

500 WORDS

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Vittorio Santoro

08.31.11



Vittorio Santoro, *Les vingt-quatre heures*, April–September 2010 (folded to trace a pre-established itinerary on a September afternoon) (detail), 2010, pencil on paper, 13 1/2 x 10.”

Vittorio Santoro is an artist based in Paris and Dublin whose post-Conceptual mixed-media works probe questions of reception and interpretation. Here he discusses his latest solo exhibition, “Les vingt-quatre heures” (Twenty-four hours), which is on view at *Campagne Première*, Berlin, from September 2–October 15.

THE TITLE OF MY EXHIBITION loosely references Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot*, which takes place over two consecutive days. I frequently incorporate references to books, plays, films, other works of art, historical facts, and more in my output to give a new perspective on them. They are the springboard from which I construct alternative narratives.

The title of the show recurs in *Les vingt-quatre heures*, April–September 2010, folded to trace a pre-established itinerary on a September afternoon, a time-based text work realized by writing the words “*Les vingt-quatre heures*” in pencil once a day for five months on the same sheet of paper in exactly the same spot. My intention was to juxtapose precise indications of past time expressed in months, days, and hours with the unquantifiable experience of the present. I also wanted to show that incessant repetition calls attention to the arbitrariness of the relationship between a word and its meaning. This same work also contains references to Parisian locations that were important to Beckett. After visiting these places, I sketched out my trajectory on a map. I then folded the sheet of paper bearing the written phrase in accordance with the lines I had traced on the map—the folds being a way of giving the sheet of paper character and a history. There is no direct or logical link between the folds and the writing, but they are nonetheless connected: The events to which they refer resonate with one another, offering a glimpse of the hidden undercurrents of thought, meaning, and intention that underlie and bind together each of our actions and gestures.

Goodbye Darkness IV, Elephants Don’t Play Chess (a loose conversation on some aspects of *BWV 1001–1006 with Kerwin Rolland*), is also based around words, although they have been transposed into another medium. Here, two electrical bulbs light up at varying intensities and intervals, each of them silently mirroring the modulation of a different pre-recorded spoken text containing repetitions and variations. The flickering bulbs illustrate the compositional principles—such as repetition, variation and the combination of different voices or parts—used by Bach to create the effect of polyphony. I am constantly surprised at the emotion that Bach’s music elicits, despite its technical rigor. There is a similar duality in the flickering lights, which convey both the text and its rhythm, and might help the viewer to understand how logic can be “sensual.” Dualities such as these can serve to demonstrate how much our apprehension of the real is dependent on our bridging the interstitial spaces between thought, emotion, text, and image.

Two large sheets of paper titled *Notes I, January–March 2011* and *Notes II, April–July 2011* open and close the show: I jotted down sketches, thoughts, and even to-do lists on them in the months leading up to the exhibition. These notes can be regarded either as a preparation for something to come or as a simple record of daily action. Some of them directly relate to the realized works, while others contain traces of ideas that might be implemented in future pieces. Notes such as these are not usually presented as artworks but in this case they serve to demystify the creative process and make visible an internal consistency—the network of cross-references on the basis of which I put together the show.

— As told to Rahma Khazam

PATRICK PAINTER

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