

# GALERIE JEROME DE NOIRMONT

PRESS RELEASE

## **ALREADY-MADE?** **February 4<sup>th</sup> – March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

In 1913, Marcel Duchamp came up with the artistic concept of *ready-made*, defining it as an “ordinary object elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist”. The original attitude - which still governs the definition of what is strictly considered to be *ready-made* today - consists of choosing a manufactured object and designating it as a work of art.

This approach, which Marcel Duchamp himself developed further in order to produce “aided ready-made” works which involve only minimal intervention on the part of the artist, or “reciprocal ready-made” works which underline the fundamental antinomy between art and the ready-made concept, is an underlying factor in the way many modern artists work, whether or not they admit to its influence, and has made a wide-ranging contribution to the essentially conceptual nature of many contemporary works.

The *Already-Made?* exhibition, which is being held at the gallery from February 4<sup>th</sup> to March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011, precisely highlights **the scale and diversity of this contemporary grasping of the ready-made concept, whether involving the assembly of found objects, using objects for purposes other than those for which they were designed or a conception focussing on the object's symbolic and metaphorical value...**

The selection draws solely upon contemporary works owned by the gallery from artists who use the object as a piece of ready-made art on a recurring or one-off basis. Thus the exhibition revolves around both **important past works and others which are new and previously unseen** by artists represented by the gallery:

Valérie BELIN  
Fabrice HYBER  
Jeff KOONS  
David MACH  
McDERMOTT & McGOUGH  
PIERRE et GILLES  
Benjamin SABATIER

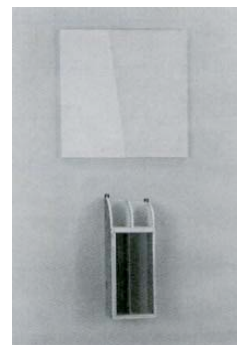
whilst at the same time highlighting other contemporary object-based approaches and techniques, with **major works** by:

John M. ARMLEDER  
collaboration BASQUIAT – CHIA - WARHOL  
BEN  
Subodh GUPTA  
Cady NOLAND  
Not VITAL

There are very few *ready-mades* in the strictest sense in art today. The use of this term to designate contemporary works applies mainly to “aided ready-made” works, by many artists who deliberately restrict themselves to a minimal artistic intervention in order to echo Marcel Duchamp's

technique, putting across themes in which the work's conceptual value is more important than its aesthetic or artistic value.

**John M. ARMLEDER** was born in Switzerland and is a worthy heir to both the Dadaist spirit and the Fluxus group, perfectly embodying the spirit of this approach and technique, coming up with a language all of his own which mingles abstraction and the reuse of furniture, especially in his key earlier **Furniture-Sculpture** series involving works that lie somewhere between painting and sculpture. Just like the one exhibited here, which dates from **1987** and juxtaposes a simple wooden shelf used as a *ready-made* with an abstract canvas, this series of works saw the artist take his place as part of the post-modern scene for once and for all, highlighting a way of working which had started off with performances in the 1970s and played on the integration and disruption of various places.



Even so, most of the contemporary artists who take this kind of conceptual approach to their work do still feel the need to divert the object away from its primary function in order to flesh out their approaches to their work. This is what is happening with the **P.O.F.s (Prototypes d'Objets en Fonctionnement - Prototypes of Working Objects)** which **Fabrice HYBER** has been creating since **1991** and their shapes engender new attitudes, for instance there is *p.o.f. no. 2 – Deep Narcissus*, a diving mask where the glass has been replaced by a mirror on the inside, or *p.o.f. no. 27 – To See What's Underneath* (1997) where a crutch fitted with a rear-view mirror suggests a rather facetious game... The artist does not merely change the way in which the object is seen, as Marcel Duchamp had done with the bottle rack and the urinal, he has taken things a step further by changing the functionality of the object into something new, out of his own imagination.

Other examples of this “aided ready-made” which will be on display include the **brand-new sculptures by Benjamin SABATIER**, a young artist whose entire approach to his work revolves around the precepts of the mass economy and consumer society applied to artistic creation. After *Colonnes La Redoute* or *Colonnes Livre de Poche* columns, and with the same care over economical use of resources, he is now unveiling his **Bases** (2010), made up of concrete cubes the weight of which crushes cans, pots of paint and blankets.

Alongside these the gallery will be exhibiting **an amazing collaboration between BASQUIAT, CHIA and WARHOL from 1985, Hood & Coathanger**, dedicated to the American couturier Halston and **a painted wooden stool from 1969, gleefully entitled Ma Mère a de l'Arthrose (My Mother Has Osteoarthritis) by BEN**, who is the inspiration for a certain ironic vision of art which hijacks all of the surrounding objects by adding his manifest slogans to them, so that the object becomes both a work of art and a medium for an artistic thought.

Even before it appeared as *ready-made* in the work of Duchamp and before it was diverted by the Dadaists and Surrealists for their own ends, the object had already been at the heart of artistic creation because of its hidden meaning, its metaphorical or symbolic value or even as a philosophical allegory, as in the still life or vanitas. In the Dada spirit and Surrealism, it is precisely this subjective and metaphorical value of the object which prevails; its aesthetic no longer matters and so the artist leads the spectator towards perceiving the work rather than seeing it.



Beyond being a way of dating their timeless creative work, it is this subversive use of the object that interest **MCDERMOTT & MCGOUGH** in some of their **photographic work**, for instance in *The Property Of Her Majesty The Queen*,

1922, a 1993 palladium which depicts 2 rolls of toilet paper...

