

RICHARD JACKSON

21 JUNE - 15 SEPTEMBER 2007



Richard Jackson's new exhibition at the Galerie Georges-Philippe et Nathalie Vallois is an homage to one of the masterpieces of twentieth-century art: Marcel Duchamp's *Étants donnés* : 1. *La chute d'eau* 2. *Le gaz d'éclairage* (*Given*: 1. *The waterfall* 2. *The illuminating gas*).

In fact, it is both a faithful copy of the original (based on a careful examination of the notes provided by Duchamp for the installation of his work), as well as its transformation, one that is carried out by way of two parallel procedures. The first is an extension of the work, breaking open the closed chamber of the original by literally opening up another door, and another perspective, in the back of the piece. The nude in Jackson's piece is not simply an anonymous body, she is a maid, and as such what the viewer peeks into is a maid's room, furnished with a bathroom and even (in keeping with Duchamp's Gallic origins) a bidet.

The maid's room adjoins a dining room in which her employers (a defecating father, a mother nursing her infant, a pissing dog...) are engaged in a comic exchange of fluids, liters of different-colored paint pumped through their various orifices onto the surrounding furniture. This architectural and thematic extension of the piece is further enhanced by the design of the family members, which references everything from the ubiquitous *smiley-face* to Japanese animation and Duane Hanson's hyper-realistic sculptures.

It is also in the design of the figures that the second transformative or translational procedure employed by Jackson is revealed, namely a shift in the type of humor employed. Whereas Duchamp's work hinges on a subtle and profound sense of irony, Jackson's latest piece oscillates between dry wit and the grotesque. The former first reveals itself in the composition of the different figures (the mother's head a paint-pump tacked onto an obese body, the infant in her arms a big *smiley-face* with legs). It also can be detected in his acerbic take on the ideal of the nuclear family. In this respect, Jackson mobilizes a profound and profoundly philosophical version of the grotesque, one that recalls the definition of the genre by the German satirist Salomo Friedlander. Writing under the pseudonym of Mynona (an acronym for anonymous or anonymous in German), Friedlander defined the genre as a means of revealing the corrupt nature of normality and its conventions by distorting them to the point of caricatural excess. Like Friedlander's artisan of the grotesque or *Groteskenmacher*, Jackson is an exterminator (*Kammerjäger*, i.e. a chamber-hunter or hunter in domestic rooms) of the "rodents" of the «modern soul.» Whereas Duchamp targeted the specular and spectacular rituals of modern art, Jackson's restaging of his work is an intimate comedy (*Kammerspiel* or chamber-play) on «normal life,» the closed chamber of *Étants donnés* invaded by a monstrous cast of caricatures, spewing forth paint like bile or piss onto the set of his family romance.

This is *Étants donnés* for the age of Jerry Springer, reality-TV, and John Hughes, and it is its distance and difference from the Duchampian original that makes of it such an eloquent and faithful adaptation.

Julien Bismuth (April 2007)



Artist Book: Manual of Instruction for the Maid's Room
 ed. of 800

FOR ANY IMAGE OR REQUEST,
 PLEASE CONTACT
 MARIANNE LE MÉTAYER
 +331 46 34 61 07
 GGPV@WANADOO.FR



The Maid's Room



The Dining Room

