

RANDOM GALLERY

Air de Paris & Galerie Praz-Delavallade
<http://www.random-gallery.com/>

Eau (Awe) du Champ 9/11

An Installation by Marcos Novak

9/11/2004

The Random Gallery concept proposes the work of art as a link in a chain of responses linking past to future, making both the work and the chain inherently open. The work is open because it must respond to a previous work, and thus reply to a condition not of its own choosing, and because it must then set a condition that is not of the choosing of the next work in the chain. The structure of overall chain is also unforeseeable – each artist can only put in place a set of premises for the next, but cannot foretell which will be accepted as challenges, which will be overcome as obstacles, and which will be ignored in the pursuit of a different agenda.

Creating a piece for such a circumstance is thus an effort in reading the threads implicit in the situation at hand, and at writing a new situation which reinterprets the initial conditions encountered into both a new work and a provocation.

Eau (Awe) du Champ 9/11 is a work that has grown from the circumstances at hand in a way that reinterprets the previous installations and sets certain conditions for the installations to follow. In some way, every creative and expressive work is a member of such a chain, or even of many such chains, but in Random Gallery this chaining of references is most explicit and prominent.

At the onset, certain givens are noted: Random Gallery is an interface, an *ultrathin*, between two galleries, Praz-Delavallade and *Air De Paris*. It is a space that opens to the street through a *Large Glass*, within which Ana Prvacki's contribution floats like a celestial *Bride* from another realm. The figure of Marcel Duchamp is instantly implied, giving the work its point of departure and setting in motion a series of transformations that result in an ever-evolving open work. But that is not all – the opening of the installation happens to be on 9/11/2004, three years after a day of notoriously world-altering violence and less than two months before elections whose outcome, though occurring in one country, is crucial to the whole world.

If *Air de Paris*, why not *Eau du Champ*? The first move is to establish a *matrix* of possibilities consisting of a grid of containers of local water and global messages, a field of containers forming a liquid crystal display that echoes Marcel Duchamp's "The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even." The Mary Poppins figure floating in the background is appropriated as the *Bride*, setting in motion a dynamic of two realms, the realm of the bride, above, and the realm of the bachelors, below, but also calling into action a distinct poetics drawn from Raymond Roussel and employed in the mixing of allusions to 9/11 within the discourse of the overall work.

From there, the linkages proliferate: from *Impressions d'Afrique* to the NASA Space Program, operations of enframing and chaining construct the piece through a Cagean computational strategy of composing parameters within containers. In a time of nanotechnology and biotechnology, of molecular problems and solutions, is the water always water? In a time of ominous white powders, are the powders in the piece innocent? What is transparency, actual or political, when it is used to obscure vision?

Having been launched, that piece is never complete – through the course of its installation, and in its future incarnations, new contents will be called upon for its containers, each time adding resonances to the list of references that are evoked.

Over the course of its stay at Random Gallery, the piece itself will reveal the identity of the next participant.