In another way, it is also by taking a familiar object out of its usual context in order to give it a certain abstraction, as here with ***Untitled (Plaster of Paris) from 1999*** which shows a monumental pipe, that the Swiss artist **Not VITAL** expresses his ideas about the interference between individual and collective identity, between the natural and the cultural; here the strength of our collective memory allows the spectator to perceive the meaning of the work.

Even so, although Duchamp's ready-made concept has a considerable influence on artistic creation today, this is largely linked to the way that the portrayal of the object has been given such a vital position in both Pop Art and all the contemporary artistic techniques that have emerged from it. In the consumer society embodied by 1950s and 1960s in America, Pop Art hijacks objects and uses them for its own ends as part of an approach which goes much further than Duchamp's ready-made concept. The objects portrayed in works of the period do not merely symbolically illustrate society's shining new modernity, i.e. "progress", they are also there because of their aesthetic value as at the time artists were citing popular culture as a major source of inspiration. Many contemporary artists believe that the ready-made concept still remains focussed on an investment of the metaphorical dimension of the object, which often asks the spectator to call upon his or her own experience and thus to invest emotionally in the work in a very personal way.

In order to express her critique of the "American way of life" as peddled by the media, **Cady NOLAND** uses everyday consumer objects and/or images which have many connotations and are symbolically and metaphorically significant, assembling or bringing them together which makes up the arena for a social archaeology that sets out to expose the idea of the American dream. The historic work exhibited here, ***Model For Entropy (1984)***, is made up of a baseball bat, a basketball, an American football helmet and a book on sports sociology...

The work of **Jeff KOONS** falls typically within the bounds of this contemporary conception of *ready-made*, whether including the object in its entirety, as in the *Popeye Sculpture* series exhibited at the gallery in September - October, or whether it hijacks it, as is the case here with ***Ice Bucket (1986)***, a faithful stainless steel replica of a classic silver ice bucket, from the *Luxury And Degradation* series, in which the artist railed against the way that alcohol advertising slogans misleadingly promise that anyone can afford luxury. It is the subversive choice of the material which gives the work its meaning.



This "aesthetic of communication" applies in a similar way to the work of **Subodh GUPTA**, who also uses stainless steel kitchen utensils to put across his ideas about the development of Indian society, as here in the painting ***Untitled (from Series of the Idol Thief) I*** from 2006.

This use of the object solely for its representational power is actually expressed in many different ways in the creative work of contemporary artists, whether it determines the very essence of the work or merely underlies its genesis.

**MCDERMOTT & MCGOUGH** have created a number of **new painted wooden sculptures**, which are exact copies of boxes of the Del Monte and Campbell tinned foods previously used by Warhol,

here artificially filled with sentimental comic strips, also in their own way railing against the hidden foibles of the “American way of life”.



Because he started his career as a sculptor with a number of monumental installations, **David Mach** is well aware of the way in which objects can take on a “spectacular” aspect and he knowingly draws upon this in the **amazing assemblies** he makes out of coat-hangers, matches or, as here in ***Dominatrix* (2004)**, a sculpture of a woman standing upright and ironically entitled as an allusion to the dominos of which she is made up, or in his equally fascinating collages of postcards which make up a portrait such as ***Laughing Buddha* (2006)**.

The highly specific work of **Pierre and Gilles** is part of a contemporary development of the History of the Art of the Portrait, so it always calls upon the object either as part of the settings for their compositions or because of its classic symbolism in mythological and religious scenes.

What is more amazing here, in this **brand-new piece** entitled ***Goldorak* (2010)**, the object becomes the actual subject of the portrait, with the toy alone powerfully embodying the hero of whom it endows every attribute.

This conceptualisation of the object has given many forms of contemporary artistic expression a purely conceptual interest, far-removed from any aesthetic research and has become part of a certain “visual indifference” which Duchamp had already proclaimed. On the contrary, there are some artists who are now underlining the representational power of the object grasped as *ready-made*, calling upon the sole visual aspect of the object in order to define the work, taking an approach to their work which more closely resembles the emergence of new aesthetic codes. Indeed, this is what guided **Valérie Belin** when she was photographing her series of ***Engines*** in 2002, ***Pallets*** and ***Safes*** in 2005, some images of which are exhibited here.

*Ready-mades* were acts set by their creator, as a rupture within the history of art are thus today topics of multiple echoes unveiling themselves as many doors opened on very different artistic interpretation of the object. Even so, all of these facets of contemporary *ready-made* come together in the fact that “**it is the viewer who makes the work**”, a concept which Marcel Duchamp laid down right from the outset. As Koons so rightly underlines, nowadays “the objects are secondary; they are simply vehicles which stimulate and activate the viewer’s mind and body”. It is probably this invitation to the public, the way that the importance of the role played by the viewer lies at the very heart of the work, which today allows art to resonate with audiences of all kinds and to occupy a key role in contemporary society.

**Press Contact:** Emmanuelle de Noirmont

**300 dpi** visuals available on our website at [www.denoirmont.com](http://www.denoirmont.com)

with the following codes: **Username = am12 / Pass = made**

Artists represented by the gallery biographies, literatures and exhibitions lists available on our website.

**Gallery opening hours:** Monday – Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**Preview:** Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 6 to 9 p.m. (by invitation)

38, AVENUE MATIGNON - 75008 PARIS - TÉL. : +33 (0)1 42 89 89 00 - FAX : +33 (0)1 42 89 89 03

ART & CONFRONTATION S.A.R.L. AU CAPITAL DE 833.196 € - R.C.S. PARIS B 393 323 878

SIRET 393 323 878 00024 - APE 4779Z - N° TVA FR 14 393 323 878

[info@denoirmont.com](mailto:info@denoirmont.com) - [www.denoirmont.com](http://www.denoirmont.com)