

## The Quiet One: Morgane Tschiember at Tracy Williams, Ltd.

Katelynn Mills

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*Installation view of "Morgane Tschiember: Almost a Kiss," 2015, at Tracy Williams, Ltd. Photo credit: Jason Mandella*

They say to always watch out for the quiet ones. It's not that they necessarily have something to hide so much as their calm, reserved nature tends to divert attention from their deep-seated, and in some cases wicked, interests. "Almost A Kiss," Morgane Tschiember's solo show at Tracy Williams Ltd., is an example of such a personality. There is a quietness in the space, or conversely, a subverted

cacophony one might experience when they almost kiss another, but then holds back with composed restraint.

Entering this exhibition one cannot help but notice an enormous pink wall painting applied with drips directly to the back, left wall of the gallery. One is drawn in by its rosy, illuminating presence and might even be tempted to initially skip the works on the first floor because of it. Once on the bottom level it is clear that the works at hand exude sexual tension coupled with emotional intelligence. Looking at Tschiember's four glass-and-steel sculptures — each titled *Dust Devil* (all works 2015) — we see languid, blown-glass forms that ooze and hug their handsome steel armatures. Each of three small, wall-mounted versions of *Dust Devil* (each roughly 20 x 10 x 10 inches) is composed of an architectural steel structure bearing its own transparent globule. The glass, expectant with an unseen pressure, weighs down on the steel as though it's about to burst, fall off, or totally envelop its frame. The sculptures feel like a snapshot in time — the moment before the fall, kiss, explosion. A larger, floor-based *Dust Devil* suggests time in a more complex way. The lines created by the steel serve not only as the support, but also as pathways through space — the glass forms being instances on the moving trajectories. It's quite spectacular how ephemeral these solid objects feel; they're like watching morning dew accumulate and bead down a window.

Across the room, a two-story structure — also made with steel — features eight variations called *Shibari*. Named after the Japanese practice of aestheticized rope bondage, the *Shibari* appear to be broken or distorted pieces of pottery suspended from the support by rope, held at various heights. Unique in size, shape, color, and deformity, the clay pieces look as though they find solace in their repression as they may totally fall apart without the rope. Unlike the self-contained glass formations, an outside force is literally restraining them. There's an intricately mysterious power struggle at hand. Perhaps these installations in relation to each other speak to a person's need to control and/or be relinquished from control.

Moving back up to the first floor of the gallery on the way out of the exhibition, we notice another intriguing relationship to consider. Here, two sculptures occupy opposing walls of the space: *Rash (Couple)* on one side and *Rash (Triplet)* on the other. They were made by pouring concrete into long, rectangular cardboard boxes and pulling off as much of the cardboard as possible. The result of each component is a single, corporally scaled gesture relating to one's body — similar to the initial gesture line one draws when rendering a figure. In *Rash (Couple)*, the gesture lines butt up against each other and create a harmony as they use one another for balance, whereas the gestures of *Rash (Triplet)* create an unresolved tension. Because they exist in relation to the couple, they suggest that

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balance could or ought to be achieved, but the middle one remains in limbo between the outside two.

What this exhibition is getting at the erotic and visceral power of body language and signals as opposed to verbal exchange. The viewer is taken by these works the way he is felled by a woman's second glance or the way she bites her lip. And this unspoken suspense is greater than achieving any sort of resolution, which is why all these sculptures — with exception to *Rash (Couple)* — seem to freeze in that heightened moment.