67. | The Black Box





2018-2019, 99 mailboxes, 99 white labels with 99 names of god, 1030 x 116 x 9 cm.
Exhibition view from The Process, Wilde Gallery, 2019, Geneva.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.
Ed. of 5 + 1 A.P.

« The Black Box », est une installation réalisée au moyen de 99 boîtes aux lettres de couleur noires, disposées côte à côte, où sont reportées sur chacune d'entre elles les 99 noms de dieu recensées par la religion musulmane. En l'absence de l'image de Dieu que l'islam interdit, il est évoqué dans le Coran par différentes appellations tels Le Superbe, Le Créateur, Le Formateur ou le Tout et Très Contraignant. L'installation fait écho à la vidéo et la sculpture « Face, les 99 noms de Dieu », réalisées en 1999, étude artistique et linguistique qui explore les relations entre signes et significations, entre langage et message, entre croyance et doute. La boite à lettre est un élément lié à l'architecture qui a cette capacité à porter notre nom et prénom pour l'afficher à l'extérieur, nous mettant ainsi en contact direct avec les autres. Recourant à cet élément architectural qui fait le lien entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur, l'installation explore le rapport entre intime et publique, entre communication et croyance.

Le dispositif mis en place par l'installation « The Black Box » pourrait donc représenter le système de réception des messages Divins. Avec cet effet absurde : le spectateur qui se met à la place du fidèle, se voit soudainement assailli de doutes et de vertige face à la complexité de la notion de Dieu. De manière assez paradoxale, le système de réception des messages et de dénomination du destinataire provoque autant une impression de précision qu'un sentiment d'incertitude, lié à sa configuration multiple et labyrinthique, froide et administrative, pour tout dire kafkaïenne. Une divinité quelque peu perverse a semblé prendre autant de plaisir à compliquer qu'à simplifier la tâche du destinataire.

Sur les boites aux lettres, les noms propres se tiennent à la

The Black Box is an installation created with 99 black mailboxes disposed side by side, on which are written the 99 names of God as inventoried by Islamic tradition. In the absence of an image of God that is forbidden by Islam, he is evoked in the Koran through a series of different names such as The Superb, The Creator, The Fashioner, the The Supreme and The Restrainer. The installation echoes the video and the sculpture “Face, the 99 Names of God”, created in 1999: an artistic and linguistic study that explores the relations between signs and significations, between language and message and between belief and doubt. The mailbox is an element related to architecture meant to bear our first and last names in order to exhibit them to the outside world, thus putting us in direct contact with other people. By using this architectural element that links the inside and the outside, the installation explores the relation between the intimate and the public, between communication and faith.

The setup created by the installation The Black Box could therefore represent a system for receiving divine messages. With this absurd effect: the viewer who is in the believer’s shoes is suddenly beset by doubt and dizziness when faced with the complexity of the notion of God. Quite ironically, the system for receiving messages and naming the recipient creates an impression of precision as much as a feeling of uncertainty, due to its multiple and maze-like configuration, which is cold and administrative, in a way Kafkaesque. A somewhat perverse divinity seems to have enjoyed complicating as much as simplifying the recipient’s task.

On the mailboxes, the names sit on the border between the intimate and the public. The denomination of beings through

frontière de l'intime et du publique. La dénomination par le nom propre des êtres, phénomène linguistique contradictoire, identifie les individus sans ambiguïté et ne dit pourtant absolument rien de leurs essences ou leurs qualités. Le nom propre révèle autant qu'il masque, exprime autant qu'il tait. Etiquette vide de significations appliquées arbitrairement aux individus, il se révèle néanmoins programmateur de trajectoires sociales ou de comportements individuels. Le nom propre charrie son lot de certitudes illusoires et de croyances à propos de ceux et celles qu'il désigne. Il soulève tout autant d'imprécisions et de doutes.

L'installation pourrait évoquer une nature essentiellement missive de Dieu : entité entretenant une correspondance proustienne avec ses fidèles, à la fois présente et absente. « The Black Box » pose finalement la question de Dieu et des messages reçus par les différentes religions et la capacité humaine à pouvoir les apprehender et les intégrer à un système de reflexion qui a ses propres limites. L'installation « The Black Box » nous rappelle aussi l'idée de la Boite noire qui reste quand même dans notre imaginaire collectif lié aux catastrophes aériennes et à la recherche des informations précises qui s'y trouve pour mettre en valeur la vérité.

Studio Fatmi, Avril 2019.

proper nouns, a contradictory linguistic phenomenon, identifies individuals without any ambiguity and yet doesn't say anything about their essence or attributes. The proper noun reveals just as much as it dissimulates, expresses as much as it keeps quiet. A label with no signification, arbitrarily applied on individuals, it nevertheless reveals itself as a programmer of social trajectories and individual behaviors. The proper noun carries its load of illusory certainties and beliefs about those it designates, thus creating that much imprecision and doubt.

The installation could evoke the essentially missive nature of God: an entity carrying out a Proustian correspondence with the faithful, simultaneously present and absent. The Black Box ultimately poses the question of God and the messages received by different religions, as well as the human capacity to apprehend and integrate them within a system of thought that has its own limitations. The installation The Black Box also brings to mind the concept of the black box, which in our collective imagination is consistently linked to airplane crashes and the search for precise information that can be found in it, in order to highlight the truth.

Studio Fatmi, April 2019.

