

DESCRIPTION OF WORK PROPOSED:

Moby Dick or the She Whale

**An alternative reading dispersed, print and graphite on 964 pages of A4 tracing paper,
Five painted fabric lengths each 140x350cm, durational participatory performance, 2022**

A radical performance-based installation investigating my own relationship to language.

In a recent performance presented at Poush in 2021, I embarked on a marathon reading of the entire unabridged version of the Great American Melville Masterpiece of Moby Dick, only subverting the original text by inserting she / her / hers for every masculine pronoun. The sheer physical feat of mouthing the words by the thousands, the spit and the foam forming at the corner of the mouth, the drudge and lull of flipping through hundreds of pages, those 26 hours of sailing through the surf in the wake of the white whale slowly took on the form of a bodily struggle to which visitors were silent witnesses.

I studied fine arts in my native Glasgow and in London before travelling around the world. The French language is an experience in mouthing and mastering unfamiliar syllables and sounds.

Turning the tables on the visitors in a recreation of my Moby Dick performance, my artwork is a participative relay race in which I invite the visitor to act out the marathon-reading of the complete novel, page by page. Each person is invited to walk through the hanging veils and come to the fore where the novel is piled up in a stack of A4 pages. I have drawn on every page, in a slow painstaking process of rubbings from the floor of the studio. Each is an original work that you can take away with you ... only after you have read it aloud in English, in the original version of the novel, presumably not the mother tongue of residents or many of the visitors to the islands of the Mediterranean. It is for you to spit out Melville's words in English while, beyond the veils, other visitors are listening to our effort and waiting to read further into Captain Ahab's mad pursuit of the white whale. As awkward English speakers, you labour aloud and activate the piece. Only then can you wander off holding one page, the tiniest part of the book and a fraction of the artwork. Thus, disseminating Melville's masterpiece...

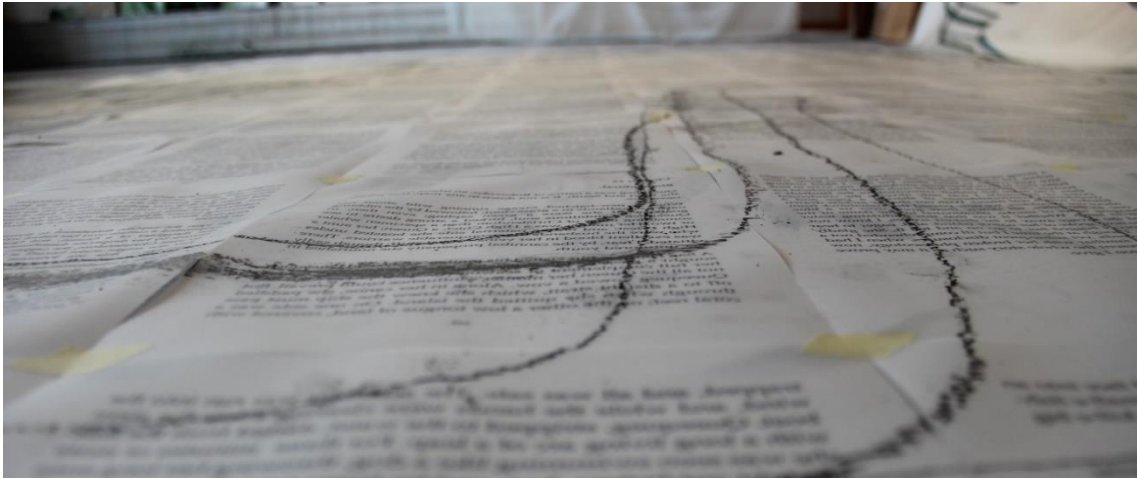
The whale. The words. The wires.

It is difficult not to see the pile of pages diminishing with every visitor-reader as a metaphor of a captured whale eaten away by the sharks in their frenzy, in one of the novel's enduring if gory scenes. It is also a discrete reminiscence of Felix Gonzalez-Torres celebrated candy piece of 1991 when he filled a corner of the Art Institute of Chicago's gallery with 175 pounds of colourful, wrapped candies. Visitors were invited to pick a candy, slowly depleting the pile which stood for Ross, his lover, whose body had shrunk to death with the Aids virus.

The bodily impact of the words. How the words are extracted from the body. And what traces they leave is suggested in the swirls of dark lines that invade the whole exhibition as they have been drawn on the hanging fabric lengths.

