

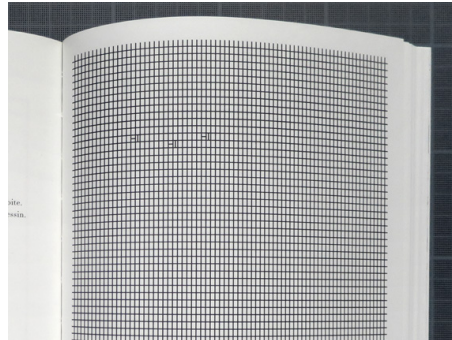
Claude Closky  
*Multiplying by three*

Exhibition on view from September 5 to 29,  
 and from October 6 to 31, 2015

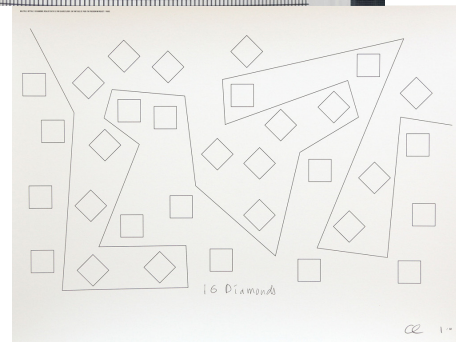
The particularity of a multiple is that it can be multiplied. No matter how specialists come up against the other terms of its definition—indeed, artist multiples excel in the diversity of their materials and techniques—, its reproduction into several copies remains a relatively uncontested criterion. However, this simple fact (this tautology) carries with it a whole philosophy, rooted in the history of 1960s avant-garde and in the redefinition of the notion of a *work of art*. From its very origin, the production of multiples is a way for artists to escape the commercial and institutional channels and insert their work into non-artistic networks, thereby reaching a larger audience and offering more affordable prices. At the Florence Loewy gallery, Claude Closky presents a selection of multiples created between 1995 and 2015 and instantly thwarts off any illusion of uniqueness: not only by multiplying each piece by three but by multiplying the exhibition itself. Like repeating an idea, Closky chose to repeat the general layout three times, thus also maintaining the same circulation of meaning from one piece to another—a way of associating the selected artworks like words forming a text, with predominant notions of protocol, composition, and language.

When discussing Claude Closky's work, media philosopher Marshall McLuhan is often quoted stating "the medium is the message." And indeed, Closky addresses the multiple like a medium in itself, made up of its format (often low-cost), its multiplication and its distribution. Each work is an opportunity to play wittily with those parameters, which constitute its *raison d'être*, or "message"—to come back to McLuhan. Closky's multiples even have a simpler form due to the fact that they apparently result from a protocol that manifests itself as being the heart of the work. In 2014, Closky created a drawing for *The Drawer* magazine: simple lines, both vertical and horizontal, make up the letters HI HI HI inside a grid—the semblance of a language (a malicious laugh that could very well be the artist's). When the editors of the review offered to sell the original drawing, Closky said that the multiple was the magazine itself and offered to frame it and sell it at the price of a regular copy, thus reviving the spirit of the avant-garde.

In Closky's artistic practice, the work arises from its enunciation rather than its result. This is why a good protocol is a simple protocol, without digression. The publication *16 Diamonds* is based on the distinction that can be made between squares and diamonds, depending on a simple difference of orientation. A clumsy line separates ones from the others, like a metaphor of the role of an artist who *shows* forms rather than creates them—and makes diamonds appear from an abstract form. The drawing *Green Form* is based on the juxtaposition of two A4 sheets of paper, showing a sort of grid made of a horizontal line regularly intersected by

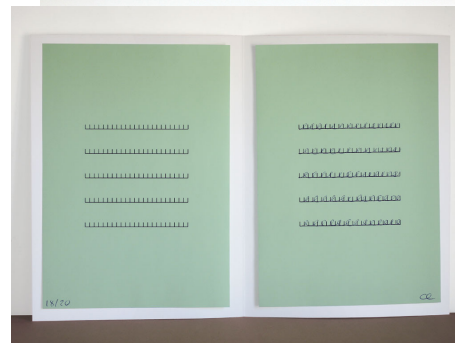


*Hi Hi Hi*, 2014, Paris:  
 The Drawer, volume 7,  
 p. 95-99, 17 x 24 cm.  
 Page 95.



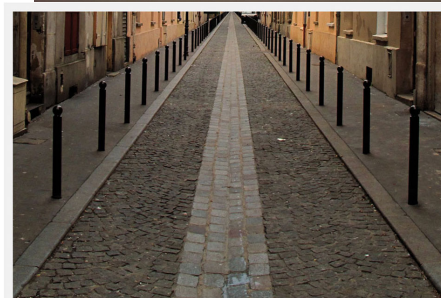
*16 Diamonds*,  
 2013, New York  
 & Paris: Gabriel  
 Jones edition.  
 Inkjet print on  
 paper, 33 x  
 49 cm.