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Studio Fatmi, April 2019

exhibitions:

2022

How much is Enough - Ceysson & Bénétière, Saint-Etienne - Solo show

2021

Rêves d’été en monochrome - Wilde Gallery - Group show

1-54 London - Wilde Gallery - Art Fair

2019

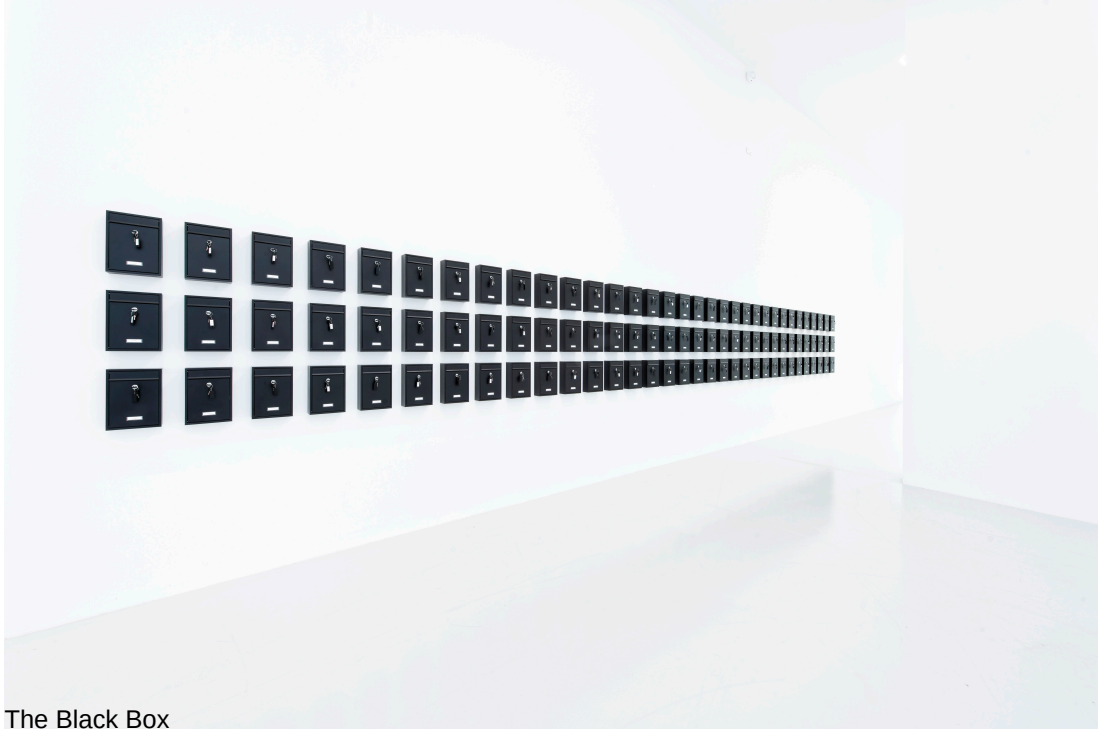
The Process - Wilde Gallery - Solo show



How much is Enough, SF Publishing, 2022

Obstacle bars with a saw are stacked in the heart of a room, this represents an idea of falling. We are consuming, we reach the end and we continue to take even more. And then there is the absence of the one who cuts.

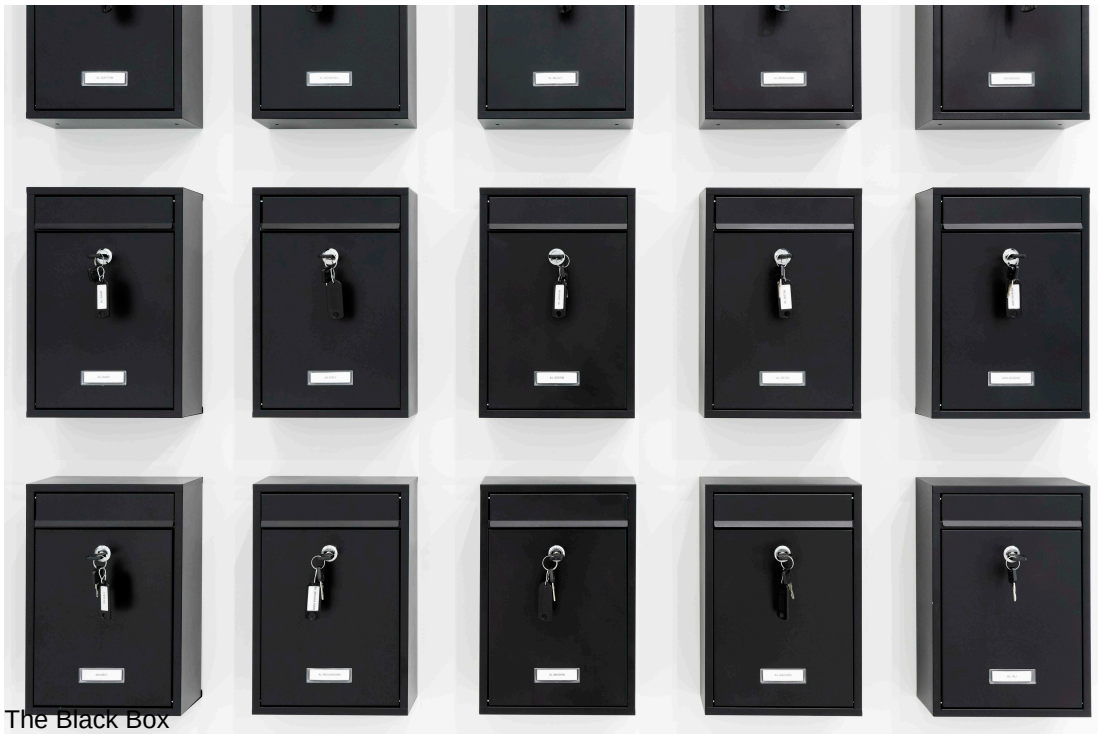
Clément Goutelle, Le Progrès, September 2022



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The Black Box

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