

EVARISTE RICHER : 'L'HYPOCENTRE'

15.5.2010__17.7.2010

Humans are accustomed to trying to gauge time and space by breaking them down into grids. Daily newspapers, geopolitical borders and devices that record the earth's spasms correspond to years, decades, and to the phenomena which play out within the earth's crust. Seismographs are one such device, and a topical one. Evariste Richer's second solo exhibition at the gallery is entitled "Hypocentre" - the term refers to the origins of earthquakes deep within the earth, the echo of which manifests itself on the surface as the epicentre of a tremor.

Evariste Richer's proposal is thus binary - a characteristic implicit in several of his other works - reproducing the sequence of causes and effects, which are by turns manifest and subliminal.

The French national newspaper *Le Monde* is transfigured in the piece "Sismogramme" (2010) (Seismogram), which is exhibited in the gallery's second room. The name of this daily newspaper could be deemed to describe, by metonymy (part for the whole), the planetary scale that the artist draws upon in his work. This series is made up of photographic prints of both sides of pages from a March edition of *Le Monde*, with a belated, somewhat "off the beat" announcement of the Chilean earthquake of 27 February 2010. The artist has discarded all the information, leaving only its framework.

A tongue-in-cheek structuralist diagramme, or geometrically arranged lines expressing the movement of the stars, or a drawing of a fossil? "Hypocentre" (2010) is a stromatolite, the first fossilised evidence of life dating back more than three billion years, into which the artist has embedded a graphite pencil. This stick functions like a tectonic force, deforming the concentric lines etched on the stromatolite. You only need to linger in front of "Geological Scale" (2009), at the very start of the exhibition, to get a notion of the dichotomy of the gestures proposed here. The names and dates have been removed from this document, which is a colorimetric chart of the geological time scale. Just as *Sismogramme* is a matrix, "Geological Scale" is a colour chart demarcating time.

Immediately, in the first room, chromatic memories of 20th-century painting insinuate themselves into the exhibition, from Mondrian's abstract use of colour, to its transcendence in the work of Blinky Palermo. The "aided" reference goes further. The notions of grid and chroma - which pervade the old academic debates between proponents of *disegno* and the Colourists - are impressed upon the retina like "conflicts of perception", optical phenomena acting on the observer's vision and psychology. Thus the most enigmatic piece in the exhibition, "Les Fonds" (2010) (Backgrounds), is made up of four monochrome paintings: black, blue, red and white. These four paintings are in fact facsimiles of the backgrounds that Brancusi strategically placed in his studio in order to enhance his sculptures and suspend them in the space.

The sculpture between the two pieces, "Cerveau" (2009) (Brain), could reduce the human phenomenon to a Cartesian mechanism. Evariste Richer has attempted to fashion a cube weighing 1.3 kg - the average weight of the human brain - out of pyrites, a mineral with a naturally cubic form. This reconstructed cube contains a piece of mosaic from Pompeii. Like a repressed memory, this element introduces mathematics of a spiritual order by exposing the geometrical beauty of the matter and of the memory that constitutes us.

Encased in glass (like the precious *Cerveau*), the sculpture "Lucifer Song" (2010) in the second room cohabits with "Sismogramme", which becomes its score as it plays muffled music,

with its bow placed between two spheres of fluorite. This specimen introduces the infraliminal music of telluric desires, which has sprung up out of the darkness of a cave where only those who are tuned into the epiphenomena of the matter enter.

texte: Joana Neves (translated by Jessie Hundleby)