

## MARTIN KERSELS «FIVE SONGS»

EXHIBITION 17 SEPTEMBER - 20 OCTOBER 2010

OPENING RECEPTION ON THURSDAY 16 SEPTEMBER



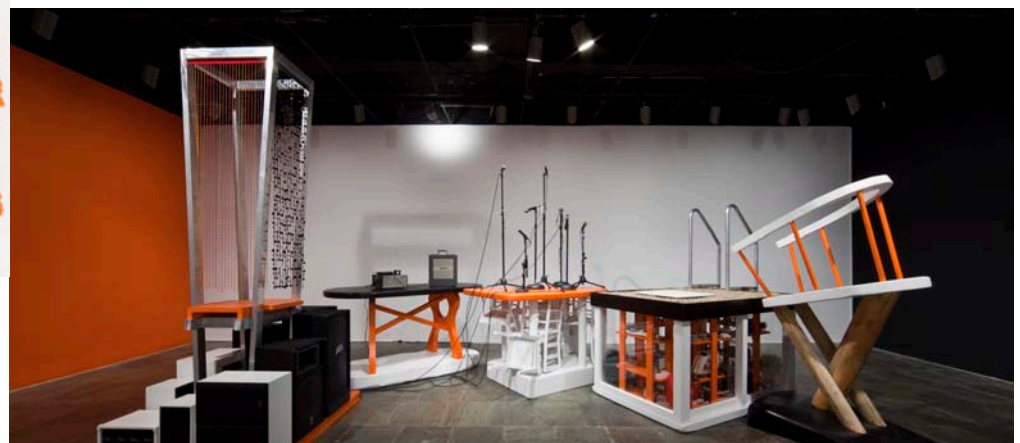
A go-go dancer's cage sitting on a loudspeaker, a table with an amplifier, another table spiky with microphones, a platform with a whole range of stage props underneath, a promontory trying to look like the prow of a ship. *Five Songs* comes in the shape of a chorus of five strange little orange, black and white stage-modules available for any/every performance or art idea. Five worlds to be appropriated by anyone ready to join in the game with a guitar. Five potential songs named in advance by Martin Kersels with the generous nonchalance that characterises his work as a whole. He wants them loud (*Loud Song*), domestic (*Family Song*), sung (*Sing Song*), composite (*Stuff Song*) and nautical (*Ship Song*). So anyone who feels like it can grab the mike and perform this predicted cacophony anyway he likes. And there's plenty of scope for bringing a personal touch to these five singles in progress. Shown at the Whitney Biennial in New York this year, the installation was also the stage for a set of theatre experiments put on by the artist throughout the event. In creating a means of hosting other art ideas he's making play with his own status as artist and producer, obeying a 100% West Coast rationale of sharing and collaboration, in the wake of Paul McCarthy and also Chris Burden, whose assistant he was. Then there's the deliberately messy look of *Five Songs*, an improbable assemblage of found and homemade objects that sets the Kersels approach squarely in the Appropriationist tradition. Obviously there's something voracious in the work of a 120-kilogram dude who looks much more a candidate for a chiliburger in downtown LA than for petits fours in some fashionable quarter of Paris.

Kersels deals in a jumble of suburban teen culture, the music and movie businesses, the atom bomb, dreams and much, much more. And with no ranking or differentiation. *Five Songs* is the product of the fantastic freedom that governs the sacrosanct High/Low Culture dichotomy when the good ole boys get together for a beer.

Étienne Bernard

Current European exhibitions of the artist:

