

## CHRISTOPH WEBER

### Galerie Jocelyn Wolff

#### Paris

As with his previous solo exhibition at the gallery in 2008, for his fourth show at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, the Austrian artist Christoph Weber created six new Minimalist sculptures, each one made – either completely or partly – of the same material: concrete, with concrete, against concrete and in spite of concrete. Weber's use of the material in his sculptures seemed to refuse its more utilitarian associations, suggesting both its strength and its unexpected fragility. His installation formed a narrative with the physical elements of the gallery space in the way it echoed the gallery's walls, the colour of the floor and even its cracks.

All six pieces here formed sculptural doubles that paired a concrete element with another material – gravel, tarpaulin, wood or steel. The exception was the exhibition's central piece, a broken monolith made entirely of concrete. *Untitled (Gegenstück)* (Untitled [Counterpart], 2012) is an impressive block whose position at the gallery's entrance mischievously suggested that it might just as well be barring access to it. But the piece was also intriguing for the technical riddle it posed: while it was rectangular and smooth on all sides, at its top, the concrete block is split cleanly in two. As the division descends, it becomes a rough, jagged crack. The next sculptural coupling (*Unfold*, 2011) presented a simple pair of wooden planks leaning side by side against the wall, creating a touching symmetry between the roughness of the two boards, where the wood's natural grain seemed to be preserved and given new life after the cement was poured onto it. Surprisingly, this process of petrification actually served to accentuate the lifelines

that each passing year had inscribed in the tree.

Another work, a concrete and steel coupling, suggested Weber's sentimental approach to space and material. In *Bündel* (Bundle, 2012), two bundles of long steel bars ran along two of the gallery walls, sometimes extending beyond them as if they'd accidentally been installed imprecisely. The rods were each wrapped in a thin layer of cement. Where one would normally expect strength from the material, Weber gives it the impression of softness, wherein the concrete takes on a protective, embracing role. *Not Yet Titled* (2012) similarly tested our assumptions about materials. In this work, a folded piece of white tarpaulin hung on the wall. In its crease was cradled a heavy gob of hardened cement, elegantly revealing the plastic's strength. In the second exhibition space sat *Bent Inversion* (2012), a large concrete plate that curved upward at each of its corners, as if gleefully defying the gravity of its material.

In each of the sculptures in the show, Weber's intimate use of concrete served to transcend the material's primarily social and political symbolism – namely, its link to the industrialization of the 20th century and its role as the second mineral resource used by humans today – the first one being water. Through his use of sensory resonances between materials and his process of associations, inversions and contradictions, we discover a discrete but fruitful gesture toward valorization. All the permanence and commercial utilitarianism conveyed by concrete are dispersed through Weber's careful investigation of its inherent, unrevealed potential.

#### LARA SARCEVIC

TRANSLATED BY SIMON PLEASANCE  
AND LARA SARCEVIC

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1  
Christoph Weber  
*Untitled (Gegenstück)*  
(Untitled [Counterpart])  
2012, concrete,  
130×135×190 cm

2  
Anne Wenzel  
*Untitled (Stag)*, 2005,  
mixed media,  
dimensions variable

3  
Joachim Koester  
*'Of Spirits and  
Empty Spaces'*, 2012,  
installation view