

LONDON

Claire Fontaine

Regina London // January 28–March 26

THE FRENCH ARTIST collective Claire Fontaine's "Fighting Gravity," at Regina London, is an exhibition as train of thought. The modified readymades, paintings, and videos are all rooted in the group's frustration at the lack of legal proceedings against most of the financiers who brought the global banking system to the brink of collapse.

"We are left with the feeling that the only law that remains unnegotiable is the law of gravity," the collective proclaims in the press materials. In a semantic shift, it then equates gravity with today's "grave" situation. In the first room a golden parachute lying on the floor gives literal form to the well-known idiom. *Money Trap*, 2011, is a wall safe with a hole cut in the middle that, as in a monkey trap, lets an empty hand through to grasp something inside but won't allow it to be retracted with its prize. These two pieces have a very obvious link with the current economic disaster. The rotating plastic plants of *Sculpture Suspendue*, 2011, are more baffling. Claire Fontaine states that they "allude to the vicious circle of the artificial temporality of production," but how or why is unclear.

In another equally bold—and tenuous—linguistic leap, Claire Fontaine relates economic climate to meteorology. The painting *Silver Iodide Monochrome*, 2011, with its ironically sunny hue, gestures

toward the supposed Russian practice of spraying silver iodide to stop the rain during state events (which sounds odd, since silver iodide is mostly used for cloud seeding). The same peculiar logic underlies the collective's figurative paintings of the machines dreamed up by the British engineer Stephen Salter to form clouds from seawater, which would then precipitate as fresh rainwater. The depictions are part cartoons, part scientific sketches. The show's conceptual thread grows increasingly attenuated.

The sky gets the exhibition back on track. A film shot from a plane flying between London and Moscow refers directly to Regina Gallery's venues in the two cities. On the facade of the London space is a light work reading "This neon sign was made by Vladimir Ustinov for the remuneration of one hundred and sixty-nine thousands rubles." A concurrent Claire Fontaine exhibition held at Regina Moscow displays a similarly Santiago Serra-esque sign made by a London craftsman. The London show climaxes with the video *Suicide Stack*, 2010, in which the last words of a 53-year-old engineer who killed himself after losing his life savings scroll on a black background. Following many detours, and without much of its usual wit, Claire Fontaine has finally made its point.

—Coline Milliard

IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR TAX SYSTEM AND, indeed, our entire legal system? Here we have a system that is, by far, too complicated for the brightest of the master scholars to understand. Yet, it mercilessly "holds accountable" its victims, claiming that they're responsible for fully complying with laws not even the experts understand. The law

Claire Fontaine  
*Suicide Stack*,  
2010. Single-  
channel digital  
animation  
projection,  
22 min., 10 sec.