

frosch & portmann

Werner Widmer
SPLASH!

frosch&portmann is pleased to present *SPLASH!*, Werner Widmer's first solo exhibition with the gallery. For his summer show in New York, the Swiss artist transforms the gallery floor into a vivid checkerboard pattern made of cleaning sponges.

Werner Widmer works with common, everyday materials. His floor installations consist of sugar, kitchen sponges or photo-paper. Carefully laid-out, the artist creates striking patterns and imagery on which he invites visitors to walk; the accessibility results in the destruction of the artwork. Contributing to the damage makes the experience of Widmer's exhibitions a challenging one, a deliberate provocation that is intended and a key factor in the artist's oeuvre.

Suggesting ornamental ceramic tiles, the often large-scale floor pieces require a closer look. Upon a more careful examination—which can only happen while walking on it—we discover that what seemed to be a swimming pool is actually an arrangement of blue sky photographs or the two-color houndstooth pattern reveals its material, white and brown sugar cubes. To step into the space and thus onto the art on the floor is essential to the understanding of the work as we need to feel the surface, smell the material, see the often fine nuances of the patterns.

Widmer works site specific and adapts his installation to the space, its history and the immediate surroundings. *SPLASH!* debuted in Switzerland in a disused elevator shaft of an empty warehouse. Using double sided pink-green cleaning sponges, the artist assembled a checkerboard floor installation; with an inoperative, but still threatening elevator lingering high above, splatter-shapes built into the regular pattern added a desired suspense to the unconventional exhibition site.

For the show in a gallery space on the New Yorker Lower East Side, Widmer adjusts his floor piece accordingly. *SPLASH!* does no longer cover the entire floor, but resembles a biomorphic structure spreading out to the boundaries of the room, leaving a narrow surrounding path. Although still accessible, the patterned floor installation can also be read as a sculptural object and thus literally as well as figuratively refers to the multifaceted art scene of our city.

August 10—27, 2017 | Summer Hours: Wednesday to Friday, noon — 6pm & by appointment

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