

Hamish Fulton
Mercantour
10.09 – 08.10.2011

Opening Thursday September 10, 2011
4–9 pm

For the first time, British artist Hamish Fulton has dedicated a walk for an exhibition in a Parisian gallery. Romain Torri's invitation relied on the condition that the artist had to choose a natural site in France and that the gallery would produce the whole artistic process.

Among the nine French National Parks, Hamish Fulton has chosen the Mercantour, known for its wild and varied landscapes due to the proximity of the 'massif' with the Mediterranean Sea. Then, the period to make this hike and the itinerary through the Park had to be determined.

Rapidly, the artist suited the symbolic date of the summer solstice to end his trek. Three weeks of walk and wild camping would be ample time to go through the Mercantour from South to North between the village of Sospel (departure June 1st 2011) and the winter sports resort of Barcelonnette (arrival June 21st 2011).

«What I build is an experience, not a sculpture. My wish is to leave as few traces of my passing as possible. My walking experiences are the reverse of creating sculptural changes, subtractions or addition to the land.» *

Since the end of his studies at the Saint Martin School in the early 1970's, Hamish Fulton has made of walk an artistic form. As the solitary walker, he strides the world and its peaks, observes what surrounds him, lives the present moment and adapts himself to the environment. In his bag, a camera, some notebooks and gears, in order to subsist during the time of his expedition.

Hamish Fulton doesn't seek to distort the landscape: he only seeks to walk across it. The visible part of his work relies on artefacts he creates after the hike: wall paintings, pictures, drawings or gouaches, that all testifies of his physical experience.

Every image that he makes includes some geographic or chronologic indications. His observations have something in common with 'explorers' or 'scientists' stories, but the posture that he embraces since the beginning is the one of an assumed artist that makes him one of the pillars of conceptual art (with Robert Barry, Mel Bochner, On Kawara, Jan Dibbets or Richard Long).

Another key to the meaning: behind the gesture's obsession and radicalism, an ideal form peeps out that reveals a romantic artist in the lineage of the 19th century's English landscape painters.

*BEAL, Daphne(ed.) Art in the landscape. Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas, 2000, pp.119-120 in, Hamish Fulton : walking journey, Tate publishing, 2002.