

Review

EXHIBITIONS

5 Marc Uzan – *De g. à d. (From g. to d.)*, porcelain enamel, 2012, ébauche H28cm; crystalliser H9cm; bottle H21cm 6 James Evans – *Cleft*, ceramic, metal leaf, and iron, 2012, H36cm. Courtesy Marsden Woo Gallery (Photo: Philip Sayer) 7 Exhibition view of *A Bouquet for Bill* at Kestle Barton, Cornwall (Photo: Sam Davies)



5

MARC UZAN – CÉRAMIQUES DE LABORATOIRE

GALERIE DE L'ANCIENNE POSTE, TOUCY, FRANCE

12 MAY-5 JULY 2012

Marc Uzan, known for years as one of the top French ceramists, presents a series of his newest work at the Galerie de l'Ancienne Poste in Toucy. Mostly inspired by the classical forms of industrial glasses used in chemistry, the exhibition is entitled *Céramiques de Laboratoire* (Laboratory Ceramics).

When you enter this exhibition it feels like you are entering a microcosm, a world that is at the same time joyful and bizarre, a world filled with funnels, phials, flasks, cylinders, or evaporators. Though less austere than his former work, Uzan has preserved his formalistic concerns, i.e. a sense of platonic perfection, but here the work is allied with a refreshing light-hearted aspect. His earlier work kept the observer at a respectful distance; now you want to get closer, and they make you want to play with them. For there is the spirit of childhood reigning over this exhibition, but in a way that only an adult, or a master ceramist in this case, could evoke, as if Marc Uzan were exploring the sensations he had as a child while playing the little chemist. Redirecting these classical industrial forms from their primary destination by recreating them in a new material (porcelain) playfully forces the observer to change his or her apprehension of those ordinary objects, leaving the field of bare utility and considering the surrounding world in a disinterested way. There is something surreal in this process, but without any violence contained in it, rather with an expression of joy.

And then there are the colours, those incredibly beautiful colours, which are in fact the real subject of the exhibition. The colours should be thought of as a field of research and a source of invention. In this is the admission that beyond the apparent 'rupture' in Uzan's work is a more refined and secret continuity. Those amazingly contemporary colours (the mauves, the coral-reds, the golden yellows, the deep blues, and the ethereal greys), the result of an enormous amount of work and experimentation, so evidently speak to the eye, adding even more to the poetic atmosphere that sums up the spirit of the exhibition. Marc Uzan is a master who is still able to play.

Mickaël Labbé

Mickaël Labbé is a French philosophy teacher and researcher