



The Sirens' Stage
An exhibition by Etienne Chambaud in collaboration with
critic Vincent Normand

Exhibition dates: 19.03.2010 – 24.04.2010

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*Stay, illusion !
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me.
The tablet shouts, it cries aloud.
Look, look at what I have seen in written letters,
A song speaking aloud !*

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The Sirens' Stage is an exhibition by Etienne Chambaud in the framework of *Permanent Exhibition, Temporary Collections*, a theoretical project by Vincent Normand.

The Sirens' Stage is developed by the David Roberts Art Foundation in London, Kadist Art Foundation in Paris and Nomas Foundation in Rome. The three exhibitions, interpreted in a different language almost simultaneously at each Foundation (*The Sirens' Stage / Le Stade des Sirènes / Lo stato delle sirene*), are based on mechanisms of writing and transcription. Translation should be considered both the medium and the shared language of the whole project.

The exhibition takes its title from the mythological sirens' song which invents itself in the ear of its addressee. Here *The Sirens' Stage* is conceived as a group of "written objects": absent but described, motionless but translated, unique but repeated, mute but transcribed. Excluded from the present time, they only exist in the moment of their transmission into language. Radically detached from the realm of authenticity, each of the three exhibitions attempts to frame a series of exclusions separations and procedures of dispossession. With the promise of producing its own absence as well as the absence of the two other exhibitions' experiences, *The Sirens' Stage* is a misunderstanding in construction, a negative space failing to be circumscribed.

The Sirens' Stage is made up of an installation of *Figures*, a group of named, empty plinths (*The Reef*), which acts as a space from which are emitted layers of speech and text. Actors occasionally interact with this space, reading, memorising and rehearsing the fragments of a script. Sometimes *The Reef* remains silent. A group of framed *Instruction Pieces* outlines a series of gestures and acts. These instructions change over the course of the exhibition. A writer (*The Copyist*), present at all times, transcribes the evolution of the exhibition day after day. The Foundation's collection is included through a series of photographs of its storage, in which all crates are named (*Stock Figures*). A written contract, drawn up by a lawyer, outlines the conditions for the exchange and the conservation of copies of sculptures between the three Foundations' collections (*The*



Exchange (The Horse, the Cobblestone, Above the Weather)).

The Sirens' Stage is a collection of fragmentary narratives, playing with accumulations and disappearances, survivals and hauntings. The exhibition stages the oblivion and the burial of its original sources, meanings and forms under its own echoes, misunderstandings, partial interpretations and incomplete memories. Between mute traces and promises of an act of speech, polyphony and cacophony, transcription and oral tradition, the remains of the song of these « sirens » stand for fossils organising their own archaeology.

The Reef

At once a monument in ruins, a stage under construction and a support for absent objects, *The Reef* is a group of empty plinths. All of them are named after abstract figures, conceptual characters, places, usual objects or objects of thought. Some are especially designed and produced for the exhibition, others are plinths used by the Foundation for its collection. Actors come to *The Reef* to memorise and rehearse a written script. Created for the exhibition, this written script includes theoretical and descriptive monologues, and excerpts from books or movies. The script is not public: it solely exists in the actors' performances. Thus, the time of the exhibition precedes the time of a performance that will never occur. Some plinths form the places or show the traces of more specific actions (from time to time a nude model poses on *The Missing Part*, *The Remains* is progressively hollowed out and supports its own residues, *The Work I (The Cube)* is marked by the evidence of its successive displacements), others refer to future or potential uses (*The Gift*, *The Hanger*).

The Copyist

The Copyist, one of the figures from *The Reef*, is constantly present in the space inserting the retrospective time of the exhibition within its own duration. Different writers successively embody *The Copyist*: they describe what is happening in the exhibition and transliterate its course in the guise of a script. As in a log book, *The Copyist's* style is neutral, limited in the objective recording of the information he or she directly experiences. By writing facts as much as transcribing them, *The Copyist* is both the ideal viewer of the exhibition and its ambiguous author. Pages are displayed in the exhibition space as they are written and form the body of a book to be published (Paraguay Press, Paris, graphic design by Åbake). The editors and graphic designers of this book may come during the exhibition to start editing the pages directly on the walls.

Instruction Pieces

The *Instruction Pieces* are performative statements, signed and framed. They score a group of gestures and actions as much as they document them. They are the only apparent sign of an authority in the exhibition, paradoxically manifesting its limits.

Stock Figures

In a series of photographs of the Foundation's storage, the crates have been renamed, as an echo to the plinths of *The Reef*. Images of a permanent memory, the *Stock Figures* point in an allegorical way towards the layers of discourse, language, writing and speech that gather as sediments in the exhibition space.

The Exchange (The Horse, the Cobblestone, Above the Weather)

A series of contracts established with lawyer Daniel McClean frames the conditions of exhibition and conservation of sculptures exchanged between the collections of the three Foundations.

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*There are so many things that one would hope might never be fathomed,
Or only partially,
And not as one might expect.
What communication do you desire, or know, or simply pretend?
Which real project has been lost?*
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Notes to editors

Etienne Chambaud (born France, 1980) lives and works in Paris. He is represented by Labor, Mexico City. Recent solo exhibitions include: *The Certificates* (with Nina Beier), CroyNielsen, Berlin (2010); *Mais où est donc Ornicar*, Espace Blank (curated by Christine Macel), Paris (2009); *Color Suite*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2009). Recent group exhibitions include: *The Store*, Artissima, Turin (curated by Adam Carr) (2009); *Un Nouveau Festival!*, Centre George Pompidou, Paris (curated by Bernard Blistène) (2009).

Vincent Normand (born France, 1985) is a writer and curator based in Paris and Lausanne. Co-editor of the magazine *Criticism*, his texts are published in *Kaleidoscope*, *May* or *Frog*. He is initiating *Permanent Exhibition*, *Temporary Collections*, a theoretical itinerant structure that inaugurates its program with this collaboration with Etienne Chambaud.

The Sirens' Stage is curated by Vincent Honoré, Artistic Director and Gaia Tedone, Assistant Curator, David Roberts Art Foundation, London.

The exhibition is supported in London by The French Institute, London and CULTURESFRANCE.



Exhibition Dates:

David Roberts Art Foundation: London, March 19 - April 24, 2010

Kadist Art Foundation: Paris, April 2 – May 2, 2010

Nomas Foundation: Rome, April 15 - May 14, 2010

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