

Frieze, Jan. 30, 2026, Andrew Hodgson

Matthias Odin Lifts the Parisian Underground into the Light

At Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Paris, the artist's assemblages are built from materials scavenged in squats and from the city's streets



The first time I encountered Matthias Odin's assemblages was in 2022, in the maintenance voids five storeys below La Défense, the financial district on the western outskirts of Paris. Through a grate in the floor far above, the piled glass of office buildings glistened. Down in the concrete service shafts, however, there was a sense of seepage: rusted fixings supporting discoloured wiring; vast, block-like machines doing whatever it is they do. Streams of refuse water fell onto large beds of moss, among which the artist's sculptural agglomerations seemed right at home. The group show, 'Claves- Gated-Dolines' , was organized by Odin's artistic-curatorial squatter collective, Ygrèves, whose ongoing focus is a situationist-inspired d é tournement of urban space intended to bring the Parisian art world, symbolically and literally, to the underground.

Odin's latest exhibition, 'Rue de Paris' at Galerie Peter Kilchmann, brings a comparable sense of the subterranean into a street-level gallery space. His presentation of objects as a scenographic project remains here, as does reference to the artist's practice of breaking and entering disused buildings. In the white box of the gallery, Odin generates a synecdoche of a haunted art squat; a simulacrum of an abandoned hotel bathroom. At either end, two assemblage works bracket the space: the mirror-based Inversion (miroir bohème) (Inversion [Bohemian mirror]) and Toujours là (Prehension of the Distant Past) (Still Here [Prehension of the Distant Past]; all works 2025), which comprises an inflated rubber glove pressed up against a shower door. They project a new radical attempt at reinvention of long-dead Parisian bohemia. However, rather than a reinvigoration, the exhibition evokes a sense of mourning, the shower's titular 'prehension' standing as Franglais for a grasping after a bygone time through the spattered accumulation of limescale on glass.

Along the two longer walls of the space is a series of recent sculptures, 'Parallaxe Hôtel', shown for the first time here. The core of each work is a framed black and white photograph of the Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame or Sacré-Cœur, all appropriated from an abandoned hotel on the show's eponymous Rue de Paris. Each frame is adorned with an accumulation of discarded everyday objects: earphones and electrical cables intertwine with pages from old books and welded steel joints. Parallaxe Hôtel 5 (Paris, Notre Dame), for example, features the repeated motif of a cast polyurethane ball, lit from within and containing

scraps from Odin's night-time welding and joining. The artist tells me he produced these works beneath the dull LED glow of these spheres, unable to switch on the lights in his squatted workspace for fear of discovery.

The 12 works on view not only carry the isolation of abandoned spaces of capital – the office, the factory, the hotel – from which their anchoring material is taken, but also the overlay of accumulated objects gathered in their rehabilitating. Together, they foreground the sense of the 'parallax' in Odin's practice: the idea that looking askance at commodified space can reveal unforeseen truths. His sculptures glance awry at the city of Paris, in turn inviting the audience to look anew upon the city – from another perspective, from across the rim of the abandoned toilet.

Amid the hypercommodification of art and the artist in the early third millennium, the Dostoevskian underground man seems far removed from the image of the contemporary artist and their practice. As such, 'Rue de Paris' raises the dilemma of nostalgia: is the past best kept in ageing photographs attached to walls in budget hotel bathrooms? But there is a building chorus in France who claim that here, in Odin, is an artist who is resuscitating the old, dead bohemia of this city – someone who does, indeed, walk the talk.