Words are returning to the mere choreography of lines, abstract yet meaningful. The wires. The words. The whale.

(‘A Cable I Have No Knife to Cut’ exhibition text by Alexandre Colliex)



MOBY DICK or the She Whale

A durational performance re-reading of the novel by the artist over a period of two days
Poush Clichy October 2021





A CABLE I HAVE I KNIFE TO CUT? Exhibition Poush! Clichy February 2022

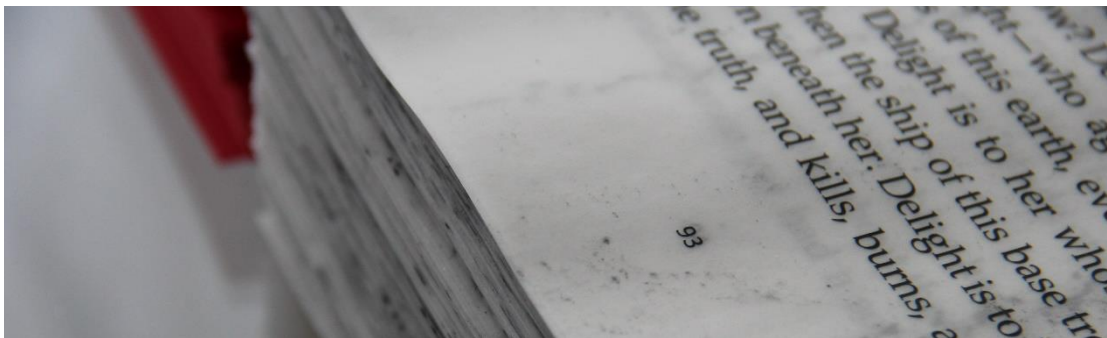
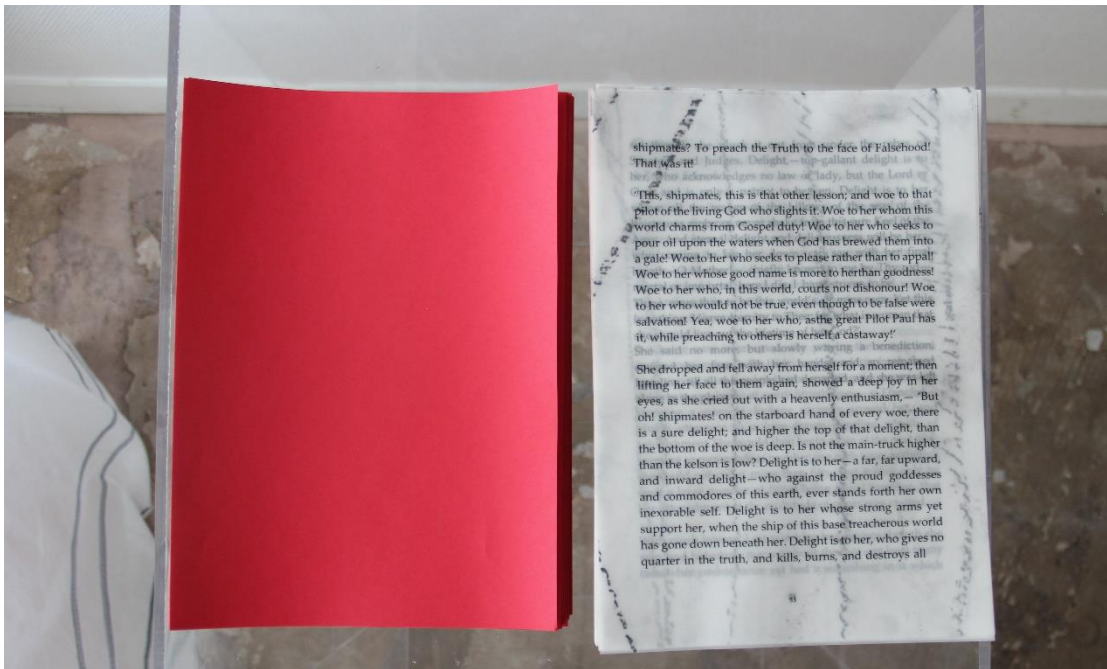




MOBY DICK or the She Whale
A re-reading of the novel by participatory action
Started at Poush Clichy 2022







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The wires. The words. The whale.