

Étienne Chabaud

BUGADA & CARGNEL

"*Objets rédimés*" (Redeemed Objects) was an exhibition in the high Duchampian idiom. Seven circles of debris on the floor contained the remains of glass molds of various objects—an umbrella, a rope, a broom, a bottle, a hammer, a bag, and some books—that had been dropped from the gallery ceiling. The exhibition thus marked seven destructions. Each time one of these "redeemed objects" is displayed, it is, necessarily, destroyed. Moreover, since Étienne Chabaud has produced only eight casts of each object, the amount of available installation-destructions is limited; each presentation of these molds thus marks a step towards their total disappearance.

The exhibition's title is a bilingual pun. It takes as its subject the most famous, or at least notorious, of Duchampian gestures or inventions: the readymade. *Rédimés*, which in French means "redeemed," sounds like the English word *readymade*; the ready-made object is also the redeemed object. "To redeem is to distribute, to undo, to undress even, and therefore to strip bare," the press release, which was written by the artist, said. "Hence, an *Objet rédimé*: object amending a fault, amending its own fault, or debt stripped bare? Here, debt is paid in words."

There were numerous further allusions to Duchamp, and not only in the rest of this two-page text, which must be considered a major element of the exhibition, not merely a supplement or introduction. The very material Chabaud used, of course, recalls the *Large Glass*, 1915–23, while the specific act of breaking glass returns to that work's shattering in transit in 1927; after piecing the fragments together between two more panes, Duchamp declared the work complete. The idea, put forth in the press release, of the gallery as a "frame of interruption" for the falling, shattering glass reiterates Duchamp's description of his own piece as a "delay in glass." Like Duchamp, the exhibition in various ways straddled English and French: The objects, which the artist characterizes as French, for instance, are "framed" only in English, as each comes with a contract, in English alone, detailing the procedure



Étienne Chabaud,
Objet rédimé (The Bottle), 2010, glass,
wire cable, pulley,
dimensions variable.

for its display. But beyond such details, Chabaud's overall strategy is itself Duchampian, as is his tone: There is a kind of dryness and precision, and a reduction of visual and sensual experience balanced by a proportional expansion of theoretical gamesmanship.

Given its coded grammar, and within its chosen conceptual parameters, the exhibition was fluent and convincing; the artist, who previously sometimes tended toward jauntiness, demonstrated an increase in maturity and control. The show succeeded through the precision of its gestures and the limitation of its means. Nothing outside the exhibition's self-selected zone of operation was indulged, and therefore nothing interfered. This was true visually as well: The gallery, with its seven circles of broken glass, was reduced to a frame, focusing everything on the single dominant gesture.