

IVRY-SUR-SEINE, FRANCE

## Véronique Joumard

LE CRÉDAC

Light, in all its ramifications, is a primary subject of Véronique Joumard's sculptures and installations—light sources and related paraphernalia,



Véronique Joumard,  
*Solarium*, 2006,  
aluminum frame,  
electric wires,  
porcelain lamp  
socket, light-  
bulbs, and frame.  
16' 4 3/4" x 16' 4 3/4".

such as heat- and light-sensitive surfaces. She also pursues an art-historical endgame based on the readymade and on Minimalism's laboratory aesthetic, while simultaneously looking for a softer vision of the electronic age's omnivorous consumption of "all imaginable things," to borrow a phrase from Yeats. The objects in her exhibition at Le Crédac, "Solarium and Other Pieces" (from 1985 to the present), as well as her occasional photographs and videos, reveal an intuitive, antisensationalist sensibility similar in spirit to Yeats's search for "an image, not a book." *Reflecting Surface*, 2003, a piece of shimmering gray reflective fabric stretched like a monochrome canvas, is hung opposite *Echo*, 2001, a halogen lamp above a stairway set to flash when actuated by gallerygoers' footsteps, the two works here "communicating" for the first time, light flashing on fabric. *Lenses*, 2006, three Fresnel lenses, each just over two feet in diameter, suspended in the reception room, functioned, for me, like giant blind spots signaling an oncoming migraine, inverting and exaggerating the scale of an image only to make it evaporate in a cloud of light. Further on, two horizontal mirrors affixed with a plastic film, in *Mirrors*, 2003, reflected correctly in parallax, but fogged up when one walked in front of them. All four works deflected light instead of focusing vision.

Central to the exhibition were four large sculptural installations. Internally lit helium-filled balloons of adjustable height, in *4 Balloons for a Room*, 2006, a new version of a work originally created in 2003 for Paris's yearly all-night cultural event, *Nuit Blanche*, seemed conceived for a futuristic park. I kept thinking about the Little Prince flying heavenward. *Solarium*, 2006, a more dramatic work—and, for the show, the most important—was made up of 121 floodlights, hung like a faux drop ceiling, eleven on a side, about seven feet off the floor. Like the balloons, *Solarium* embodied the enveloping tactile sensations of light itself, one implying ascendance and the other convalescence, both born in the thrall of images, not words. Two earlier works vaguely echoed the drumroll of heavier industrial Minimalist art, such as that of Richard Serra, which titillates instead of calming the senses. For *Untitled*, 1985, Le Crédac roped off a room in which two steel I-beams were precariously balanced on a single bare lightbulb (the sculptural equivalent of a heavy-metal oxymoron like *Iron Butterfly* or *Led Zeppelin*). And in *Springs and Rocks*, 1995, twelve jagged, calciferous stones quarried from the hole-riddled bedrock upon which much of Paris sits (in places unstably) were each bolted to a spring cable so that they dangled nearly to the floor like antitrophies (a negation of the apostles, the months in the calendar, the notes in an octave, the sign of the zodiac, and so on), as if playing an underworld role opposite *Solarium*'s materialization of warmth.

But it was the enigmatic simplicity of the works that piqued the imagination, for reasons description never fully deciphers: serious but not academic, intimate, charming, and in some cases (as with the mirrors, or the lamps, which can be altered to accommodate different spaces) functional. In that regard they felt closer to the selfless works of an artist like Isamu Noguchi and similarly manifested Yeats's hope for modern art to light upon "the gentle, sensitive mind."

—Jeff Rian

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