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Claire Fontaine
“Working Together”

Paris-based collective artist Claire Fontaine presents “Working Together,” her first exhibition at Metro Pictures. Founded in 2004 Fontaine lifted her name from a brand of French notebooks and stationery to develop a practice largely based on the elaboration of existing forms and materials. In an attempt to identify the transformed position of “the artist” Fontaine conceived the “ready-made artist,” which considers the contemporary artist as equivalent to the urinal or Brillo Box. Examining society’s visible and invisible cooperative systems, “Working Together” focuses on the delicate balance between independence and complicity.

The sculptures, videos, paintings and neon signs in the exhibition explore conflict as an inherent aspect of working together while also addressing cooperation as essential to both struggle and daily life. *Joke Paintings (Richard and Marc) (2011)*, takes excerpts from a conversation published in a popular fashion magazine between artist Richard Prince and designer Marc Jacobs on the occasion of Prince’s contribution to Luis Vuitton’s 2008 collection. Fontaine explains, “a specific lexicon, ethics, vision of life, art and work emerge from the lines of the text silkscreened on the painted surfaces, enlightening the disquieting complicity between fashion and art.” *Untitled (2011)* is composed of a Newton’s Cradle—a pendulum-like “executive toy” comprising a series of metal balls suspended on a frame—with the word “networking” engraved on its side. Originally produced by Lehman Brothers, this modified ready-made is adjusted to remain in perpetual motion.

Two new video works included in the show are *Situations (2011)* and *The Assistants (2011)*. Speaking of the former Fontaine says, “Situations indiscriminately diffuses information to the viewer on how to behave in a street fight.” The latter takes its title from a 2007 text by Giorgio Agamben, which describes assistants as imperfect “[...] good giants, fairies, and capricious genies [...]” whom the protagonists of children’s stories owe their happily ever afters to. As Agamben notes, Walter Benjamin defines the assistant as the hunchback, “the representative of the forgotten,” and Sufi Ibn al-‘Arabi as the “translator.” Read aloud by London-based poet Douglas Park, *The Assistants* is a self-portrait of the artist, but also an enigmatic warning: “everything that now appears debased and worthless to us is the currency that we will have to redeem on the last day.” Fontaine says, “the assistants translate and deliver a message of freedom without understanding it, they are foreigners, inadequate, idle, but they are the only ones that can save us.”

Claire Fontaine’s work is currently featured in: “Untitled (12th Istanbul Biennial), 2011”; “Rewriting Worlds: The Fourth Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art”; “Temporary Beauty: Art, Crisis, Change & The Office of Non-Compliance,” Dublin Contemporary 2011. Her recent one-person exhibitions include: “P.I.G.S.,” MUSAC, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Spain; “Future Tense,” Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City; “Economies,” Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; and “Claire Fontaine: The Exhibition Formerly Known As Passengers,” CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco. Fontaine has participated in group exhibitions that include: “Seconde Main,” Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; “The Traveling Show,” La Colección Jumex, Mexico City; and “Audio, Video, Disco,” Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich.

Gallery hours: 10-6 pm, Tuesday – Saturday

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