

reviews: international

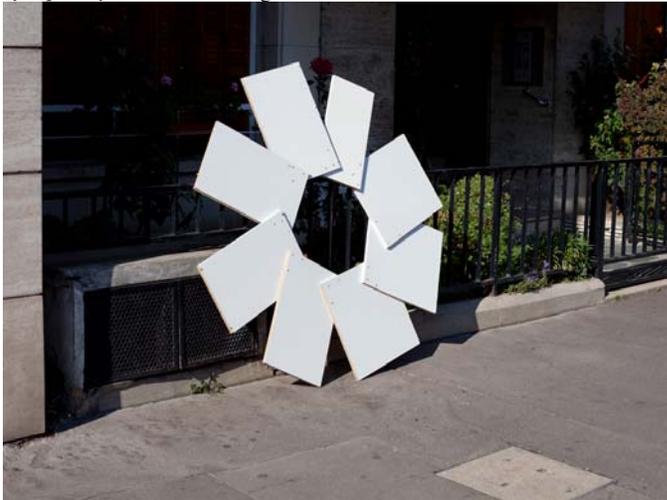
Didier Courbot

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Toronto

French artist Didier Courbot draws inspiration from his immediate surroundings, creating magical sculptures from provisional materials. A tall, thin work titled *Vertical* (2010), shown at this gallery in 2010, consisted of an extension pole for a paint roller, a cardboard tube, a roll of duct tape, and other bric-a-brac anchored precariously to the floor and ceiling. Such constructions would be twee if they weren't so considered.

Courbot's latest body of work, the focus of this charming exhibition, includes eight photographs (all 2011) that document his temporary arte povera-inspired sculptures on Paris streets. Made from discarded objects, the sculptures allude to modernist design. For *French Thonet* the artist reconfigured an old wooden coatrack into a symphony of interlocking arcs and curves.



Didier Courbot, *Hylla*, 2011, digital c-print

Hylla depicts a large circular form constructed from white shelves propped upright against a fence, while the mobile hanging from a tree in *Tournicotte* has a Calderesque charm, despite being made from a battered laundry-drying rack. Courbot usually builds his sculptures where he finds the materials, then has someone else photograph them; he leaves the constructions behind for passersby to notice (or not).

Also on view was *8 Memos* (2011), a sculptural installation consisting of eight white paper shopping bags arranged strategically throughout the two-floor gallery. Each bag contained a commonplace object—a wooden log, a ball of elastic bands, Styrofoam. Visitors had to navigate around the bags, thereby becoming conscious of how they moved around the space.

Courbot's engagement with the urban environment brings to mind another Frenchman, the filmmaker Jacques Tati, whose *Playtime* (1967) and *Traffic* (1971) satirize modern city life. But where Tati takes a cynical view, Courbot finds delight in the urban flotsam. —*Bill Clarke*