

Half or more of Sarah Benslimane's work is neither painting nor sculpture. A central in-betweenness powers the experience of the work; liminal spaces surround expectations, materials, forms, and culture. These objects confuse depth and reality. The fake rules. Surfaces rest on unsound foundations. Each work in its own way follows a formula of baiting and switching, confounding traditional expectations of what art promises.

That Benslimane gets away with this is completely related to her knowledge—and manipulation—of what has come before. Minimalism and its cousins, the most pure and holy of artistic schools, inform the architectural building-blocks of her work. It contains more than a little of Robert Smithson's concept of a "new monumentality" and the "specific objects" of Donald Judd (whose modified opening and closing lines of his eponymous essay bookend this text). Benslimane's works are never settled, they are often boxed in, and *Fetish Finish* is ubiquitous. It all heads down roads traveled by the likes of John McCracken and Ken Price—but with a permissiveness and rebelliousness towards perceived purity. Notice the peeling and revealing, the quiet possibility of entropy. The digestion of those minimal forms, as seen in the Neo-Geo works of the 1980s, is everywhere. Neo-Geo has been highly regarded in western Switzerland for decades due to a combination of constructivist puritan impulses that date back to the 1960s and a desire by subsequent generations to be connected to the global art world. Simulationism, Peter Halley's version, can be applied throughout, as faked nature is exploited: plastic grass, plastic stone, plastic plants. But Benslimane's work hardly deals with the ironies of Neo-Geo's mercantile abstraction. A different kind of ambiguity is at play here: a punk statement about who gets to create and consume, where and how.

Sarah Benslimane might trace her own interest in blurring boundaries to her upbringings and origins. A holder of three passports (Algerian, French and Swiss), she moved to study in Switzerland after growing up in France. Her interest in the geometric, mosaic, and saturated hues enters from a personal cultural network that stands alongside Western art history. These manufactured lines between places and ideas mark stark contrasts in class, opportunity, and taste as well as in notions of what encompasses culture. Her works sit like cuckoo eggs in exhibition spaces; their aesthetic and materials have always existed geographically nearby but have until now been unrepresented locally. They perform as well-executed craft—beads and baubles of the artsy Sunday creative—while resting confidently in the white cube. Her version of a hyper baroque, a *rococaine*, expresses a vital insurrection.

Playing on expectations of class, gender, and territorial integrity, her works express themselves as actual games. A giant tic-tac-toe board that evokes Rosalind Krauss's riffing on Jasper Johns's *Flag* is both a painting of a game and the game itself. Online we recognize when we are being manipulated but still can't resist consuming heightened colors and impossibly toned abs. Benslimane recognizes these tricks. But she herself isn't tricking. Her works appear as dynamic in person as they do when we are scrolling an Instagram feed. Luxury mixes with false ideas of representations. There is cow skin that turns out to be real but there are brick walls that aren't; there are the soft pastel colors of cheap plastic trinkets and cheap plastic trinkets that emblazon her compositions. Iridescent paper, rusty chains, and newly made bracelets string out like rope. Sarah Benslimane uses real objects and depends on the viewer's knowledge of these objects.

**Text by Mitchell Anderson**