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Meessen De Clercq

EVARISTE RICHER
Avalanche

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meessendeclercq.com

Avalanche, the work presented in the Wunderkammer, is one by Evariste Richer, a version of which was shown in Vassivière then at Art Basel in the Parcours section last June. It consists of approximately 45,000 dice placed on the ground, seemingly placed at random, yet in a very precise arrangement, reproducing an image of an avalanche; the six-sides of the dice correspond to the six shades of grey in the photo of an avalanche chosen by the artist (1 being almost white, 6 being almost black). They are placed side by side without being glued (to each other or to the ground), which gives a sense of fragility to the whole work, as it is at risk of being shattered by some clumsy foot. By adopting a position with their back to the street, visitors can reconstruct a raster image into a kind of optical intoxication. The artist, sensitive to the notion of chance, its triggering, its consequences, is proposing here a work that can be read in many ways.

Games of chance have roots in all cultures in every era. Using the die as the base material, the gaming accessory par excellence, Richer perfectly combines object and subject. An avalanche is a contingent phenomenon and its triggering is subject to many factors that seem to be as much a matter of chance as a roll of the dice. One thinks here of course the poem by Mallarmé and his famous phrase "*A roll of the dice will never abolish chance*" but in a natural link, of the eponymous work of Marcel Broodthaers. One can also legitimately allude to the major work *Un, Eins, One* by Robert Filliou consisting of thousands of dice of different sizes and colours, all marked with a single "1" and thrown randomly on the floor. However the work of Richer is very different: the dice have come straight from the factory and are positioned one by one in a methodical sequence with the patience of a monk. The effect of cloud-like vibration is conferred by the cumulative mass of the dice; we cannot not detect an actual epicenter, giving it a hazy appearance. The dice, all of equal size, do not seem to concentrate around a point but to be in a sliding movement and growing constantly.

In his work, the artist often analyses and breaks down the suprahuman events that govern our existence and have a fundamental impact on our individual destiny. By turning his attention on the one hand to gaming which symbolizes entertainment, and on the other hand, to a violent manifestation of nature, Richer imparts a pronounced tension to the work that is accentuated by the black/white contrast of the dice as well as by their density. It seems that the avalanche is about to unleash its destructive energy, the dispersion of the cubic particles is imminent and a tremendous energy will be released