

ARTFORUM

Guillaume Leblon

LE CENTRE CULTUREL FRANCAIS DE MILAN

Corso Magenta 63

May 20–July 10

An enormous gray cube of fresh clay, wrapped in white cotton strips that resemble bandages, straddles the threshold between two different exhibition spaces in the building that houses the Centre Culturel Français de Milan, as if attempting to seal the encounter between the two spaces—and perhaps, too, between the two nations, France and Italy, that meet in this six-decade-old institution. Water rains down constantly on the clay, keeping it damp and malleable. Meanwhile, the bandages appear to contain and protect the fragile material.

The title of this sculpture, *Monumento nazionale* (National Monument), 2006/10, clearly points to the rhetoric of nationalism. But what the viewer finds here is an abstract work that requires a peculiar form of preservation. Guillaume Leblon originally conceived the work for a prize organized by the French city of Ivry-sur-Seine in 2006. At the time, the artist wondered what the city administrators expected from him—if, indeed, they might not want a monument. He decided to propose an antimonument that would resemble something monumental but would also call into question notions of tradition, memory, and political representation.

The curator of this exhibition, Alessandro Rabottini, has also included Leblon's *16h, Frévent*, 2009. This sound installation occupies the inner courtyard of the Palazzo delle Stelline, where the Centre Culturel Français is located, and consists of a recording of a church bell in the French farming town of the work's title. Frévent's bell rings every day at 4 PM, when day gives way to late afternoon; the piece repeats its slightly distorted sound every hour from then until 7 PM, when the gallery closes, as if to extend that particular moment for the rest of the day.

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.



Guillaume Leblon, *Monumento nazionale* (National Monument), 2006/10, clay, canvas, plastic tubing, water, 11' x 8' 11".

— Marco Tagliafierro