

# Galerie Daniel Templon

Paris

## DANIEL DEZEUZE

ArtReview, March 2016

### Daniel Dezeuze *Tableaux-valises et dessins*

Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris 9 January – 20 February

Entering *Tableaux-valises et dessins*, Daniel Dezeuze's sixth solo show at Daniel Templon, viewers familiar with his work will most likely be surprised to discover that half of the artworks displayed are sketchy pastels of butterflies over more than a dozen drawings titled *Papillons* (1997), *Vol de papillons* (2003–04) or, for the most part, *Persistance du taoïsme* (2003–05). Although not recent, they are exhibited here for the first time in Paris. These, the artist has said, are attempts to grasp the ungraspable: namely, the erratic flight paths of butterflies.

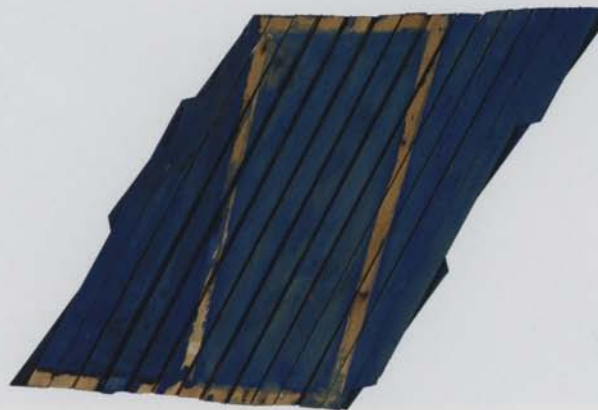
In my case, the momentary dread that arose on seeing these works wasn't due to my irrational fear of fancy moths, but to the seeming puerility of the lively motif, considering that Dezeuze was formerly a leading member of Supports/Surfaces, the shortlived, modernist and ultimately last French avant-garde movement, which he cofounded in 1969 with nine other painters and that had dissolved by 1972. While completely rejecting the illusionistic space of the canvas, Supports/Surfaces furthered the essentialist deconstruction and reinvention of painting through bricolage by exposing and experimenting with its structural elements, using poor fabrics, found objects and scraps, an aesthetic that Dezeuze has never ceased to

explore. In the light of this, his now-disclosed obsession with fluttering butterflies might thus appear, at first glance, somewhat uncanny.

At the core of Dezeuze's vocabulary since the late 1960s have been extensible panels and ladders, meaning that they can be easily folded or rolled up and down, and which he uses as flexible supporting frames (also his signature forms); when these are not left bare, he additionally employs see-through fabrics such as open mesh and gauze instead of canvas. All of this has allowed him not only to purge painting of its illusionistic space, but also radically to unsettle its fixed format. For instance, in this show, among nine assemblages – 'paintings' in Dezeuze's conception – commingling on the walls with the butterflies, *Fragment d'espace* and *Isis Extension de l'Univers* (both 2014) are diamond-shaped cut-outs of extensible wood lattice fences, which the artist more or less spread out before applying onto them blue and white paint respectively. While on the former he left the thin, unpainted delineation of a rectangle to recall the shape of the traditional pictorial frame, he also nailed a T-square onto the latter, a rather ironic touch given that the dimensions of these artworks, which do not care for right angles, are not fixed but potentially alterable. Holding that thought, and very figuratively speaking then, metamorphosis – of which the butterfly is the symbol

par excellence – has always been the essence of Dezeuze's DIY approach to painting; so I suppose it was only a matter of time before some of his art, at least, burst from its conceptual cocoon.

That said, along with the wandering flights of the decade-old pastel daubs of butterflies, all the other artworks presented in the gallery revolve around these notions of transformation and its route, none of them as stunningly and improbably as *Tableaux-valises* (2015), an ensemble of 20 hybrid suitcase-paintings installed on the floor in the middle of the single exhibition room. After removing both sides (the lid and bottom) of each suitcase, leaving only the edges and handles intact, Dezeuze filled three with cross timbers to suggest the supporting frame of a canvas and covered the others with fishnet, onto which he scattered paint with a large brush, in hues ranging from red, pink, blue and green to yellow. The slightly oblique position at which he placed the suitcases for this show, pulling them together and angling them all in the same direction, makes them look like a swarm ready to take off. And as your gaze wanders through the multicoloured maze of these gauzy portable paintings, the effect is absolutely dazzling, leaving me convinced that Dezeuze still has plenty up his sleeve; although perhaps, here, too many butterflies in the belfry. *Violaine Boutet de Monvel*



*Fragment d'espace*, 2014, painted wood, 72 × 44 cm. Photo: B. Huet/Tutti.  
Courtesy Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris & Brussels