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Genevieve Allison, "Critics' Picks - New York: Claire Fontaine," Artforum.com, November 28, 2011

ARTFORUM

Critics' Picks

Claire Fontaine–
METRO PICTURES
519 West 24th Street
November 3–December 10

As the title, "Working Together," foregrounds, this exhibition considers the social aspect of production. Beyond a concrete practice, industry is presented as an essential social force inseparable from economic-philosophical and ontological dimensions. To an extent, the show's collection of sculptures, videos, paintings, and neon signs made by the French collective pairs the social logic of late-capitalist organization (characterized by principles of fraternity, interdependency, and competition) with other forms of collaborative and cooperative enterprise. As a group of assistants, the artist "herself" represents a communal framework and lateral power structure. The concept of the assistant (a subordinate, dependent element) is a central motif, explored directly through works such as *The Assistants*, 2011, a video in which, via a reading of Giorgio Agamben's text of the same name, poet Douglas Park traces the position of these "parallel and approximate beings" in our cultural psyche as they are mapped out in folklore and literature.



A series of paintings based on Richard Prince's *Joke Paintings* (Richard and Marc), 2011, outline a certain flippancy and a complicity between art and fashion, while corporate ephemera, scaffolding, party lights, and bags of empty beer and soda cans hew a sense of postfestivity and disengagement—as if the material yield of society's productive force had come into conflict with, and overwhelmed, the ideological system that supported it. Several works, including a replica of a Newton's Cradle swinging-ball toy produced by Lehman Brothers with a tennis court base and inscription reading "Networking," are motorized to remain in perpetual motion. The constancy represented by these works, as well as by the illuminated neon sign *Past Present Future*, 2011, may gesture toward Marxist notions that the "relations of production" we establish—whether in business, art, the business of art, or any other intermutual practice—can be understood in terms of evolving, historical continuities.

Above Image:
View of "Working Together," 2011.