

FABRICE GYGI: MAY 31ST – AUGUST 18TH
CURATED BY MARC-OLIVIER WAHLER, SWISS INSTITUTE, NY.

Web Text:

For his first one-person exhibition in the U.S., Fabrice Gygi, a European shooting star, has transformed the Swiss Institute's gallery space into a polling station. Fabrice Gygi presents his work the way that a dealer of illegal goods displays his objects on the street. He uses a mobile structure that can vanish in the wink of an eye and reappear just as quickly elsewhere - not seen, not captured, but always there. A structure too heavy, too static, and he is dead, he disappears. As in his first exhibitions, Fabrice Gygi still works with canvas tarpaulins, fitted pipes, inflatable modules, and wire mesh. He utilizes, for example: protective mattresses, which he attaches around columns or along handrails ; tents for covering a tribunal ; sand bags placed at the entrance to a museum ; fences made of tarpaulins that form a barrier. Besides the elaboration of a remarkably coherent plastic language, the great force of Fabrice Gygi's work resides in an ambiguity never quite resolved in his proposals. Is a podium made of grey-green canvas and wood designed for the use of wealthy generals, who have at their disposal a little sentry box hastily constructed for viewing a march of troops in the Valais Alps ? Or is it perhaps a mobile space for surveillance, where those same generals, taken prisoner by guerrillas, are being "exhibited" before entering the tent-tribunal ? But who decides : a representative of authority or of the resistance ? Is this before or after the coup d'état ?

The work shown at SI: a kit for voting with booth, ballot box, crowd barriers, benches, notice boards, flagpole, etc., shares the same ambiguity. For whom are we going to vote? Is there really a choice? Is it just an installation to please the media, as the die is already cast. Or is this kit a standard model of what should be a fair voting? Anyway, it's hard to decide. This state of indecisiveness makes such a work not pleasant at all, not friendly-user or relation oriented. Fabrice Gygi doesn't care. Attempts have been made to define art by its capacity to generate exchange, to "inhabit" the everyday, to forge links between different segments of reality. Certainly, much of today's art tastes "real" but, just as Canada Dry is not whiskey, so art is not reality. Or rather art, which is always furtive, constitutes a parallel reality. Artists like Gygi are not obsessed with organizing neighborly, even fruitful relations between these two realities. Never there where you expect them, they are constantly developing transfer movements, activating energy vectors and the constant oscillations that undermine our systems of interpretation. (Marc-Olivier Wahler)

Co-production: Fonds cantonal de décoration et d'art visuel, Geneva