Franck Leibovici

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« témoin 280, evd cpi, procès katanga/ngudjolo », *muzungu*, 2016 © avec l'aimable autorisation de Franck Leibovici

- 1 “More than thirty-five thousand pages published in the form of lots of books and manuscripts, as well as more than three thousand tape-recorded lectures. with more than 160 million copies of his works in circulation throughout the world, published on 9 May 1950, the most read and most used book on the human mind, of all time, with 20 million copies in circulation [...]”. Franck Leibovici’s body of work is prolific; in the past ten years, it has been on view in exhibitions and at festivals, on the Internet, and in the form of performances, books and collective projects. The above statement, for its part, extols the influence of L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the church of scientology (and science-fiction author). It is arrayed with other statements found about contemporary

beliefs and fears in *quelques storyboards* (2003). The digital book introduces a practice of “uncreative writing”¹ as a poetic style, and announces the method of “redescription” (a term used in the cognitive sciences) as a way of producing knowledge. What is involved is moving freely circulating eclectic statements away from their original field or format of transmission, by repetition or translation. Franck Leibovici’s work was embarked upon, *de facto*, at a time when a dark net was being developed and it was possible to find on the Internet endless quantities of declassified or exposed secret documents (put about by WikiLeaks, among others), while the artist’s works are in their turn made freely accessible.²

- 2 This is how Franck Leibovici’s “pragmatist poetics”³ or “documental poetry” proceeds, with the author always talking about a document or an artwork as a “tool”. This tool does not change the world—for this “situated” practice contrasts with forms of essentialist discourse—but it lends visibility to the “ecosystems” which produce the information reaching us more or less directly, and wielding an influence over the social and individual space. Here is an artist who imagines a third term between art for art’s sake and engaged art, “a way of linking writing and action”⁴ (through the lens of non-creation). So the interpretation of a document does not involve a search for meaning, but a quest for use. This pragmatist hermeneutics perforce implies a group of interpreters, if possible non-experts, and ignorant encoders.⁵ This applies to the cycle of activations titled *mini-opéra pour non musiciens* (2008-2014),⁶ whose first movement transcribes to a system of musical notation the slide show presented by Colin Powell about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction (“powell opera”). The mini-opera deals with “low-intensity conflicts”,⁷ another keyword in Franck Leibovici’s vocabulary, describing smallish events which have worldwide repercussions by way of mediation phenomena, and this in the age of post-truth.
- 3 “Art tools” turn out to be efficient when it comes to processing their complex data, as has been shown by the work carried out during one of the first war crimes trials at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The resulting book *bogoro*⁸ is an art book as much as a handbook for jurists interested in other ways of reading evidence, in particular when it comes from cultures that are alien to them. “So the aim is not so much to produce art for the art world but to invent tools coming genealogically from other disciplines and, after a detour by way of art, send them back”⁹, to quote the artist. Some of his “inquiry works” operate all the same in the art arena, like the project (*des formes de vie*) (2010-2012)¹⁰ and *des récits ordinaires* (2014)¹¹, both of which replace the “public problems” which artworks are, away from their usual paratext, by (collectively) probing the way they work (culturally and for each spectator). For this, just like for institutional documents, it is a matter of displaying the “ecosystems” in which they are produced (in a continuum between the artist’s life and art) and seen (beyond exhibitions and even in conversations), where art has a use value for art.

NOTES

1. Referring to “uncreative writing” as theorized by the poet Kenneth Goldsmith.
2. *quelques storyboards*, like other books and works, is available on the UbuWeb site.
3. From the title of the book about this: *Une Poétique pragmatiste : considérations sur l'œuvre de Franck Leibovici* = *A Pragmatic Poetics: Reflections on the work of Franck Leibovici*, Dijon : Les Presses du réel ; Paris : AICA France, 2018. Ed. by Rahma Khazam
4. Teroni, Cristelle. “Sur quoi opère l’art”, interview with Franck Leibovici, *La Vie des idées*, October 2016, www.lavidesidees.fr
5. Let us also mention that most of his projects are undertaken in collaboration with people from the social sciences, and disciplines outside art.
6. *Franck Leibovici : low intensity conflicts - un mini-opéra pour non-musiciens*, Paris : MF éditions, 2019
7. See Leibovici, Franck. “suivre les conflits de basse intensité en .jpg, .doc, .zip”, *In octavo : les formats de l’art*, Dijon : Les Presse du réel : Annecy : ESAAA, 2015. Ed. by David Zerbib
8. Leibovici, Franck. Seroussi, Julien. *bogoro*, Paris : Questions théoriques, 2016, (Réalités non couvertes)
9. Teroni, Cristelle. *Op. cit.*
10. *(des formes de vie) : une écologie des pratiques artistiques*, Aubervilliers : Les Laboratoires d’Aubervilliers ; Paris : Questions théoriques, 2012
11. *des récits ordinaires*, Dijon : Les Presses du réel ; Nice : Villa Arson, 2014. Eds Grégory Castéra, Yaël Kreplak, Franck Leibovici