

# METRO PICTURES

Nordby Werno, Johanne. "Heavy Hand," *ArtReview* (2013) : 148-149.

## ArtReview



**Nina Beier**  
*Heavy Hand*, 2013 (installation view). Photo: Vegard Kleven. Courtesy the artist and Standard (Oslo)

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Exhibition Reviews

# Nina Beier

Nina Beier: *Heavy Hand*  
Standard (Oslo)

11 January - 16 February

Ten slim granite plinths are arranged around the opening space in a triangular constellation so precise and colour-coordinated it would make a minimalist weep. Most are graced with individual imitation-leather headrests on fragile metal necks and are attentively facing the next room. This quasi-mythological chorus directs visitors into the rest of Nina Beier's show, her second with Standard (Oslo). Since the first, in 2011, the gallery has

moved into new and larger facilities. The Danish artist has filled both of its main rooms with sculptural installations: clever probings into the mysteries of the signified and its signifier, Beier specialising as usual in issues of representation, an irreverent semiotic quizmaster.

Most of the plinths' headrests belong to car seats, save for one that stems from a massage chair, one from an office chair, while another plinth has no head at all: instead a pair of oversize Mickey Mouse gloves are displayed on the granite support. But are the plinths really mere supports? And if so, in what respect? In contrast to the nine other works in this room, the plinth supporting the gloves is - according to the checklist - *not* part of the artwork. Thus, one must assume, it is just a display element. And yet it looks identical to those other plinths that are inscribed with artistic value, it is perfectly integrated into the geometry of Beier's floor triangle and everything appears to have been done to suggest that they're all aligned and alike in status. On the other hand, even the title, *Blood, Sweat and Tears # 01* (all works 2013), gives this work away as a deviant in the company of the nine others, which all belong to the *Real Estate* series.

The floor around *Blood Sweat and Tears # 01* is stained with moisture. That's also the case in the second room, where *Blood, Sweat and Tears # 02* awaits. A pair of size 55 sneakers sits by the wall - like the gloves, they look clownish and oversize, but unlike the gloves, they are produced for body parts of that actual size. Like the gloves, they are soaked in artificial body fluids - the sweat and tears of the works' titles. The same logic (as well as another reference to human body fluids) is present in *Smokes*, two generous piles of Persian rugs that dominate the room. The uppermost carpet of each stack features blobs of chewing gum, softened by spit and thumbed onto its surface. Again: same, same, but different. For are the twin piles twins after all once you learn that the stains on one derive, pre-chewing, from children's gum in the shape of cigarettes, while those of the other are of nicotine gum?

Besides the rugs, a typical domestic investment, a number of other tokens in this room signify 'home'. (Or signify signifying home.) Three kitschy flatscreens (*Loulou*, *Potato Potato* and *Money Money Money*), originally manufactured to display an animated fireplace while giving off heat, surround the rugs. Having substituted the fireplace with three other images, the work can be said to point - still by way of synecdoche - to some essential markers of 'home'. The kitchen (the zero degree of culinary ingredients, a potato, hovers on one screen), the bathroom (a perfume bottle follows) and a sense of financial stability (a generic wallet). The story goes on even in the rugs, which suggest the generational variety of the residents of a 'home': it holds both kids' gum and grownups' gum. And then there's the fact that there's gum in the rug at all...

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