

The New York Times

© 2014 The New York Times

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 2014



2014 JEAN-MICHEL MEURICE ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK; CANADA AND GALERIE BERNARD CEYSSON

Jean-Michel Meurice's
"Vinyle" (1976), at Canada.

'Supports/Surfaces'

Canada

333 Broome Street, between
Bowery and Chrystie Streets,
Lower East Side
Through July 20

Big, shiny Chelsea galleries are not the only ones that can present missing chunks of recent

art history. Canada, working with the Paris-based Galerie Bernard Ceysson, is staging the first American survey of some painters of the relatively unknown French Supports/Surfaces art movement, which was active in the late 1960s, '70s and early '80s. With so much of current abstraction in back-to-basics mode, the show is timely, revealing the strengths and pitfalls of its artists' approach. Some of this stuff looks alive and pertinent; some of it looks ordinary and inert.

To be fair, that distinction was a thin line these painters avidly explored. Formed after the Paris demonstrations of May 1968, the group combined Marxist thought, deconstructionist attitudes and the influences of late Matisse and Color Field stain painting. Firmly hands-on, its artists pursued a politically aware formalism that, by laying bare the processes and structure of painting, sought to diminish its commodity status without being anti-painting. The American painters working similarly at the time included Alan Shields, Alvin D. Loving Jr., Louise Fishman and Howardena Pindell.

As seen in the efforts of the 10 artists here, the best of them made unprepossessing works whose complexity emerges gradually. Surfaces (canvas) and supports (stretchers) were sometimes broadly interpreted and obviously opposed, as in Bernard Pagès's insouciant bundling of sticks in wire fencing.

But usually surface and support fuse. Claude Viallat and Daniel Dezeuze favor tinted grids of rope or slats of wood. Noël Dolla's cryptically dotted dish towel almost shrinks from being a painting, although his "Tartane" is a virtuosic marvel of layered stains and splashes.

Other high points include Jean-Michel Meurice's brilliantly simple layering of yellow vinyl on pink vinyl that casual cut-and-paste has converted into an irregular grid of pink arrows on yellow; Jean-Pierre Pinchemin's simple grid of thick pink and gray lines that is actually 56 pieces of intermittently dyed canvas, glued together somewhat like a quilt; and Louis Cane's genuinely economical "Toile Découpée," a single piece of canvas painted on both sides that presages Joe Bradley's geometric figures. As indicated by its catalog and timeline poster, this valiant show deserves to be much larger. **ROBERTA SMITH**

‘Supports/Surfaces’ at Canada



Jean-Michel Meurice's "Vinyle" (1976), at Canada. 2014 Jean-Michel Meurice Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York ; CANADA and Galerie Bernard Ceysson

Big, shiny Chelsea galleries are not the only ones that can present missing chunks of recent art history. Canada, working with the Paris-based Galerie Bernard Ceysson, is staging the first American survey of some painters of the relatively unknown French Supports/Surfaces art movement, which was active in the late 1960s, '70s and early '80s. With so much of current abstraction in back-to-basics mode, the show is timely, revealing the strengths and pitfalls of its artists' approach. Some of this stuff looks alive and pertinent; some of it looks ordinary and inert.

To be fair, that distinction was a thin line these painters avidly explored. Formed after the Paris demonstrations of May 1968, the group combined Marxist thought, deconstructionist attitudes and the influences of late Matisse and Color Field stain painting. Firmly hands-on, its artists pursued a politically aware formalism that, by laying bare the processes and structure of painting, sought to diminish its commodity status without being anti-painting. The American painters working similarly at the time included Alan Shields, Alvin D. Loving Jr., Louise Fishman and Howardena Pindell.

As seen in the efforts of the 10 artists here, the best of them made unprepossessing works whose complexity emerges gradually. Surfaces (canvas) and supports (stretchers) were sometimes broadly interpreted and obviously opposed, as in Bernard Pagès's insouciant bundling of sticks in wire fencing.

But usually surface and support fuse. Claude Viallat and Daniel Dezeuze favor tinted grids of rope or slats of wood. Noël Dolla's cryptically dotted dish towel almost shrinks from being a painting, although his "Tarlatane" is a virtuosic marvel of layered stains and splashes.

Other high points include Jean-Michel Meurice's brilliantly simple layering of yellow vinyl on pink vinyl that casual cut-and-paste has converted into an irregular grid of pink arrows on yellow; Jean-Pierre Pincemin's simple grid of thick pink and gray lines that is actually 56 pieces of intermittently dyed canvas, glued together somewhat like a quilt; and Louis Cane's genuinely economical "Toile Découpée," a single piece of canvas painted on both sides that presages Joe Bradley's geometric figures. As indicated by its catalog and timeline poster, this valiant show deserves to be much larger.