

ELMGREEN & DRAGSET

Wallpaper,

Laid bare: Elmgreen & Dragset create subversive massage parlour in Paris

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* wallpaper.com/art/elmgreen-dragset-new-tenants-Perrotin-gallery-matignon-paris

In Paris, Perrotin's Matignon gallery is transformed into an uncanny massage parlour in the hands of artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset



View of Elmgreen & Dragset's exhibition 'New Tenants' at Perrotin Matignon, 2021. *Photography: Tanguy Beurdeley. © Elmgreen & Dragset / ADAGP Paris 2021. Courtesy of the artists & Perrotin*

'MASSAGE: €35/60 min, €45/90min, sans rendez-vous', reads the decal on a ground-level window on Paris' Avenue Matignon, a stone's throw from the Champs-Élysées. The choice of font – Brush Script for the headline, Comic Sans for the rest – and the suggestion of spontaneous, suspiciously cheap treatments is sure to turn heads. But don't jump to the conclusion of a neighbourhood in decline. What appears to be a massage parlour is in fact a new show at Perrotin, 'New Tenants', by artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset.

Through the window, we see a treatment room with a two-toned wall (white and mint green, reminiscent of the artists' swimming pool installations), with a bamboo rack in the corner containing massage oils, towels and slippers. In the centre is a massage bench where a life-size silicone figure of a naked man lies prone, covered only by a white towel over his hips. This is hardly an aspirational visual: the massage bench is an off-the-shelf,

collapsible model upholstered in off-white artificial leather, and the naked figure appears deliberately ordinary, with pallid skin, body hair in unflattering places, and not much visible musculature.

