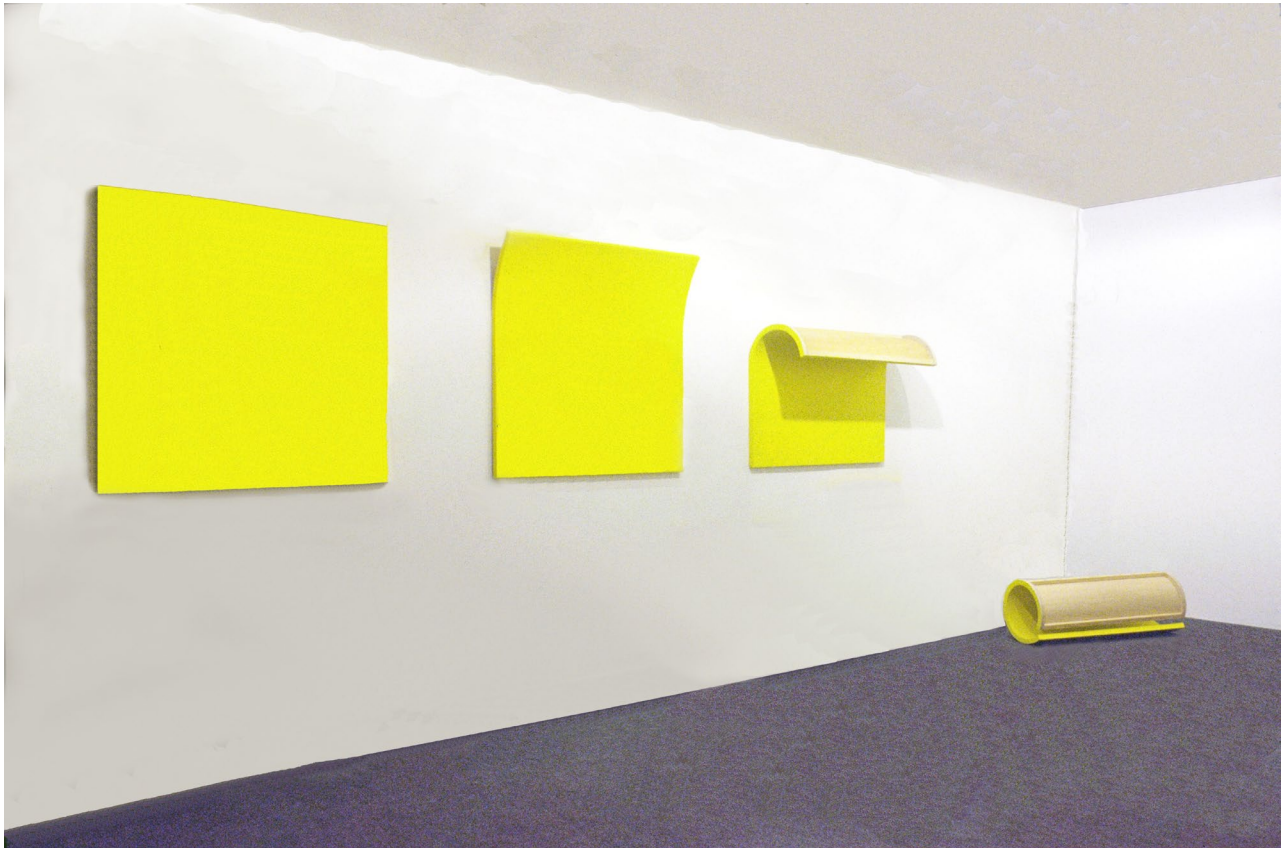


ANDRE STEMPEL – Amsterdam Retrospective at Merchant House

By Jacob John Shale, 17th April 2023



In John Cheever's 1969 novel *Bullet Park* there is a character named Hammer whose feelings of depression can be exorcised by him sitting in an ordinary room painted yellow. 'My life had begun again,' Hammer writes in his diary, 'and I could see, from this beginning, how far I had gone from any natural course.' I quote the passage not only because I relish any excuse to bring public awareness to Cheever's writing, but because I think a description of the revivifying properties of the colour yellow is an apposite introduction to the work of Andre Stempel, the nonagenarian French artist whose career is currently being commemorated by a retrospective exhibition at The Merchant House in Amsterdam.

Andre Stempel is a minimalist who creates paintings and sculptures depicting geometric shapes in sundry shades of yellow (for the past fifty years, he has married himself to this one colour). Some of Stempel's paintings are designed to look as though they are peeling away from the frame, the edges curling like a cheap paperback warped by too much sun. Others have had small chunks snipped from the corners. A human frivolity vandalises the mathematical orderliness of the shapes; two alien aesthetics are made to coexist in the same artwork.