugène Ionesco. Like Surrealists' plays, Dennison's works use absurdity to poke fun at debilitating social conventions. Daffy and manic, yet oddly elegant, her sculptures hint at darker psychological unrest. For each work, the artist augments the discarded office chairs with cylinder, square, and tombstone-shaped cement forms. She then wreaths these heavy, hard configurations with plastic plants, multicolored plastic dusters, and wire that looks like waving tentacles. But the most evocative elements are the black base and the wheels of the ordinary chairs, because these foundations cannot escape the association with their former restrictive cubical dwellings. The cement stands in for a tethering to professional obligations, while the other details borrowed from corporate interior decor are meager gestures toward creative expression and cheer. Dennison's sculptures allude to drab realities, but their apparently illogical weight distribution—all that cement on top of plastic, as in *Endosymbiotic Dilation. Time To Die, 2014*—turn them into objects of fun and wonder, creating characters that look ready for futures not brightened by florescent light.

Peppi Bottrop's energizing paintings, on the other hand, could inspire Dennison's sculptures toward freedom. His geometric graphite marks on wall-size raw canvases stapled against the gallery walls are graceful and intense, with gestural compositions that emanate exuberant energy, as in *Clutch, 2014*. Some of the square and headstone shapes that Dennison uses in her sculptures are loosely reproduced in Bottrop's rough, liberal gestures—flexible enough that they could be sketches of dancers enacting free and happy versions of Dennison's cement sculptures.

— Ana Finel Honigman