

CLAIRE FONTAINE

Redemptions

Kent and Vicki Logan Gallery, 360 Kansas Street, San Francisco, CA 94103

January 22, 2013 to February 16, 2013

Following her residency at the Capp Street Project, Paris based collective artist Claire Fontaine, presents an exhibition entitled *Redemptions*. This exhibition is one of two inaugural exhibitions in the Wattis' new gallery space.

Redemptions is a singular art work that radically transforms the space of the gallery, and obliges the viewer to perceive the artwork as an oppressive presence, almost a threat. The installation consists of thousands of aluminum cans stashed in plastic bags, presenting itself as a metaphor but it also has an intense material and sculptural accumulation. Redeemed from their status as “trash,” the crowd of cans take on an unexpected beauty. Their hollowness reminds us of the disappeared liquids absorbed into multitudes of unknown bodies, and their material presence seeks to trace the paths of vagrants, homeless, and unemployed people that collect these empty shells.

Redemptions can also be interpreted in relation to Claire Fontaine's specific concern with the use value of objects in culture. Suspending for a moment the continuous cycle of exploitation of the cans (used, abandoned, melted and re-used virtually forever), the artist creates a form of redemption for them. Transforming them out of their value-less and meaningless condition into art objects, *Redemptions* also alludes to the possibility of salvation for people who are continuously evicted from the productive cycle and deprived of a destiny by poverty. Redemption can be seen here as both a material process of re-use, and a messianic hope for a superior social and human justice that will repair the wrongs.

In the third *Thesis on the Concept of History* Walter Benjamin writes of a redeemed humanity, for whom the totality of the past is quotable and nothing is lost for history. For Benjamin, redemption is defined as the full ownership and accessibility of history by everyone; this accessibility to both an individual and a collective destiny takes place under the sign of happiness. But this happiness isn't a new one. Rather, it's the familiar joy and fulfillment we are used to, that comes from habits, repetition, and familiar possibilities As he explains: “the kind of happiness that could arouse envy in

us exists only in the air we have breathed, among people we could have talked to, women who could have given themselves to us. In other words, our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption.”

During her residency, Claire Fontaine will instigate several events at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts:

On October 30, 2012 Claire Fontaine and art critic Hal Foster will speak for the CCA Graduate Lecture Series. The two will present a dialogue centered on the aesthetic possibilities of politically engaged art in the contemporary moment. More info here:

<http://www.wattis.org/calendar/graduate-lecture-series-claire-fontaine-h...>

On November 5th, 2012 Claire Fontaine will begin a six-night film series. The film series looks at the concept of the human strike, which the artist deals with extensively in her work, as expressed through both narrative and documentary film. The film series will culminate with a discussion with the artist. More info here: **<http://www.wattis.org/exhibitions/human-strike-within-moving-images>**

On January 23, 2012 following the opening of her project, Redemptions, at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, Claire Fontaine will be joined by Jason E. Smith for a public conversation, placing Redemptions in the context of her larger body of work. More info here:

<http://www.wattis.org/node/1807>

Claire Fontaine is a Paris-based collective artist, founded in 2004. After lifting her name from a popular brand of school notebooks, Claire Fontaine declared herself a "readymade artist" and began to elaborate a version of neo-conceptual art that often looks like other people's work. Working in neon, video, sculpture, painting and text, her practice can be described as an ongoing interrogation of the political impotence and the crisis of singularity that seem to define contemporary art today. But if the artist herself is the subjective equivalent of a urinal or a Brillo box—as displaced, deprived of its use value, and exchangeable as the products she makes—there is always the possibility of what she calls the "human strike." Claire Fontaine uses her freshness and youth to

make herself a whatever-singularity and an existential terrorist in search of subjective emancipation. She grows up among the ruins of the notion of authorship, experimenting with collective protocols of production, détournements, and the production of various devices for the sharing of intellectual and private property

Please note that this exhibition will be held at the Wattis' new Kent and Vicki Logan Gallery on 360 Kansas Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. Please call 415-703-9305 for more information.

All installation images from *Redemptions* were photographed by Johnna Arnold.

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