

PROJECT ROOM

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

EXHIBITION 17 SEPTEMBER - 20 OCTOBER 2010
 OPENING RECEPTION ON THURSDAY 16 SEPTEMBER



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

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 JACQUES VILLEGLÉ « LA PEINTURE DANS LA NON PEINTURE »