



we promise it's not dangerous...

THE EMILY
HARVEY
FOUNDATION

The Emily Harvey Foundation
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Read, Look! We promise it's not dangerous...

Curated by Laurence Bruguière, Charlotte Cosson, and Astrid de Maismont

May 4, 5, and 8, 2012, 1-7 pm

Opening Reception Friday May 4, 5:30-8:30 pm

With a performance by Louise Hervé & Chloé Maillet at 6:45 pm

Pythagoras's Daughter

The three French, New York City-based curators, Laurence Bruguière, Charlotte Cosson, and Astrid de Maismont are pleased to announce the multi-generational group show « Read, Look ! We promise it's not dangerous... » at the Emily Harvey Foundation. This exhibition gathers works by artists who, despite different geographical and temporal horizons, all challenge the format of the book within their artistic process. It presents works of art and essays from the collective General Idea (1969-1994, Toronto, New York), Pierre Huyghe (1962, Paris, New York), Liam Gillick (1964, London, New York), and Valeska Soares (1957, Sao Paulo, New York). The show also displays pieces by several “research-based artists” at the beginning of their carrier. Louise Hervé & Chloé Maillet (1981), Benoît Maire (1978), and Raphaël Zarka (1977) work in France, while Paul Chan (1973), Gareth Long (1979), Jill Magid (1973), and Emily Roysdon (1977) live in North America, mostly in New York City.

These oeuvres convey one of the most pregnant paradoxes of contemporary art. Since the 1960s and the so-called theoretical turn, artists have been writing more and more, and some of them even published books. At the same time, none of the artists in the exhibition stopped creating more crafted works of art. Although their questions are in line with Conceptual Art, they are far from the latter's attempt to get rid of the object. Rather, it seems that these artists' ideas need to be embodied in concrete ways. How do they merge these seemingly irreconcilable approaches?

Firstly, we can state that these writings are part of their overall production; as such, they have to be considered as works of art. Despite the plurality of means employed, texts – and often language in general – link the different works within each artist's opus. Moreover, these words offer new perspectives into their oeuvre. Also, when these artists treat the book as a medium, they do so in different ways. While they create books which we can all read, they can also conceive them as objects, sources of knowledge, or stages in an experimental progression.

This exhibition therefore connects each artist's publication to an object they produced. Viewers are prompted to apprehend these works of art in conjunction with their producers' essays, in order to highlight their status as works-in-progress. Indeed, their pieces, whether or not they take the shape of a book, are often thought of as a stage in a laboratory-like process where the viability of the concepts conveyed is tested. Both the experimentations run by the artists and the Fluxus-related history of the Foundation created a backdrop which supports our curatorial approach of challenging new ideas about these artists.

For instance, the artists gathered in "Read, Look!" could all be described as politically engaged in a variety of ways. Indeed, at both ends of the time frame covered by the exhibition, General Idea and Emily Roysdon edited magazines championing queer or homosexual claims. In his videos and essays about skateboarding, Raphaël Zarka challenged

the very notion of public space. Jill Magid, as she interviews spies from the Dutch Secret Service or as she is trained at night in the New York subway by a police officer, touches upon very sensitive contemporary subjects. The political perspectives of the other artists are not as explicit. Liam Gillick's or Pierre Huyghe's works of art, often opaque and carefully designed or staged, do not directly address critical sociological questions. Yet, one can state that their apparent withdrawal from any claim is nonetheless eloquently political. Their works of art, with their open-endedness and preoccupation with the potential of a given situation, are precisely concerned with the viewer's attempt to understand and think on his own. Ultimately, the new generation of artists displayed in "Read, Look!" seems more concerned with ideas, narration and knowledge than with strikes or political statements. Paul Chan, Louise Hervé & Chloé Maillet, Gareth Long, Benoît Maire and Raphaël Zarka mostly are what can be called "research-based artists", whose practices are rooted in scholarly and amateur researches. The poetry of Valeska Soares's plays on words or displays of recycled books also appear to be far away from any political claim. Even though these practices are at first sight harmless, what could be more politically engaged than championing erudition and books in our world ruled by short-term profits and high efficiency?

Finally, the open-endedness of most of the art practices displayed here are an appeal for the viewer to create webs of signification, on the top of the ones artists have already produced. Spectators can for instance follow the path of Borges's – and particularly of his novel *Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote* – influence throughout the exhibition. We invite you to read and look! And, we promise, it's not dangerous...

Charlotte Cosson