

Anne & Patrick Poirier

Galerie Mitterrand

Awareness of the recent catastrophic destruction by DAESH, or ISIS, in Iraq and Syria haunts this exhibition by the duo Anne & Patrick Poirier. The title of the show, “Mesopotamia,” is the term for the part of the ancient Middle East referenced in their recent works. Bird’s-eye views of colonnades, amphitheaters, churches, cities, fortifications, roads, and other urban systems appear in acrylic and polyurethane relief on three large, white paintings, collectively titled “Archeology of the future,” 2012–15. A tondo of the same subject matter is realized using the ashes of *Le Monde* newspapers, displayed in a separate room. Yet there is no sense of opportunism here, since the Poiriers have been visiting and researching historic places around the world together or separately since the 1960s. Their work with ruins began during their residency at the Villa Médicis in Rome around the 1970s and was documented through brightly over-painted photographs taken there, as well as more recently in Palmyra. Tourism is practiced but also questioned.

For *Alep*, 2014–2015, the Poiriers asked Tibetan refugees whom they knew in Nepal to apply their traditional weaving technique to create a silk, wool, and bamboo carpet reproducing a black-and-white screenshot of Aleppo taken with satellite mapping technology. Are the crater-like shapes traces of bombings, legal or illegal digs, age-old constructions, or land formations? History, the future, fact, and fiction are converged and confused. Meanwhile, their installation *2235 AD*, 2001, is a maquette assembled from found materials depicting an incinerated postapocalyptic city with a neon sign stating: “A world that blows itself up no longer allows its portrait to be taken.” This speaks to how individuals and organizations seek to compile their memories in order to express a sense of loss and also hope for enabling new forms of continuity or preservation.