

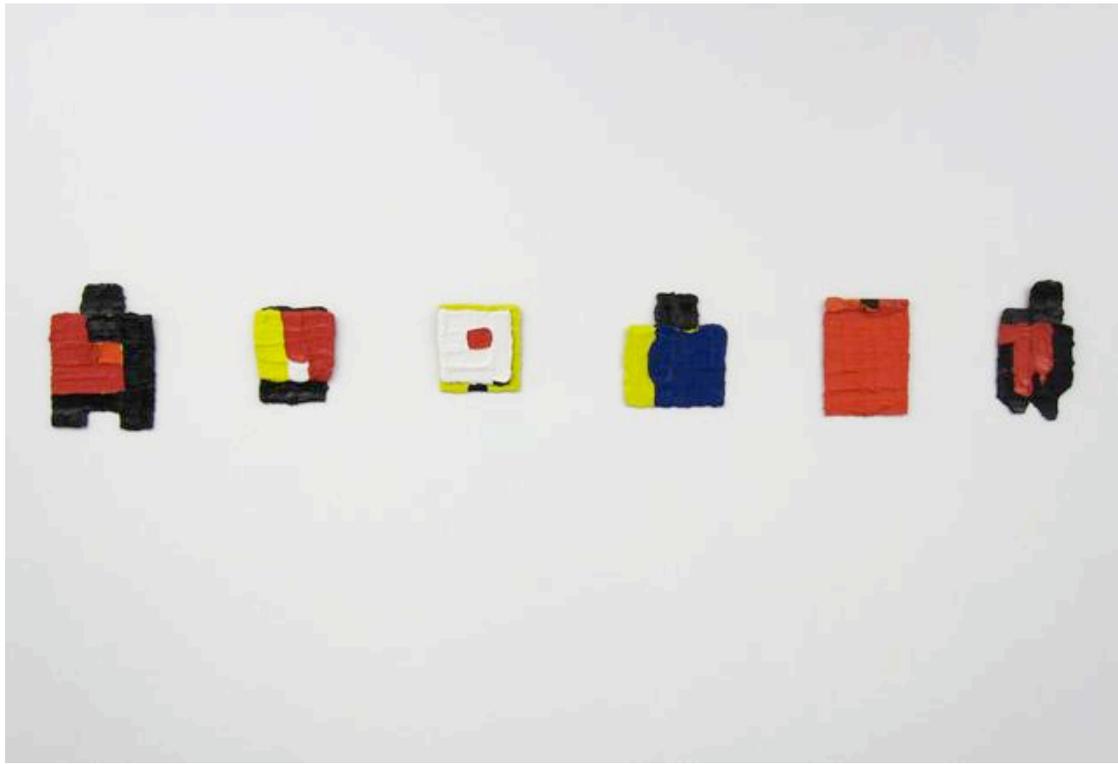
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Paul Bureau: One on One

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Paul Bureau: One on One. Cartons, oil on cardboard, dimensions variable (installation view, 2010). Photo: Magenta, with permission from Galerie Donald Browne, Montreal.

By **Bill Clarke**

Paul Bureau: One on One

Ever since Paul-Emile Borduas and the **Galerie Donald Browne** introduced painting in Quebec in the 1940s, some of the most important painters produced by this country in the latter half of the 20th Century emerged from *la belle province* — Guido Molinari, Yves Gaucher, Françoise Sullivan, Claude Tousignant and, of course, Jean-Paul Riopelle. It seems that Montreal has always been a painting town, just as Vancouver seems to be Canada's photography capital and Winnipeg has become a hotbed for drawing and artist collaborations. It seems appropriate, then, that several of Montreal's galleries coordinated exhibitions featuring new painting under the banner "Extreme Painting/ Peinture Extrême" this summer.

June 19 - August 21, 2010



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One on One (R/W/Y). Oil on canvas,

183 cm (2010). Photo: Guy L'Heureux.

the artist and Galerie Donald Browne,

Montreal.

Bureau, a Montreal-based painter who has been exhibiting for almost 25 years, creates wonderfully textured paintings that are rooted in the styles of the Automatistes and the later Plasticiens. Each work in the exhibition, all sharing the title *One on One*, refers to the artist's approach to applying

the paint to the canvas or cardboard — one thickly applied layer of paint on top of another thickly layered coat. The two large near-monochromes in the show, one an assertive block of red with single smaller blocks of yellow and white, and the other a deep void of black with flashes of white, provide viewers with plenty of visual stimulation despite the artist's restricted colour palette. Deep striations in uneven grid patterns through the paint animate these canvases, while the licks of paint that wrap over the edges make it feel as if, at this large scale, the energy radiating from these paintings is being barely contained.

Another series of seven smaller works, the *One on One* cartons (2010), have this same energy despite their smaller size. Here, the oil paints thoroughly envelop the cardboard bases, and the paint handling seems dictated by the shapes of these cardboard scraps. In one lovely piece, an impasto of paint overhangs the top of the vertical rectangle, while two works with glossy black foundations hint subtly at the anthropomorphic. These works feel most in the tradition of painters like Borduas and mid-50s Molinari with their emphasis on texture and colour.

In the back gallery hangs an earlier series of 146 paintings completed by the artist while living in Paris. The uniformly sized (27 x 22 cm) works that make up the *Série Efflorescence* (1994) attest to the dynamic flexibility of the painting medium with the canvases displaying a wide range of techniques and moods. Although many have been sounding the death-knell of painting for years, in Bureau's hands oil paint continues to feel vibrantly alive.

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