

Claire Fontaine exhibits monochrome paintings and readymade sculptures in “*Stop Seeking Approval*,” her second exhibition at Metro Pictures. A self-declared “readymade-artist” with a readymade name—Claire Fontaine being a popular brand of French notebooks—the works in the exhibition are a continuation of her *détournement* of existing artistic forms and strategies. Fontaine incorporates readily available security products to address the symbiosis of theft and protection, a recurring theme in her work. In the series Fresh Monochromes Fontaine uses what is referred to in theft prevention jargon an “anti-climb” paint. The paint, which never dries, is coated on walls and fences with the intention of discouraging endeavoring intruders by staining their clothes to make their criminal intent known, quite literally leaving them to be “caught red handed.” In this way Fontaine considers her paintings to be both defensive and aggressive as any viewer deliberately touching or even negligently brushing up against them is marked as a culprit. While she quotes the tradition of monochrome painting, Fontaine asserts that Fresh Monochromes are conceptual artworks, the three colors used—gray, red and black—dictated solely by the commercial availability of the paint and but most importantly because her primary interest lies not in contributing to the long-established form of monochrome painting, but rather in the latent hostility of her chosen medium.

The circulation of water and liquid is another dominant motif throughout the exhibition. Fontaine conceals a knife inside a zinc pipe ordinarily used as a rain gutter and covers its upper half in anti-climb paint in *Mr Skinny Legs*. For Fontaine the sculpture recalls the lullaby of the Itsy Bitsy Spider climbing it’s way up the waterspout, but reimagines the innocent children’s song as a violent metaphor as the spider, or intruder, climbs the pipe only to be washed away again and again. The painting *White Whale* explicitly evokes *Moby Dick*, water shooting into the air like a fountain from the whale’s blowhole, while *Untitled (Toilet Snorkel)* depicts a puzzling illustration for a device that would allow a person trapped in a fire to access clean air by breathing through a hose inside a toilet. This acerbic humor pervades Fontaine’s work and can be seen in *Untitled (Rotary Spike; Noir profond/Blanc/Rouge Paris/Bleu de Kossou)*. The sculpture is made with rotating razor spikes, a particularly brutal variant of barbed wire. Fontaine painted each of the spikes in what she refers to as a sequence of four “festive” colors, the strands of colorful razor spikes reminiscent of party streamers. In two videos based on the dogma of a self-help guru, *You Can Cut Anyone* and *Why Your Psychology Sucks*, Fontaine offers questionable solutions for staying happy, healthy and productive to her audience.

Claire Fontaine was founded in Paris in 2004. A “collective artist,” Fontaine rejects notions of authorship, activism and opposition. She addresses the problem of political impotence through what she calls “human strike,” which can encompass both micro and macro social (in)action. A prolific

writer, Fontaine's texts on contemporary political culture and discourse are essential for understanding the breadth of her project. Copies of her writings are available at the front desk of the gallery.

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