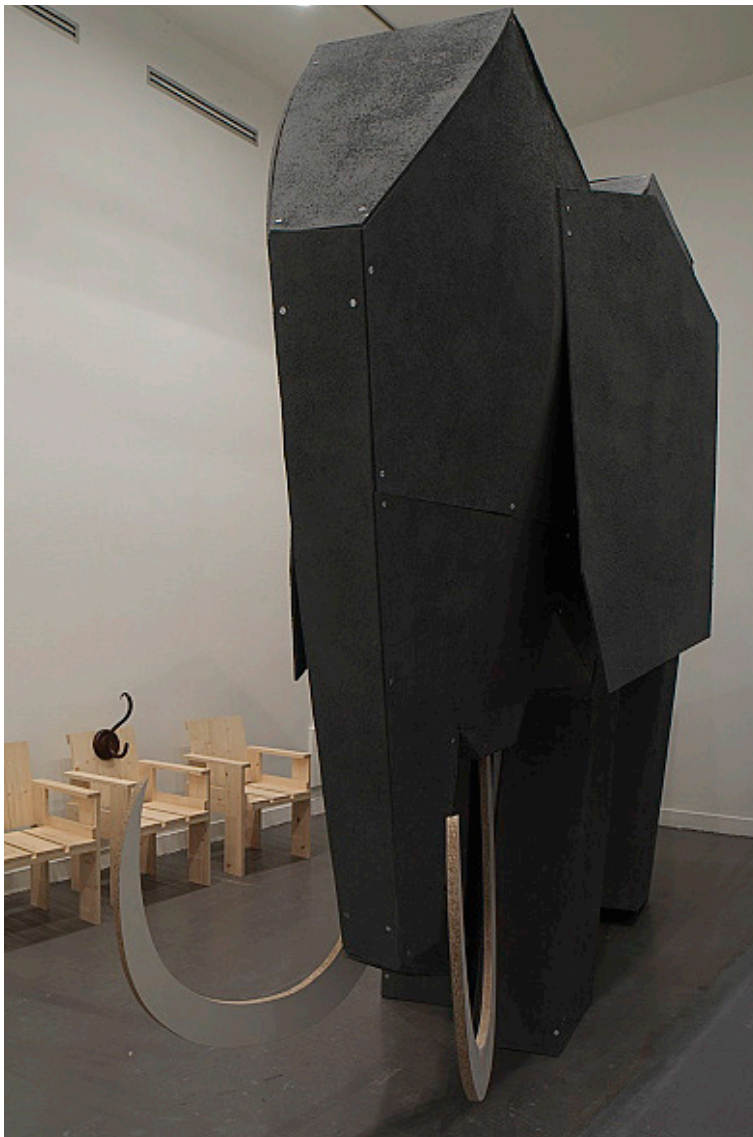
24 September - 17 October: «Une forme pour toute action», Printemps de Septembre, Toulouse, France  
 19 October - December: «Tumble Room», Musée Tinguely, Basel, Switzerland



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## VIRGINIE YASSEF POUR LE RÉVEILLER, IL SUFFIT D'UN SOUFFLE

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A wooden elephant coated with roughcast and enigmatically titled *Pour le réveiller il suffit d'un souffle* (*To Wake Him up, Just Blow on Him*): a slyly two-faced trick that projects us into the past at the same time as it raises questions about our future. Survivor of a pre-human world and the focus of countless depictions ranging from Hannibal's crossing of the Alps to the universally familiar figures of Babar and Dumbo, the elephant is the authentic embodiment of «what lasts». And yet the creature the natural historian Buffon saw as a «miracle of intelligence» no longer inspires this kind of admiration. Threatened with extinction – by the end of the century, the experts say – he now looks to be living on borrowed time, trailing with him something primitive and uncouth neatly captured by Virginie Yassef's bits-and-pieces structure. A tad mammoth, a tad stage set or fairground stand, this deliberately clumsy work looks as incongruous in an art space as the original looks bulky and out of place in today's world: we are reminded of Romain Gary's *Letter to an Elephant* of 1968, describing its subject as an anachronism condemned by the march of civilisation. As ill at ease in a museum as in a china shop, and banned from human society, is the elephant going to vanish, like the dinosaurs, from the face of the earth? The implicit question finds a most unlikely answer in the form of this work, which transforms the quadruped into a Trojan Horse by using a backing track of sewing machine noise to suggest a sweatshop going full tilt inside.

Catherine Francblin

« Virginie Yassef : la cause des éléphants », in *Ce qui demeure est le futur*, Collection moderne et contemporaine du Musée Picardie, 2009, pp.116-119.

### Current exhibitions of the artist:

October: FIAC, «Flat Land», Jardin des Tuileries, Paris, France  
October - January 2011, «Qui es-tu Peter ?», Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris, France  
November - December: «Virginie Yassef», EBA, Clermont-Ferrand, France

FORTHCOMING :

21-24 OCTOBER  
FIAC , GRAND PALAIS

29 OCTOBER – 4 DECEMBER

JACQUES VILLEGLÉ « LA PEINTURE DANS LA NON PEINTURE »