

██████████

Press Release


Curators' Series #5. Bouvard and Pécuchet's Compendious Quest for Beauty.

Exhibition dates: 05.04.12 – 09.06.12

Opening Reception: 04.04.2012 from 6.30 pm



Mark Manders. *Figure with Book and Fake Dictionaries* 2009. David Roberts Collection, London



Chris Sharp and Simone Menegoi are the fifth guest curators invited by D.R.A.F. to be part of the Curators' Series. The title for the exhibition is taken from Gustave Flaubert's last, unfinished novel where two Parisian copyists Bouvard and Pécuchet meet, become dear friends, and stoke each other's curiosity to know the world and its rational, post-Enlightenment ways better. They become autodidacts of a dozen different orders, teaching themselves everything from agriculture to medicine. However, despite their best intellectual intentions, any application of the often contradictory knowledge they recklessly accumulate almost always results in confusion, failure or disaster. Yet success is not entirely elusive. One moment a given principle works, whereas in the next it doesn't. This in turn leads them to continually cry in vain, *Où est la règle?* (Where is the rule?), as if the clarity and understanding of the supposedly knowable world promised by the Age of Reason were but a farce.

In a time when any one individual can access and amass vast and even arcane stores of information, Flaubert's hapless antiheroes seem to be both prescient harbingers and symbols of our era. Their headlong approach can also be said to implicitly describe a good portion of what takes place in contemporary art today, in which we are faced with an obscure and at times questionable expertise on a bewildering multiplicity of subjects. Seeking to render this implicit tendency explicit and examine its implications, *Bouvard and Pécuchet's Compendious Quest for Beauty* sees curators Simone Menegoi and Chris Sharp apply the hasty methodology of the perplexed copyists to the field of curating. By effectively becoming Bouvard and Pécuchet, they liberally allow themselves to engage in the foredoomed hubris of trying to define one of the most protean and subjective qualities of all: *beauty*. They do so by using a format that is a byproduct of the Enlightenment itself: the exhibition.

The selection of works in the exhibition was deliberately limited to D.R.A.F.'s vast and variegated collection of more than 1800 works. The curators outlined ten categories of beauty with the intention of disobeying and scrambling the traditional history of aesthetics. Indeed, the art works presented in the show are arranged within unwieldy and contradictory criteria, which range from egregious misreading to mutual contradiction and from poetic fancy to traditionally acceptable interpretation. Categories of beauty include: Classic; Expressive; Female Nude; Memento Mori; Realism; Landscape; Moral; Outsider art; Abstraction; and the Sublime.

Artists: Caroline Achaintre, Phyllida Barlow, Yto Barrada, Morton Bartlett, Bram Bogart, Boyle Family, Sir Frank Brangwyn, Peter Buggenhout, Gerard Byrne, Carter, Susan Collis, George Condo, John Currin, Jules Dalou, Thomas Demand, VALIE EXPORT, Graham Hudson, Tamara De Lempicka, Roy Lichtenstein, Mark Manders, Susan Meiselas, Marlo Pascual, Grayson Perry, Seth Pick, Man Ray, Santiago Sierra, David Shrigley, Jamie Shovlin, Andreas Slominski, Oscar Tuazon, Gavin Turk, and Douglas White.

The exhibition is supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England





Notes to editors

About Chris Sharp and Simone Menegoi

Simone Menegoi (b.1970) is a critic and curator based in Verona. He writes for *Kaleidoscope* magazine and *artforum.com*. Together with Cecilia Canziani, he curates ZegnArt, a program of residencies and commissions of public artworks in emerging countries funded by Ermenegildo Zegna Group. From 1997 to 2003 he worked in the field of contemporary art mainly as a journalist: as an editor for *Tema Celeste* and *Il Giornale dell'Arte*, as well as a number of art and design magazines, and the daily *Corriere della Sera*. From 2006 to 2008, he wrote the "Focus" column in *Mousse magazine*. Since 2005, he has curated exhibitions for private galleries and public venues in Italy and abroad. Recent exhibitions include, *LE SILENCE Une fiction*, at Nouveau Musée National de Monaco – Villa Paloma, Monaco, 2012 ; *Cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione: or, The Drawing Machines*, at Galerija Gregor Podnar, Berlin, *Scavi* at the French Cultural Centre of Milan, all 2010; *It Rests by Changing* at Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan, and *PresentFuture* at Artissima Contemporary Art Fair, Turin, both 2009. In 2010-2011 he was advisor for "Back to the Future", a section of Artissima devoted to pioneering but underestimated artists from the '60 and the '70. In 2008-2009 he curated the cycle of screening and talks *Una certa idea dell'Italia* at Interzona, Verona. In 2008 he was the resident curator at La Galerie (Noisy-Le-Sec, Paris), where he organized the exhibition *Fables du doute*. He contributed a number of essays to the publications of both Italian and foreign institutions, writing about the work of, among others, Becky Beasley, Ulla von Brandenburg, Hubert Duprat, Attila Csörgö, Flavio Favelli, Mark Lewis, Roman Ondák, Gyan Panchal.

Chris Sharp (b. 1974) is a writer and independent curator based in Paris. Recent exhibitions and projects include, *Antic Measures*, Galerija Gregor Podnar, 2011; *Under Destruction*, co-curated with Gianni Jetzer, at The Swiss Institute New York, 2011; *The Moment Pleasantly Frightful*, Laura Bartlett Gallery, 2011; the performance *13 Pieces, 17 Feet*, in collaboration with Becky Beasley at the Serpentine Gallery, September 2010; *Still Vast Reserves*, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, 2010, co-curated with Emily Cormack and Alexie Glass-Cantor; *In Which the Wind is Also a Protagonist*, La générale en manufacture, France, 2010; *The Zero Budget Biennial 2009-10*, co-curated with Joanna Fiduccia, which traveled from Paris to Milan, London, and Berlin; and a solo survey of the work of Alexander Gutke at Culturgest, Porto, 2009. He is editor-at-large of *Kaleidoscope magazine*, a contributing editor of *Art Review*, and his writing has appeared in magazines and on-line publications including *Frieze*, *Afterall*, *Mousse*, *Metropolis M*, and *Art-Agenda*, among many others. He has contributed texts to publications on the work of artists such as Simon Dybbroe Møller, Dane Mitchell, Roman Ondák, Michael Dean, Christian Andersson, Ian Kiaer, Nina Canell, Lara Favaretto, Nina Beier and Owen Land among many others for such institutions as Moderna Museet, Malmö, Hamburg Kunstverein, Kunsthalle Bern, and the Sculpture Center, New York. He is currently preparing *A Necessarily Incomplete Anthology of Withdrawal* to be published by Archive Books, Berlin.



About D.R.A.F.

D.R.A.F.: exhibiting, producing, sharing. A platform dedicated to critical dialogues and experiments, directed and curated by Vincent Honoré. The David Roberts Art Foundation Limited is a registered charity in England and Wales (No. 1119738) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (No. 6051439) at 25 Gosfield Street, London, W1W 6HQ. It is proudly supported by the Edinburgh House Estates group of companies.

111 Great Titchfield Street, London W1W 6RY | Tel: 44 (0)20 7637 0868
Tue – Fri 10am -6pm, Sat 11am – 4pm | www.davidrobertsartfoundation.com