

## I NEVER KNEW THAT SAND HAD SO MANY COLOURS.

a solo show by **Elisabeth S. Clark**

April 07th - May 26th 2018

If you listen very carefully, you might hear an accordion breathing in and out. In this book, it is night and the whole story is recounted in only one breath.

Jump to another stack, and we find fragments, 'tweets' of popular classic stories re-told. Gushing orange. Bite-size. Twitterature. The best of Penguin Books all folded into one. A third rendition embodies the sonic temperature of a previous performance. A thermometer stands in for the conductor's baton.

For ten years, **Elisabeth S. Clark** has been orchestrating what she calls 'Book Concertos' – a performance which explores the possibility for a whole novel to be read in under ten minutes, involving as many people as there are leaves in a chosen book.

In the gallery, only piles of books remain, murmuring memories of their previous function. For Clark however, they are not merely books but also musical instruments for her performances. And here in the space, these books, *'Eleven Instruments, Eleven Variations'* (2018), have found new forms, new sculptural manifestations dictated by each previous performance. Her custom bookshelves are designed to encase but also resonate their performative potential. Each rendition encapsulates a more complex story. The custom bookshelves become like another page, another fold, an extension of the book itself.

Downstairs, her *'Between Words'* score (2010-2013) has a new *'Reading Machine'* (2018); also a protagonist for a new upcoming performance.

These *'Reading Machines'* equally serve as both methods of display (viewing structures/ music stands) and tools (sonorous instruments/props) for her performances. The score of punctuation hanging from these objects was once a poem by Raymond Roussel (*'Les Nouvelles Impressions d'Afrique'*). Elisabeth S. Clark appropriates this poem, isolating all the author's punctuation and concealing all the words. She then re-translates this into a score for voice or orchestra or even dance.

The score of punctuation encapsulates both sound and silence, emotion and gesture. In fact, these intricate punctuation marks – translated here as notation, or musical notes, or conductors of expression – both encase and resonate sound in equal measures and explore possibilities of variation.

This is exemplified in her future performance propositions, *'Conducting Conductors (Silent interpretations of a sonorous score)'* (2018) that she envisions for four performers (including a musical conductor, vocalist, dancer and musician). Four black folders present a vision for this event.

In the last room of her exhibition, **Elisabeth S. Clark** delicately fashions together grains of sand from more than a dozen places and countries around the world. The fragility of her gesture brings to mind the precariousness of a perfectly crafted snowball. Or could it be a hefty pile, a globe, a sphere of poetry for inexpressible language... One's mind turns to Robert Smithson's *Heap of Language*, as if she had crumpled together into a wad all the punctuation that had fallen from the pages next door. Though her gesture might seem light in touch, these grains of sand bridge places far and wide. This work, entitled *'My World'* (2018), contains years of collecting: the artist's own personal atlas of sand from all the places that have shaped her.

Unlike in the documentation of her installation *'Enchanté'* (2017) presented in the gallery window upstairs, here she has chosen to gather rather than scatter particles. Both of these gestures nevertheless seem at the very heart of this exhibition.

All of the works in this exhibition span many years. And yet, like shifting sand none of them are fixed. Part installation, part performance, part sculpture, **Elisabeth S. Clark's** works move freely between disciplines. Her sculptures evoke performances and her performances sculptures.

Her works become like a collection of interpretations ('moments') and yet her poetry is filled with a cadence that leaves you returning again and again. Under every layer is another layer, another moment.

Clark's own words spring to mind, lifted from the page of her sketchbook:  
'I never knew that sand had so many colours...'

We are not quite sure if the artist is speaking of sand or of words or of an event or of the larger entity of language and expression.

Elisabeth S. Clark

