

Michael Dumontier

Submitted by Magenta on Thu, 06/07/2012 - 05:56 in

TORONTO



Michael Dumontier: *Untitled (red sock, right)*, 2012: Acrylic on mdf. Images courtesy MKG127,

Toronto.

By Romas Astrauskas

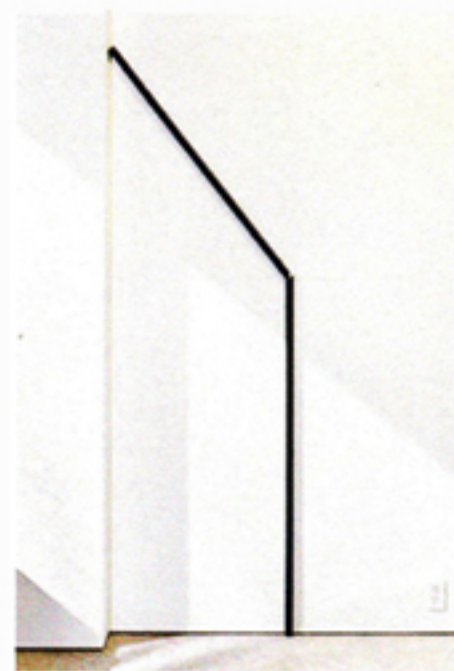
In the contemporary art landscape, with all its variations and genres, there is perhaps no style of practice more maligned and singled out for criticism by the public at large than

Conceptualism and Minimalism, particularly when they are combined. (Which they often are.) Often interpreted as cold, lifeless and intensely cerebral, these two approaches to art production often arouse the disdain of a public eager to criticize contemporary practice as exclusionary, insular and, at its worst, elitist. It is easy to view both disciplines as standoffish, impenetrable and ultimately inaccessible. What a pleasant surprise it was, then, to walk into an exhibition and have these expectations turned on their head.

Michael Dumontier

MKG127

March 17 – April 14, 2012



Michael Dumontier: *Untitled (broken stick)*, 2011: Acrylic on mdf.

Michael Dumontier's *the middle of the air*, which ran concurrent to his retrospective at Winnipeg's Plug-in Institute for Contemporary Art, is a charming and gentle rebuke of Minimalist practice, adding elements of humour and warmth to a genre that often possesses neither. The work, which encompasses drawing, painting, sculpture and collage, generally focuses on simple forms that are then brought to life or "activated" using some element of physical intervention. This physical intervention is often spare and economic in nature, but just enough to initiate some form of dialogue or narrative.

In *Untitled (Cracked Egg)*, a small white egg shape lies flat on a plywood shelf that protrudes from the wall, an impossibly thin crack carved into it stir sentiments of vulnerability and fragility. On the other side of the room, a tall thin black stick leans against the wall, a cartoon-like split carved into it, the top half of the stick virtually separated from its base as it leans away from itself at a roughly 45-degree angle. *Untitled (Broken Stick)* seems ripe with malaise. Sad, broken and with no clear purpose, the sculpture seems as good a visual metaphor for dejection and obsolescence as any. A few feet away, nestled in a spot where the wall meets the floor, sits a flat piece of wood scrolled into the shape of a sock and painted a bright Coca-Cola can red. Is it the one that got away in the dryer? A souvenir from last night's party? That one sock in the corner of the bedroom that you've refused to pick up for two weeks? It's an image so familiar and unexceptional to most of us, yet its incongruity and trespass into a gallery context inspires a flood of buoyant contemplation.

It is Dumontier's ability to transform the prosaic and mundane into things of interest that seems to be his greatest strength. His fascination with the materials and objects which inhabit the quieter corners of our lives peg him as a man interested in the life of quiet contemplation. His refined, gentle and distinctly humanistic approach to object-making posits the artist as a clear counterpoint to the rigidity and dehumanization one associates with Minimalist practice. By subtly challenging viewers to take a closer look at the things we most often ignore, Dumontier supplies us with the means and inspiration to see poetry in places it never would have otherwise existed.