

# D R E I

Coumba Samba

This Is Money  
November 17 – January 13, 2024

In *This Is Money* by Senegalese-American artist Coumba Samba, curls of language fall to the floor like wood shavings and are swept away. Meaning flakes, as the artist enmeshes individual and collectively intelligible references in a series of interventions more akin to veneers on the architecture of the gallery. Playing with the major theme of this exhibition—the question of to which extent the materials we choose to be surrounded by are significant, and how—Samba has created three kinds of hybrid domestic-presentational interiors, each fed by vessels of colour, and identified by anti-imperialist, self-referential, and performative features.

The artist's preceding interest in the deconstruction and staging of raw materials is exemplified by the fully-fledged aquatic tank (*Tank*, 2023) composed atop a shallow plinth swimming in a dark hardwood prefab floor. The imposition of this life-recreating mini oasis (configured to support the delicate Penny, one of the artist's two pet turtles, in absentia) is unsettled against the proud backdrop of swirling wood grain which, like a pattern of prize animal hide, professes not to re-create life, but to directly inhibit it and glorify the spoils.

In the second room of the space, a linoleum *tricolore* is politely laid out for trampling. Walking over the full scope of the solemn blue, innocent white, and blood-red French stripes, however, is confounded by a full encounter with *Wall*, 2023, two wall-mounted quadrilaterals to the *trompe l'oeil* effect of bearing the innards of the wall, insulation and all. *Wall*, 2023 is a sculpture of a concept. How to vandalise a space while keeping it pretty. Demonstration becomes decoration as the artist's desires are thwarted by material realities.

The slick black gloss on the floor of the third room is like a broad lacquered thumbnail, obediently reflecting the broad pool of light cast by the corporate in-ceiling fixture above. The dark pool eddies and billows with muted streaks of colour from the four paintings which flank the white walls (*Stripe*, 2023). The vertical colour fields—the pinks swatched from her mother's "feminine, boring, and comforting" apartment in the Bronx, and the brighter tones from the free stock image website *Pixabay*—mark a continuation of Samba's colour field experiments through which the artist manages to project strategies of assimilation onto domestic or otherwise functional objects removed from context. (See the earlier *Stripe Blinds*, 2023, a surreptitious "portrait" of the artist's elder sister as the individually painted slats of a reclaimed Venetian blind.)

Besides displacement, highlighting value paradoxes and the codification of memory emerge as Samba's preferred themes of engagement. "This Is Money" tells us the cash is there but doesn't let us see it for a second.

— Olamiju Fajemisin

Coumba Samba was born in 2000 in Harlem, New York City. She is based in London. 2023 saw her solo exhibition *Couture* at Galerina, and contributions to *World as diagram, work as dance* at Emalin, *Ways of Living #3* at Arcadia Missa (all London), and *Slow Dance (3)* at Stadtgalerie, Bern. Upcoming projects include the artist's first institutional solo exhibition at Cell Project Space in London (2024). *This Is Money* marks the artist first solo exhibition in Germany.

# DREI

## List of Works

1

*Turtle Tank*, 2023

Laminate flooring and plinth,  
water tank with equipment

Dimensions variable

Edition of 1 (+ 1 AP)

2

*Plastic*, 2023

Tri color vinyl flooring

Dimensions variable

Edition of 1 (+ 1 AP)

3

*Wall*, 2023

Insulation, wood

Dimensions variable

Edition of 1 (+ 1 AP)

4

*Stripe*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

150 × 120 cm / 59 × 47 ¼ in

5

*Stripe*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

150 × 120 cm / 59 × 47 ¼ in

6

*Stripe*, 2023

Oil stick and acrylic on canvas

200 × 150 cm / 78 ¾ × 59 in

7

*Stripe*, 2023

Oil stick and acrylic on canvas

200 × 290 cm / 78 ¾ × 114 ⅞ in

