

ELMGREEN & DRAGSET

LOT

17.09 – 31.10.2015

Galería Helga de Alvear is pleased to present *Lot*, an exhibition of two new installations by Elmgreen & Dragset. The artist duo's latest take on the contemporary art world transforms the gallery's two rooms into an art auction and a storage space. Visual and audio modifications enhance visitors' perceptions of each space, resulting in two very different experiences.

One space mirrors itself from the center: classic greyish-blue walls, orderly rows of black chairs, and two black podiums, one at each end, create the setting of a doubled auction house. However, there is no auctioneer present, no audience, and no artwork on display. The only sign of life is a modified and edited recording of a contemporary auction. The sound of two auctioneers' voices echo each other throughout the space, waging a war of bids, with numbers and names swirling around in the air, turning the auction itself into an act of absurdity. This cacophonous soundtrack makes it almost unbearable for the visitor to stay in the room for an extended amount of time. *Lot*, the exhibition's title, cites the term used to refer to a single item or group of items sold in an auction sale, but can also mean a person's situation in life especially as decided by chance.

In the second gallery space, one encounters three large, metal shelving units filled with various art storage items, including wooden crates, cardboard boxes, wrapped canvases, frames, and abstract shapes. Some details of the packed artworks are visible through the semi-transparent layers of wrapping, such as fragments of cast body parts or architectural models, but the actual contents of the storage as a whole remain ambiguous. The artists turn the storage itself into an artwork—a modified, choreographed version that refers to the style of early Minimalism.

Unlike an art auction, with its meticulous display and boisterous commentary from the auctioneer, the storage area typically constitutes the least spectacular space in an art institution or commercial gallery. Hidden and out of sight of the audience, it normally serves a merely practical, not artistic, purpose. It acts as a home in the darkness for works of art that have not yet found a collector, or have not been deemed worthy of display in the exhibition halls of a museum.

Lot is the most recent exhibition by Elmgreen & Dragset to transform an existing art space into an altogether different environment, with a function other than the normal presentation of art. In previous projects like *Please, keep quiet!* (2003), the artists turned an exhibition room at the SMK–National Gallery of Denmark in Copenhagen into a sterile hospital ward that is now part of the museum's permanent collection. *The Welfare Show* at London's Serpentine Gallery (2006), among other venues, consisted of a whole series of institutional corridors, waiting rooms and administrative spaces, with varying iterations. In 2009 the artist duo redesigned the Danish and Norwegian pavilions at the 53rd Venice Biennale as the homes of wealthy art collectors with their acclaimed exhibition *The Collectors*, and in 2013 they changed the Victoria and Albert Museum's former textile galleries into the grand family home of a disillusioned, elderly architect with the exhibition *Tomorrow*. In their current show *Aéroport Mille Plateaux*, Elmgreen & Dragset have transformed Samsung Museum's PLATEAU in Seoul into a dysfunctional airport (on view until October 18, 2015). Upcoming projects include a solo exhibition at the UCCA in Beijing, opening in January 2016.