

DIAZ CONTEMPORARY

Stéphane La Rue

21 February to 28 March 2009

Opening Saturday 21 February from 3 to 6

Artist in Attendance

Diaz Contemporary is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Montreal-based artist Stéphane La Rue. This is the artist's first show with Diaz Contemporary.

Despite having emerged from the legendary territory of the Montreal Plasticiens, La Rue himself has adamantly refuted an adherence to any one movement, stating he does not "believe in 'isms' or 'ists'". Indeed it is hard to pin down La Rue or his practice with the usual labels associated with minimalism. His works do, in fact, involve a stripping down, both in terms of media and in terms of "action" within the confines of the picture ground. But this is merely the jumping off point for an engagement with the viewer that is as emotional as it is physiological.

This body of work gives an impression of adding a sculptural (and poetic) dimension to otherwise two-dimensional forms. Mylar sheets are tenuously joined by snippets of masking tape, a material not normally regarded as a medium unto itself, but rather as an invisible tool. After observing the pieces of tape for their own discreet formal integrity within the picture space, the viewer's gaze comes to shift between the advancing and receding layers of transparency. It is not a question of one overlapping the other, but of one becoming interchangeable with the other. Here, the tape becomes a signifier of process, the brave and fragile act of creating—and a mirror to the similarly brave and fragile act of absorbing, reflecting and enjoying.

Other works by La Rue include a series of flattened origami-like forms made from folded graph paper. There is the initial impulse to appreciate the shapes within the picture ground as "made" two-dimensional images. Following that comes the desire to mentally "open" the shapes towards us, into the room.

The fold reappears in coy suggestion in La Rue's larger works, namely a series of square, dark grey canvases. The edges (either the top alone, or the pairing of the top and bottom) of these bigger pictures are bordered with bare canvas trapezoidal and triangular slices. To the viewer standing directly in front of the pictures, this creates an irresistible illusion of deepened perspective. The pictures seem to be either folding or tilting. The work, in this case, gains a sculptural, almost architectural dimension. As well, the darkness of the pictures comes from graphite on cotton. The mottled unevenness of the grey draws forth the tactile quality of the cotton. Seemingly pure, but never simple, La Rue's work, for all its ostensible sedateness and absence of pictorial narrative, lacks nothing in intimacy or playfulness.

An MFA graduate from Concordia University, La Rue has exhibited extensively, including shows at: Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Art Gallery of York University, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal and Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec in Quebec City. La Rue is represented by Galerie Roger Bellemare in Montreal.

The artist acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts



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