

## PARIS

## Yann Sérandour

GB AGENCY

In his 1967 essay "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes famously asserts that "the writer can only imitate a gesture forever anterior, never original." The same year, Italo Calvino wrote "Whom Do We Write For or The Hypothetical Bookshelf," suggesting that books are written to be placed next to other books in a juxtaposition of voices



Yann Sérandour, *Weiss (White)*, 2008, exhibition catalogue, table, publications, installation view.

particular to each reader's library. French artist Yann Sérandour evokes this transitional moment in literary theory by appropriating anterior works and reactivating them through subtle interventions and a precise sense of humor. He focuses on the act of reading and the slippages that result from repetition, modification, and displacement.

The title work of Sérandour's recent show, *Weiss (White)*, 2008, features a selection of publications from the overflow of gb agency's archive. Sérandour casually propped these magazines and catalogues (including the winter 2008 issue of the gallery guide *Louise*, announcing Sérandour's show with a virtually blank double-page spread) against the wall in loose stacks. Extracting the surplus material from this already superfluous collection, Sérandour cut out all of the blank, or nearly blank, pages to create an accordion-fold leaflet. The cover of Sérandour's collaged booklet, spread across a makeshift plywood table, is the title page from the catalogue for the 2001 group show "*Weiss*" at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel. The German word for *white*, Sérandour's cover text also alludes to the location of the gallery on rue Louise Weiss.

Sérandour revisits iconic artworks, paying particular attention to protoconceptual projects of the 1950s and '60s such as Yves Klein's *Le Vide* (The Void), 1958, and Arman's response, *Le Plein* (The Full), 1960. Borrowing the latter's title, Sérandour's *Le Plein*, 2008, is an organized catalogue of the contents of Arman's packed gallery space, written in neat black print and plastered onto one of the gallery's walls. Sérandour's work remains unwieldy—not so much physically, but via an information overload; a profusion of details, ancillary to Arman's original work, are revealed. For example, Sérandour carefully lists titles of records—the Billy Vaughn Singers' *Sweet Maria*, Davy Jones and the Voodoo Funk Machine's *Love*—once heaped into Arman's piece. Similarly, Sérandour's *Yucatan Mirror Displacements (I-9)*, 2008, updates Robert Rauschenberg's project (originally presented in the September 1969 edition of *Artforum*). Carefully cutting out each of the mirrors Rauschenberg pictured in various Mexican landscapes, Sérandour places the modified images over shiny new mirrors.

Although consistently referencing historical works, Sérandour turns them back toward the present. *Portrait d'un jeune homme lisant un magazine pour messieurs* (Portrait of a Young Man Reading a Magazine for Men), 2008, includes a found photograph from the 1930s tucked into a corner of a rectangular mirror. The young man in the photograph bears a strong resemblance to Sérandour, while the magazine he is reading, *Esquire*, is still in print. Installed inside the entrance to the gallery, the mirror reflects the title of the show on the front door as well as the street sign, folding the historical image and the visitor's reflection into one specific site and moment.

In the storage room, Sérandour unpacked a group of works by gallery artists Mac Adams, Roman Ondák, and Jiří Kovanda, as well as

some of his own pieces both old and new. His *Interview with a Cat*, 2008, quotes the conversation that Marcel Broodthaers recorded with a cat at the Museum of Modern Art in Düsseldorf in 1970. In Sérandour's version, we hear only a cat's series of stressed cries, seemingly in response to Broodthaers's cat undergoing its existential grilling. The artist's pointed line of inquiry is absent, while Sérandour's amplification of his cat's voice, combined with that of Broodthaers's, finds renewed significance in the rearticulation of the original and the stratification of authorship—a multiplied legibility.

—Lillian Davies