

Galerie Neu

Linienstrasse 119abc
10115 Berlin

Tel. +49 (0)30 285 75 50
Fax. +49 (0)30 281 00 85
mail@galerieneu.com
www.galerieneu.com

Claire Fontaine, *Become a Sea*, 15.12.2023 – 17.02.2024

The title of the exhibition comes from Jalal ad-Din Rumi, the famous Persian mystical poet of the thirteenth century and follower of Sufism. In the text of *Become a Sea* we read: "Every form you see draws its origin from the unseen divine world. So if the form vanishes, what does it matter? Its origin was from the Eternal. Do not grieve that every form you see, every mystical truth you hear will one day vanish. The Fountain is always gushing water. Neither Fountain nor water will ever stop flowing, so why mourn? Your spirit is a fountain; river after river flow from it, put all mourning out of your mind forever and keep on drinking from the water. Do not be afraid. The water is limitless." (*Become a Sea* in Andrew Harvey, *Teachings of Rumi*, Shambhala, 1999).

La mer à boire (2023), is a drinking fountain containing water with 38 grams of salt per liter, its blue tank is a characteristic architectural element around the Mediterranean Sea, it evokes clearly a condition of deprivation immediately associated these days to the siege of Gaza, where the desalination plants no longer work and the only drinking water available is salty. Salty water is also often associated with tears and to the French expression "ce n'est pas la mer à boire" is used when something is difficult but not impossible ("it's not like drinking the sea").

The fountain is in a strict dialogue with the *Mediterranean Sea (Unburnt / Burnt)* (2023) made with matchsticks implanted into the wall in order to be later ignited. The sculpture reveals the familiar negative outlines and coasts of the countries that enclose the sea and their islands as empty spaces. In these waters hundreds of migrants lose their lives every month and conflicts rage for the control of the liquid borders.

The Mediterranean Sea is also the most impoverished marine landscape, polluted and threatened by intensive touristic exploitation despite its unique biodiversity. As the place of many struggles and contradictions it is the core of the exhibition and a sculpture where the two opposite elements of water and fire evocatively merge.

Galerie Neu

Linienstrasse 119abc
10115 Berlin

Tel. +49 (0)30 285 75 50
Fax. +49 (0)30 281 00 85
mail@galerieneu.com
www.galerieneu.com

A brickbat is a projectile wrapped within a threatening message, to be launched through a window in the guise of a warning. These sculptures, *Boire la mer à Gaza brickbat* (2007) and *The Punishment of Gaza brickbat* (2014), are composed of bricks enveloped in book jackets. The size of the books' spines have been modified to accommodate the thickness of a brick, giving the impression that all the books have a uniform dimension. This gesture of petrification underlines the illegibility of these objects, their inaccessibility to the majority of the population, as well as the difficulty of attributing a use value to written texts in the actual context.

Emojis are our hieroglyphics, pictograms to describe the spiritual and the trivial. In her research on the transubstantiation of the digital, through the materialization of virtual forms (anti-nft) Claire Fontaine created *On Fire* (2023) a double sided light-box portraying the flame often used as a positive comment, but also reminiscent in recent months of wars, and fires caused by climate change.

STOP (2023) is a luminous sign that evokes the self-produced signage sometimes seen in parking lots. Its form is bare, fragile and simple, it holds the poetry of things made with poor means. In this exhibition it is an artwork that warns the viewers and invites them to pause and reflect on what they are seeing and not seeing.

Claire Fontaine, Palermo, December 2023