

TEMLON



DANIEL DEZEUZE

ARTFORUM, February 2018

GRENOBLE, FRANCE

Daniel Dezeuze

MUSÉE DE GRENOBLE

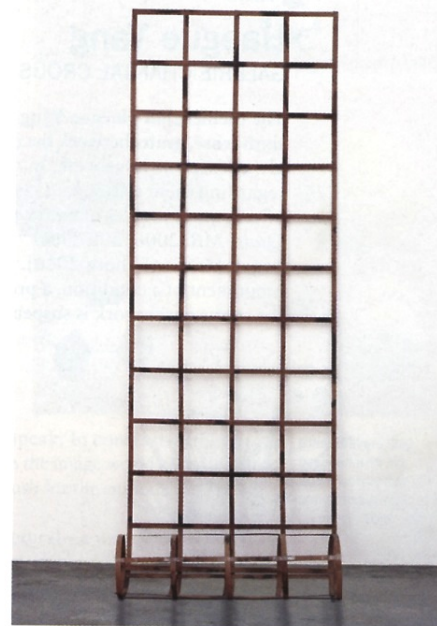
One can't help but smile at Daniel Dezeuze's "*Objets de cueillette*" (Gathering Objects), 1992–95. Delicate, gently bowed branches or stalks of bamboo adorned with brightly colored bulbs and funnels and bits of mesh, and displayed leaning against the gallery walls, these improvised forms with found objects suggest fantastical fishing poles or butterfly nets. Clustered at the midpoint of this brilliantly selected and beautifully installed retrospective—the artist's first comprehensive showing since a 2009 survey at the Musée Fabre in Montpellier, France—they offered a witty send-up of the idea of art as a lure or a trap. That they also suggest outsize surrogates for the paintbrush is surely part of the point.

In France, where he has long been a major figure, Dezeuze remains indelibly linked to Supports/Surfaces, the now-legendary collective he helped found in 1970, which famously professed to "deconstruct" painting. Yet as this exhibition confirmed, the artist has never ceased to channel the practical and theoretical ferment of those heady early years toward new and oft-surprising ends. With 141 works spanning all stages of his production, and accompanied by an excellent catalogue with essays by curators Guy Tosatto and Sophie Bernard, among others, "*Daniel Dezeuze. Une rétrospective*" put the full array of his inventions on view.

Following some initial scene setting—a handful of figurative paintings from the early 1960s, made during the artist's student years in Mexico—the first five rooms primarily tracked a sustained phase of focused inquiry instigated in part by Dezeuze's growing awareness of postwar American abstraction and pursued through and in the aftermath of his active engagement with Supports/Surfaces. At issue here is the very notion that "support" and "surface" might be held apart. For Dezeuze, the traditional opposition between stretcher and canvas has merely enabled their hierarchized and ultimately "idealist" coupling, one that privileges the taut screen for projection at the expense of the rigid yet concealed armature. The most famous object in this show, a plastic-covered stretcher of 1967, set the terms: Brought down to the ground and propped against the wall, the wooden chassis seems an obdurately material structure; stained and ever so slightly set off from us by the transparent barrier, it is nonetheless "virtualized" in turn, made to appear a painterly surface in its own right. What looks at first like a relentlessly literal gesture proves surprisingly hard to pin down.

A bit of found geometry, the stretcher can appear equally as a material correlate for either the perspectival grill or the modernist grid, a technology of specular capture, or an autotelic apparatus. Dezeuze's rapidly proliferating lattices variously invoke these possibilities, the better to derange them all. Modular configurations in canvas, tarlatan, or wood were rolled upon themselves or left to pool on the floor like Jackson Pollock's paint skeins (*Quadrillages de rubans de toile* [Grids with Strips of Cloth], 1972; "*Échelles*" [Ladders] and "*Claies*" [Grates], 1970–77; and *Échelles ajourées* [Openwork Ladders], 1972). Veneer strips, stapled to the wall, charted mutually interrupting vectors and unruly recessions ("*Triangulations*," 1975–76). The 1977–81 "*Gazes*" (Gauzes), rightly represented in depth in Grenoble, touched the extreme: Composed of cutout shapes in the tulle fabric hazily impregnated with pigment and pinned directly to the wall, with an aerated weave that is at once innately rigid and visually permeable, the forms are undeniably physical and yet ungraspable, unstable targets and trapdoors for vision itself.

The emphatically material "*Portes*" (Doors), 1982–84, comprised of entrances the artist recuperated from demolished housing and further modified in various ways, strongly suggest a new threshold within the oeuvre itself—but to what, exactly? Even more so than his



Daniel Dezeuze, *Untitled*, 1977, stained wood, approx. 111 x 42 1/4 x 15".

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earlier output, Dezeuze's work after 1980 stubbornly resists assimilation under one cohesive rubric. He explores multiple directions simultaneously, alternating between and unpredictably condensing formal, material, and conceptual contiguities. Take the "*Portes*" themselves. Propped against the walls and frequently subdivided into rectangular units, they point to the continued presence of the stretcher lattice as an organizing paradigm, yet they also extend painting's net to the broader field of objects at issue in the artist's later series. Nothing stands alone; each body of work unfolds into a larger system of prolongations and displacements. And as the "*Objets de cueillette*" are there to remind us, each invites us to gather up that system in a different way.

—Molly Warnock