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Adam David Brown

Submitted by Magenta on Tue, 10/25/2011 - 04:46 in

TORONTO



Adam David Brown: Mirror, Mirror, 2011: Acrylic mirrors. Images courtesy the artist and MKG127, Toronto.

By Bill Clarke

Using very few elements, Toronto-based Adam David Brown always seems able to create magic. In earlier work, the artist produced formally elegant pieces using stacks of deftly

Adam David Brown
MKG127
September 10 – October 8, 2011

cut coloured paper that are painterly and sculptural and suggestive of the work of Lucio Fontana. *Infinity Plus One*, his second solo at this gallery, felt like a big step forward for this artist, especially in terms of the ambitious, yet playful, use of materials.



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[%20Spell%20%28Light%29%20smoke%20on%20paper%202011.jpg\)](#)

Adam David Brown: Spell (Light), 2011: Smoke
on paper.

Upon entering the gallery, viewers' eyes immediately turned to a wall-filling installation titled "Mirror, Mirror" (all works 2011), consisting of glinting, laser-cut mirrors in the shapes of the English alphabet, the numbers zero through nine, and the words Yes, No and Goodbye. The font is similar to that often employed by Jasper Johns, and also calls to mind the bold graphics of Robert Indiana, both of these artists also having employed text sculpturally. The letters and figures are reproduced in a mirror-image to the right of the main arrangement, soaring off towards, if not infinity, then at least in the direction of a blackboard covered in equations and calculations that hung at the back of the gallery. It is here, and in a video of a light plume of smoke rising upwards against a dark background, where the artist suggested that some artistic alchemy is taking place.

Rounding out the exhibition were two framed works on paper titled "Spell (Light)" and "Spell (Dark)"; one sheet white and the other black. These are works for which Brown is becoming well-known. Both contain the word "abracadabra" three times in

a circle placed towards the top of the paper. The words have been stained onto the paper with smoke, and some of the letters are surrounded by graceful tendrils left behind by the staining process. Rumour also has it that the artist hangs these paper works outside at night so they can absorb some of the mystical power of the moonlight.

The “Spells”, it seems, are the result of a transformative process that brings together the building blocks of language (the letters and numbers), human ingenuity and scientific reasoning (the blackboard with its calculations) and nature (the smoke). The choice of the word ‘abracadabra’ equates the role of the artist with that of a conjuror, who also displays the tools of his trade, but then confounds his audience’s expectations by revealing them changed into something else. Like a magician, Brown, in this exhibition, used his smoke and mirrors to create works that surprise and delight.

Published in [Magenta Magazine Online \(/epublish/1\)](#), **Fall 2011, Volume 2, No. 4**

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