MASSAGE

€35/60 min

€45/90 min

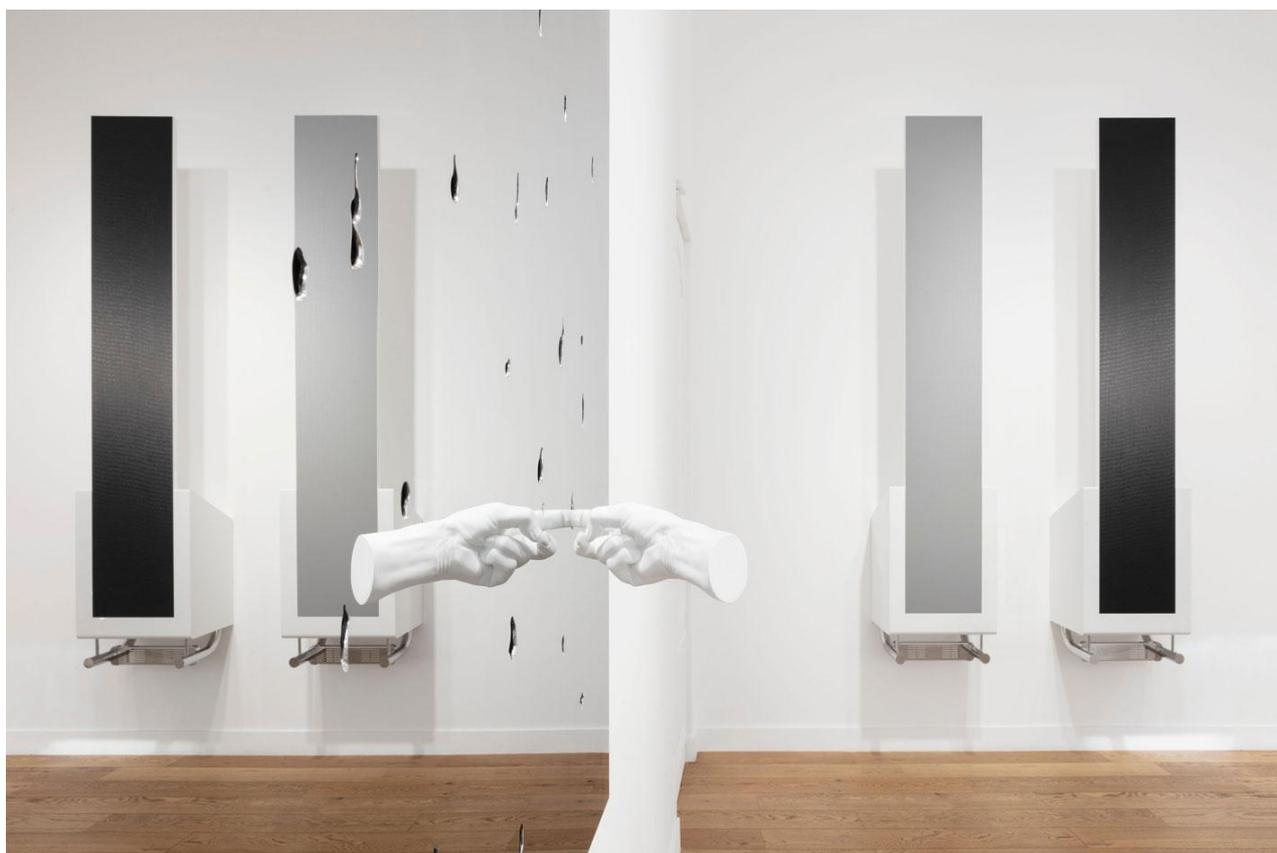
Sans Rendez-Vous



View of Elmgreen & Dragset's exhibition 'New Tenants' at Perrotin Matignon, 2021.
Photography: Tanguy Beurdeley. © Elmgreen & Dragset / ADAGP Paris 2021. Courtesy of the artists & Perrotin

The Touch, as the installation is ironically titled (the masseur is nowhere in sight), continues on Elmgreen & Dragset's ongoing interest in how we interact with our surroundings. Masters of spatial transformation, they have converted Seoul's Plateau gallery into a modernist airport terminal, Whitechapel Gallery's ground-floor exhibition space into a derelict swimming pool, and the nave of Berlin's St Agnes church (now owned by König Galerie) into an indoor tennis court. Similarly, *The Touch* subverts expectations and sparks our imaginations, with a dash of irreverence that makes it difficult to turn away.

'When we come into a room, even if it is an amazing institution, we are constantly asking ourselves how we can transform it into something that changes its identity for a time,' says Michael Elmgreen in a recent interview for *Sculpture magazine*. 'Maybe that has to do with us not being brought up in a museum environment. We never take an art space for granted.'



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Photography: Tanguy Beurdeley. © Elmgreen & Dragset / ADAGP Paris 2021. Courtesy of the artists & Perrotin

The show continues in the adjacent room, where a selection of bodily-related sculptural works are on display: monochrome diving boards, displayed as a duo (*Couple*) and trio (*Ménage à Trois*), a Möbius-shaped swimming pool in polished stainless steel (*Human*)

Scale (Loop Pool)), and a mirrored surface that has been repeatedly ruptured by a lacquered bronze hand (*Doubt, Fig. 3*).

Also present is a pair of sinks, installed perpendicular to each other and linked with a twisting pipe – so that water poured down one sink would in theory re-emerge in another. Titled *Separated*, this 2021 work nods to the 2004 installation *Marriage* which showed two interconnected sinks side by side. The new iteration seems to suggest the way two people can remain intertwined after their relationship has collapsed, however hard they try to extricate themselves.



View of Elmgreen & Dragset's exhibition 'New Tenants' at Perrotin Matignon, 2021. Photography: Tanguy Beurdeley. © Elmgreen & Dragset / ADAGP Paris 2021. Courtesy of the artists & Perrotin

Outside the gallery is a brushed bronze and stainless steel sculpture from 2020, depicting a vulture perched on a barren tree. This predatory motif – which the artists previously employed at London's Frieze Sculpture Park in 2018, and at their V&A show 'Tomorrow' in 2013 (it was also part of their cover portrait for the October 2013 Guest Editors issue of Wallpaper*) – is given an ambiguous spin with the title of the work, *Hope*. We like to think that hope springs eternal. But Elmgreen & Dragset's new show points to the illusory

nature of our post-pandemic optimism, and reminds us that the promise of release may turn out hollow, like the masseur who never arrives and the divorce that doesn't quite materialise. §



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Information

Elmgreen & Dragset, 'New Tenants', until 20 November 2021, Perrotin Matignon

perrotin.com

elmgreen-dragset.com

Address

2 bis avenue Matignon