

Anna Czaban

Press release for  
*SUCHE* solo show  
(2011)



Ewa Axelrad's works start with thinking of (architectural) space, its physical and functional qualities as well as its subtle tensions and dynamics that one experiences in response to it. The artist perturbs viewer's conventional codes of behaviour, lets him/her into a state of confusion, doubtfulness and disturbance. The methods she employs are very subtle, and formally the works are very simple and aesthetic. The most recent piece *SUCHE* is a site-specific installation, which utilizes the architectural qualities of the Arsenal Gallery's ground floor, causing an uncertainty of what has been built specifically for this show and what is the actual, ordinary shape of the gallery. Axelrad justifies: The indefiniteness of these elements gives a viewer the possibility to immerse themselves in the work on many different levels and allows him/her to question their function. I'm inclined to settings in which the viewer can be drawn in by seductive sterility of the piece, in order to begin a kind of autopsy that is underpinning its lure... At this point, the viewer him/herself becomes an inextricable component of the work. In this context the motifs that the artist brings are not coincidental - hygiene and violence falling into a disturbing relationship. The hygiene gets pushed to a level of disinfection, which gets escalated to a level of erasure or even liquidation - just a few steps away from extermination. Hygiene may occur as an aggressive tool of control, domination and violence, and even a war tactic element. The military is hardly implied in the work, hence it is entirely up to the viewer how far he or she will follow this trail. The artist abstracts its characteristics such as discipline, domination and hierarchy, but also smartness, cleanliness and fitness. These attributes the viewer can find in various forms, starting with proportions of the composition, through lustrous and smoothened surfaces and olfactory stimuli. All these factors are brought together in order to lure the viewer, who inevitably gets seduced and has a chance to feel like a perpetrator. The installation built upon deceitfulness, seemingly clear and straightforward, abounds with unexpectedness. The snellen chart piece (*Commission*) has been made in collaboration with Steven Press.