

17 NOVEMBER - 21 DECEMBER 2006
OPENING 16TH NOVEMBER 2006

OLAV WESTPHALEN LE GRAND BLANC (THE BIG WHITE)

The unfortunate snowman, the proverbial figure of disastrous Christmases thanks to ridiculous and childish customs and beliefs, is the unifying figure that makes up an album of stylised images proposed by Olav Westphalen. The four imposing winter sculptures proposed by the artist put forward several hypotheses. I will reassure you immediately. None of them would seriously survive on an icy road... Nevertheless, I cannot help thinking of the initial, global and fictional, iconographic research to create an *Encyclopaedia of Snowmen*. This would not be a human publication dedicated to micro-details in a macro-climate, but rather a comprehensive survey of a specific world, seen from within; that of the snowmen. Let us imagine this parallel world, this empire of the snowmen, which only partly, and even then accidentally, communicate with the outside world and enter into the history of humanity. Imagine that at the heart of this reality an encyclopaedic dream is born, one of creating and scientifically describing, with the coldness and patience that characterise this strange climate, the history, geography, religion, physical nature, literature, sexuality, humour and economy of this parallel world, which is at once, playful, caricature, crystalline, folkloric and wintry. The title of this encyclopaedia would obviously be *The Big White*. In the «science» volume, a chapter would be devoted to the Theory of Chaos. We remark that if the silhouettes of the snowmen prove to be simple, over-stylised, compatible with Euclidian physics then by contrast the crystals of snow and ice are an uncontrollable phenomena, asserting their physical reality through their fractured dimension and non-linear equations. A footnote would send the reader to the «arts» volume: to explain that in this domain, as well, form is only one element, equally poor as obvious, and that the essence of complexity is to be sought in the hidden depth of Matter, or in the impassable maze of ideas.

Jean-Yves Jouannais

Olav Westphalen is a German-born artist living in New York. His work strategically refuses categorization. Instead, it straddles contrasting disciplines and attitudes such as entertainment and art, performance and education, cartooning and painting, comedy and critique. Among other venues his work has been exhibited at The Whitney Museum of American Art (Whitney Biennial 2004); Ps1, New York (Greater New York); Kunst Werke Berlin; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Kunsthalles Wien; Neuberger Museum of Art; Kunstverein Kassel; ICA London; Malmö Konsthall; Kunsternes Hus, Oslo; Kulturforum Ludwig, Aachen; The Studio Museum, Harlem; Swiss Institute, NY; Sculpture Center, New York; Lace, Los Angeles; Yerba Buena Center, San Francisco; Netherlands Media Institute. He is represented in major public and private collections in the Americas and Europe. "Le Grand Blanc," is Westphalen's first solo show in France.



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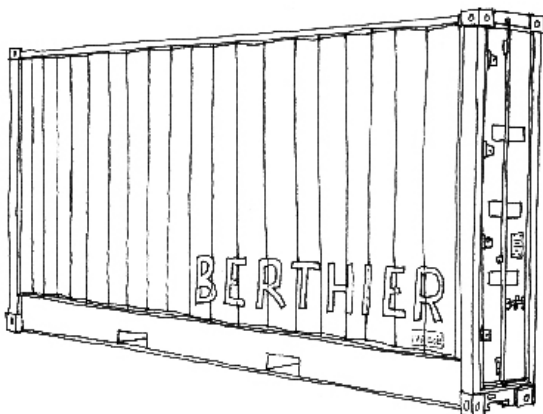
«AROUND THE WORLD»

Julien Berthier didn't study Architecture, the science of construction and redeveloping urban landscapes. However, his activity as an artist consists of inventing or creating means of construction, mostly using vanishing tricks, illusion, modification and displacement. One surely remembers, in particular, the extraordinary sculpture entitled *F2* (2001, in collaboration with Virginie Yassef), an ambiguous architectural structure perched on top of an exhibition wall, a dwelling with no definite function where only a sound system brought it back to everyday life.

The sculpture entitled *Around the World* will be visible during the Parisian part of its tour. A «classic» parquet floor and the container that holds it, will go on a tour of the world, hoping to gain an «exotic» status through its journey, to change its nature simply by mechanical virtue of the transfer.

Here one thinks of Xavier De Maistre's masterpiece, *Journey around my room* (1795), in which the reactionary writer humorously displayed his general distain in a parody of his withdrawal from the world during the revolutionary era. Beyond the parodic aspect, one detects in this famous Journey the double renewal, which constituted the romantic revolution: the advent of the ego and the explosion of the idea of race. In contrast to the general vogue for accounts of adventures and travels, Xavier De Maistre asserted a firm immobility. While his contemporaries travelled across the world in order to describe it, he made a point of being satisfied with the limited tour of the parquet floor of his room. Well... one should imagine that this famous parquet floor, surveyed by Xavier De Maistre; this symbol of hesitancy and lack of curiosity, this avowed mark of political reaction in denying exoticism; this polished, middle-class and immobile parquet floor, is the one that Julien Berthier plans to send all over the world, stage by stage. This is an idiotic bet, but nevertheless the attempt to make the sections of parquet travel across the world, proves to be an important and necessary marker in the mythology of territorial Art, between Robert Smithson's *Nonsites* and Jean-Pierre Raynaud's real-estate operations.

Jean-Yves Jouannais



GILLES BARBIER / MIKE BOUCHET
JOACHIM MOGARRA
JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2007

VIRGINIE YASSEF / VINCENT LAMOUREUX
MARCH - APRIL 2007