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FLOOR

## JEAN-PIERRE BERTRAND *SIX FOIS SHEM EN DEUX* 08.09 - 06.10.2012

Galerie Michel Rein is pleased to present the fourth solo exhibition by Jean Pierre Bertrand at the gallery. When Jean-Pierre Bertrand evokes in his work the subsistence of an ancient body, he is primarily referencing an incarnation of immemorial relics: an egyptian statuette inhabited by the being it represents, and which expresses itself through the artist's voice in the film *Samout et Moutnefret, 7 ans avant l'an 2000* (1993 - 2008); the mixtures with which he impregnates his paper as if to feed it with fragrant or fortifying substances. The *salt paper* becomes mineralized. The *lemon paper*, vegetalized. The *honey paper*, animalism and often painted in a red sometimes described as sanguine : plasmic or coagulant. We cannot however stop at this mystical corporeality of the ancient body which represents more fundamentally the preexistence of a structured order. A fragment of the island which to Robinson Crusoe "appeared so fresh, so green, so flourishing [...] that it looked like a *planted garden*" recalls these completed spaces (arranged in advance) to which the artist often alludes<sup>1</sup>. In the same way, Jean-Pierre Bertrand does not consider the hanging of his works as spacial negotiations a posteriori, but more like the completing of a latent equation which the exhibition temporarily reveals.

The formula for the title *Six Fois Shem en Deux* can be seen as the deivision between the two spaces and the six manifestations of one unique *shem* - a format present in the artist's work for many years and which he describes in simple terms: 'sheets of plexiglas, painted the colour of parchment, which allow horizontal stripes of colour, red or brown, to appear'<sup>2</sup>; a chromatic trinity which he sometimes defines as the three sates of a "goldenized" blood, bright and coagulated. The format of the works are invariable, their dimensions are fixed and their harmonies are predetermined ; only the occurrences vary. Once the general deivision has been memorized, we understand that between one *shem* and another the internal variations cancel each other out by "denouncing" themselves: presences and absences mutually refer to each other. This is in fact why there is only one single *shem*, of which the occurrences coexist in their totality. In linguistic terms, this type of ordered instance is called a scheme : an organizatory structure, which itself has been organized by the rules of the combinations of its constituents. There is therefore between *shem* and scheme a correspondence which exceeds simple homophony since "*shem*", meaning "to name" in hebrew, is likely derived from the primary root "swum", "to place, to order, to establish". This (sacred) etymology thus reveals the edifying power of *shem/scheme* which founds and reveals.

The logical or algebraic syntax which underlies the work of the artist rejoins that which Wittgenstein described: a logic in which nothing is accidental because "If (we) know an object, then (we) also know all the possibilities of its occurrence in atomic facts"<sup>3</sup>. In Jean-Pierre Bertrand's case, the object in question would be the ancient body which preexists and outlives the work, an arrangement inherited from a utopian place. In the exhibition space, a mirror observes *Six fois shem en Deux*. Like in the film *Playing Dice* (1972) where three dice are indefinitely thrown against a mirror, it reflects without recording, not demonstrations of chance, but those of necessity.

Hélène Meisel, July 2012

To be published:

*Jean-Pierre Bertrand*, texts : Agnès Clerc, Hélène Meisel, Catherine Millet and Philippe Alain Michaud, 250 p, Mettray editions, Marseille (dec 2012)

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Vie et aventures de Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2008, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Pierre Bertrand, interview with Didier Morin, in *Mettray*, sept. 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1921), Paris, Gallimard, coll. « tel », p. 34.



Jean-Pierre Bertrand, *Shem*, 2012, honey paper  
acrylic/plexiglass/steel, 204 x 153,5 x 1,8 cm  
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