*Green Form*,  
 2006, artist  
 edition, laser  
 print and  
 ballpoint pen on  
 colored paper,  
 32 x 44 cm.



*Inside a  
 Triangle (Paris,  
 France)*, 2011,  
 Paris: La Poste.  
 postcard, color  
 offset, 10,5 x  
 15 cm.

*Dix tentatives de  
 multiplier 2 par 4*  
 [ten attempts to  
 multiply 2 by 4],  
 1993, ballpoint  
 pen on paper,  
 30 x 24 cm.



*4, 5, 6*, 1995, Paris:  
 Florence Loewy.  
 Poster. Black offset,  
 70 x 50 cm.

2 x 4 = 1  
 2 x 4 = 2  
 2 x 4 = 3  
 2 x 4 = 4  
 2 x 4 = 5  
 2 x 4 = 6  
 2 x 4 = 7  
 2 x 4 = 8  
 2 x 4 = 9  
 2 x 4 = 10

*Dix tentatives de multiplier 2 par 4*

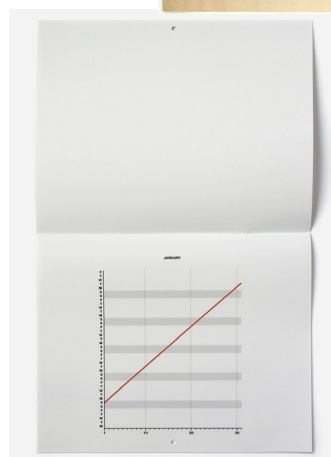


small vertical segments. On the left sheet the grid is left bare, whilst on the right sheet the artist has tried to fill it with a continuous series of the letter “e,” like the boxes of an administrative document. Thanks to the simple and hesitant presence of this handwritten line, a whole system of control and standardisation—sacrificing the individual on the altar of rationalisation—emanates from an abstract form.

Eager to challenge the absolute truth of certain types of formalisation and mathematisation of the world, Claude Closky did not refrain from mocking them, like when he attempted to multiply 2 by 4 ten times (*Dix tentatives de multiplier 2 par 4*, 1993). Whether it be through exaggerated literalism (for his postcard series *Inside a triangle*, he constricts landscapes to fit inside a triangle) or through the distortion of a numerical logic to create another (4,5,6), Closky uses the ability of numbers and geometry to instinctively push us towards an elementary form of abstraction. Thus *Perfect Nature*, and *Beautiful Face*, are images created through division by two and symmetry; ironically, they underline the ideal of classical beauty and compromise it at the same time.

However, multiplication logic is not just a formal game as it clearly refers to the idea of having “three times more.” With a kind of false naivety, Closky seems to suggest that “more” (more expensive, more grand, more beautiful) is necessarily better. Closky’s multiples fit particularly well within the general movement of his artistic work, which attempts to highlight the models that rule our daily lives “by following their common logic and getting it to run riot until absurdity.”<sup>1</sup> Like a parody of media discourse and representations of the world obsessed with growth, the 2006 calendar features the days of the week as the ordinates and the numbers as the abscissae, thus comparing the passing of time to a bidding race. In 2000, he directly applied this idea by putting up for sale four plastic lighters in the Colette shop (*Untitled*. 15 francs, 20 francs, 25 francs, 30 francs). The lighters only differed in prices and after time confirmed his intuition: in the end, there were only 15 francs lighters left! Does this mean that the value indicated on an object has the power to transform the object itself? This question also seems to arise from the work *Dessert plate* that, even when it is desperately empty, remains full of the fascination sparked by the image of money.

Camille Azaïs  
Translation: Tiffany Thomas



*Perfect Nature*, 2002, Pisa: Foundation Teseco per l'Arte. Greetings card. Color offset, 60 x 84 cm.

*Beautiful Face*, Vienna: Der Standard, no. 252, October 7th 2000, commissioned by Museum in Progress, center fold, 47 x 63 cm.

2006, 2005, Paris: Editions 2-909043. Two color offset, 24 pages, 24 x 30 cm.



*Untitled* (15, 20, 25, 30 Francs), 2000, 4 lighters, Paris: Colette.

*Dessert Plate*, 2010, Paris: gdm. Royal Limoges ceramic dish, ø 21 cm. Photographed with fruit salad.



<sup>1</sup> Claude Closky, interview conducted by Elisabeth Milon for *Livres d'enfances*, Centre national du Livre d'Artiste, 2001, cited by Michel Gauthier, “Un message dans le décor,” in *Prix Marcel Duchamp 2005*, Un-deux... quatre Editions, 2006.