

## Helen Mirra

### Conscience de pierre

14 November 2009 – 22 January 2010

The Galerie Nelson-Freeman is pleased to present the second one-person exhibition in France of the American artist, Helen Mirra.

The work of Helen Mirra is at the crossroads of several influences, including Arte Povera, Fluxus, and Concrete Poetry, and is characterized above all by an economy of resources. She uses simple materials (felt, wool, cotton, wood), recovered items (clothes, pallets), and objects found in nature (stones, pine cones). These elements, chosen for their intrinsic qualities, are generally subjected to minimal transformations excluding the use of industrial techniques.

For this exhibition, Helen Mirra presents a new series of works with the title *Mind of a Rock*.

« I've been in Switzerland for the past year. I spent a lot of time in the mountains, hiking and collecting rocks. I set out while occupied with the idea of pan-psychism: that consciousness, of a sort, exists at the level of the atom. This is not unrelated to perceiving the transference of one's own experiences and feelings onto one's surroundings, onto the world of things.

The one thing on the wall in my room in Basel was a postcard reproduction of the poster for the Robert Bresson film *Lancelot du Lac*. It's a simple clunky cartoonish drawing of a knight falling off a horse (both are overturned) and vomiting blood. It isn't so much grotesque as it is matter of fact.

Difficult to say how I chose particular rocks, though it was easy to tell why most of them weren't tempting - too small, too round, too sharp, too impressive, too whatever. Their maximum size was determined by what I could carry in my backpack. I wasn't sure what I would do with them, but the task generated momentum to go for the hikes – that there was some extra labor involved, non-essential to the wanders. When I took a rock, I marked the location on the trail map, and I put a camera on the ground in the same spot and took a photograph, ostensibly of what the rock saw from that place.

I placed the rocks on folded Swiss military blankets as staging grounds. I noticed that the size of the folded blanket was the same size as an unfolded trail map. »

Helen Mirra was born in 1970. She lives in Cambridge Massachusetts.