

Edouard Malingue Gallery
馬凌畫廊

Opening Hours
Monday to Saturday
10AM-7PM

Gallery Exhibition
'Fabien Merelle: Elles et moi'
First Floor, 8 Queen's Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dates
May 21 – June 29, 2013

Opening
May 21, 6.30-8.30PM

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Art Basel Hong Kong 2013

Dates
May 23 – 26, 2013

Encounters Section 2, Hall 1
Laurent Grasso 'visibility is a trap' [2012]

Insights Section
Floor 3, Booth 3D20, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wan Chai,
Hong Kong

Opening Hours
Thursday to Sunday, 12 – 7PM

Edouard Malingue Gallery is pleased to announce that '*visibility is a trap*', a neon installation by prominent French conceptual artist Laurent Grasso (b. 1972), has been selected by internationally-renown curator Yuko Hasegawa for the Encounters section of Art Basel Hong Kong. Mounted on a white metal structure, the sentence spelled is a direct reference to Michel Foucault's theory of Panopticism elaborated in the theorist's seminal text '*Discipline and Punish*' (1975). By virtue of the sculpture's content and billboard appearance, Grasso seeks to create his own Panoptical statement, prompting a discussion about the visitor's selfsubjected status as a viewer as well as an exploration into the limits of how we define objects.

Laurent Grasso plays on Michel Foucault's discussion about the social effects of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. Conceived as a prison building, the Panopticon controlled inmates by creating a simple imbalance of reciprocal viewership: whereas the inmates could be viewed at all times by a guard positioned in the central tower, this source of power was conversely concealed from the inmates. Such an interplay between visibility and invisibility caused the prisoners to behave themselves, a result that prompted Foucault to seminally remark: "Visibility is a trap... he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Vintage Books New York, 1995, p. 200 – 203).

Grasso's structure openly quotes Foucault's famous sentence. It crucially aims, however, to simultaneously extend the words beyond their ordinary meaning. Importantly, Grasso uses the confronting sentence to create an artistic structure that enhances and reflects the viewership trappings of the original Panopticon. As a glowing sentence, mounted on a metal structure, it resembles a billboard statement. As the viewers are lured into reading it from left to right, they subject themselves to the very snare Foucault refers to: they place themselves in a position of visibility and of control as their behaviour is monitored by the adequacies of fair-attending and art-viewing. Grasso thus lures the visitors into inscribing themselves into a power relation while extending the meaning of Foucault's sentence to create a strained viewing relationship between the artwork, the single viewer, and the group of visitors at large.

Beyond the theoretical content of the installation, Grasso also uses '*Visibility is a trap*' to explore the impact of scale and structure on the nature of the object.

The sentence is not only to be looked at for its meaning but also for its shape and colour: Grasso specifically selected to work on a very large scale, with a bulbous font and translucent white-coloured neons, against a metal structure. Taken out of its original literary context, Grasso intends the sentence to become an independent object, something to view and not just to be read. Grasso's selection of scale and material, however, suggests that the sentence is more than a simple object: its structure resembles an advertisement panel, ones that dominates views on the side of motorways or stands atop buildings. Grasso therefore tests the limits of artwork classifications by recasting these words as components of a seemingly empty message, when in fact they stand tall as a reminder of our self-controlled condition of spectatorship.

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Laurent Grasso is regarded as one of the leaders of his artistic generation. He was awarded the prestigious Marcel Duchamp prize in 2008 and was recently the focus of a major solo exhibition at the Jeu de Paume in Paris. He is currently exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Montreal and will be the subject of an upcoming solo show at the Kunsthaus, Baselland, Basel. Grasso's work has been featured in multiple publications, including Architecture Now! His work is held in collections around the world, including the leading Leem Samsung collection of art in Seoul, South Korea.

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visibility is a trap, 2012

Neon, transformer, metal structure

750 (L) x 100 (W) x 377 (H) cm

Courtesy of the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery