Compte rendu

"A "Dangerous" painting"

Ouvrage recensé :

Michel Daigneault, Michel Daigneault, Galerie Trois Point; Montréal. April 28 - May 26, 2007

par James D. Campbell


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Michel Daigneault, Mur de Verre, 2005. Acrylic on canvas, 203 x 188 cm. Photo: Guy L'Heureux
his exhibition demonstrated that Michel Daigneault is quickly becoming one of the leading abstract painters of his generation. His work is at once inviting and interrogatory, and quietly proceeds from strength to strength, gathering greater credibility and momentum all the while. His last several exhibitions have been exemplary in their critical tenor, widening scope—and overwhelmingly seductive facades.

While they do not govern interpretation, his titles for these works inject a playful measure of whimsy and referential undecidability into their reading. They play simultaneously different riffs on content (iconographic and semiotic) issues and reading strategies. Such is certainly the case with Through the Looking Glass [Mur de Verre] (2006), which suggests a hectic transit through the wonderland mirror on our part and subsequent emergence on the other side of abstraction in a state of bemused wonder, now several light years removed from the Modernist home planet. Rife with metaphors that lurk restively somewhere just beneath our surface reading of them—like hungry sharks beneath the surface of ocean water—his recent paintings are capacious, daunting, and even, in a sense, dangerous. They continue to question, as several commentators have pointed out over the last few years, just what constitutes abstraction today amidst a conflation of heterogenous practices. It must be said that these works are the furthest things from hermetically closed abstracts. Daigneault has nimbly side-stepped the cul-de-sac of late Modernism and its pieties and emerged on the resplendent facade, a steel trap lies in waiting in the safest assumptions all come tumbling down. As noted above, Daigneault addresses the optic as well as our gray matter. This is certainly true of other paintings in the exhibition as well: A ciel ouvert [Open Skies] (2006), Ligne d'arrivée [Finish Line] (2006), and the resplendent La couleur qui tombe [Colour Falling] (2006, acrylic on canvas, 137 x 147, 5 cm).

While Daigneault is mentioned in passing towards the end of Roald Nasgaard's brave new book Abstract Painting in Canada, he (and his like-minded colleagues in new abstraction like Carmen Ruschiensky and David Blatherwick who sadly receive no mention there at all) clearly deserves more expansive, sympathetic and in-depth treatment—and, of course, a few repros.

JAMES D. CAMPBELL
Michel Daigneault, Jaune, 2006. Acrylic on canvas; 203 x 188 cm. Photo: Guy L'Heureux.
Michel Daigneault, À ciel ouvert, 2006-2007. Acrylic on canvas, 203 x 188 cm. Photo : Guy L’Heureux