

GOWEN CONTEMPORARY

GENEVA, Switzerland

Nick Laessing

Voice Figure, (Eidophone I) 2011

Brass, latex, wood + dvd

Ed. 1/3

Live performances by Nick Laessing and Noga on Tuesday, March 24, 4 p.m. at Carreau Du Temple (on our booth) and on **Wednesday, March 25, 7 p.m. at Silencio Club**, 142 rue de Montmartre



In the 1880s the singing teacher Margaret Watts Hughes invented a device she called the Eidophone. It consisted of a tube that she sung into. At the other end of the tube a membrane of stretched rubber would be caused to resonate. She created images on its surface using her voice to vibrate water colour paste and fine powder into forms. She was able to sing flowers; daisies, pansies, and sunflowers, later on extending her repertoire to include quasi-religious imagery such as serpents in landscapes. Her work, in its attempt to understand the Relationship between the voice and its ability to conjure up such visual manifestations of nature, attracted the curiosity of the scientific institutions of the day.

Hughes' performances created a minor sensation and demonstrations were given at the Royal College of Music and the Royal Society in London. The artist and president of the Royal Academy of Arts, Lord Frederick Leighton invited Hughes to perform at a soiree at his Holland Park studio in London. Whilst the results of her work attracted attention, it was of such a personal nature that it was found impossible to evaluate in a scientific way.

With his Eidophones Laessing lays no claim to originality in these inventions for himself, rather he is reconstructing the obsessions behind these discoveries, as he works through the original inventor's thinking. You could say this is driven by a nostalgia for a time when scientific innovation was still open to the lay-man and the utopian possibilities of these discoveries seemed tangible.

Laessing has rebuilt the Eidophones as performative devices, however for him they also operate as sculptures in their own right which. They function as strange objects with a sense of arcane functionality, as well as relics to a past performance, past time, and past obsession.

GOWEN CONTEMPORARY Sàrl

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