

Claire Fontaine & Lucie Fontaine : Exceptions

Exhibition: April 28th - June 3rd, 2012

Milwaukee, WI - The Green Gallery is pleased to present *Exceptions*, a collaborative exhibition by Claire Fontaine and Lucie Fontaine.

Over the last five years Claire Fontaine, a "Paris-based collective artist" and Lucie Fontaine, "an art employer who lives and works in Colmar" have been in dialogue at different times and places like Tel Aviv, Los Angeles, New York, Paris and Stockholm. Though both work with similar forms and formats they have entirely separate practices and modes of presentation. *Exceptions* is their first collaborative exhibition.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is a collaborative product of the Fontaine dialogue. The piece is a neon sign, which continuously alternates its message from "employer" to "employee." *Employer/Employee* at once utilizes the rhetorical themes of Lucie Fontaine and the typographic styles Claire Fontaine has deployed in previous works.

"Exceptions" also features Claire Fontaine's sound piece entitled *Clearstream/Whitenoise* (2007). This piece refers to Clearstream a banking system specialized in settling and ensuring transactions. *Clearstream/Whitenoise* functions noiselessly in the background, helping people to concentrate and inducing children to sleep. The white noise also has a particular frequency that absorbs all the other sounds and makes speech inaudible. In relation to the impossibility of discovering the truth about the international speculations surrounding us, the white noise is supposed to evoke the narcotic sound of a waterfall or a continuous refrain that doesn't signify anything but keeps us in a state of wordless regression.

Responding to Claire Fontaine's video *Suicide Stack* (2010) is Lucie Fontaine's piece *Stack got Stuck* (2012). Both pieces refer to tax protester Joseph Stack's piloting of a small plane into the Austin, Texas branch of the Internal Revenue Service. Stack's suicide mission resulted in the death of one IRS agent out of the 200 federal and non-federal employees at the office complex. *Stack got Stuck* – a bouquet of synthetic flowers presented on the floor and lighted from above – is a deliberate act of condolence to Joseph Stack's loved ones and friends as well as a signifier of a temporality and a disconnection from reality.

Accompanying the exhibition the artists will release a book entitled *Exceptions* published by the Green Gallery Press. The limited edition book includes Claire Fontaine's "Footnotes on the State of Exception" and Lucie Fontaine's "The State of Exception (After Claire Fontaine)".

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.

Lucie Fontaine is an art employer who lives and works in Colmar, France. Describing herself as an "art employer," Lucie Fontaine avoids harnessing her practice to a specific figure of the art field, preferring to cultivate a modus operandi driven solely by her relationship with two employees, a concept of self-generated labor similar to the Master-Slave dialectic presented by Hegel in his master-piece, The Phenomenology of Spirit. Her two art employees like to define her as the Jamie Lynn Spears of contemporary art: "pregnant and in search of easy success." Thus, Lucie Fontaine incarnates the following three assumptions: 1) The anti-hierarchical perception of the art field, where artists, curators, gallerists, collectors, editors and critics are all considered "players" in the same game. 2) The theory of expanded practice, in which the artist is not only considered the "creator" of an artwork, but also a cultural operator able to write, manage galleries, curate, collect, and so on. 3) The consideration of the entire discourse around the artwork: conception / creation / production / presentation / distribution / communication / promotion.