

**Raphaël Zarka***Ratiocination*

May 24 – June 21 2008

Galerie Michel Rein is pleased to be holding its first ever solo show of Raphael Zarka's work. This artist, born in 1977, a graduate of the Beaux-Arts de Paris and the Winchester School of Art, and author of two books on the history of the skate-board\*, came to notice as a result of his work presented at the last Lyon Biennial. Titled *Riding Modern Art*, the installation consisted of a series of photographs depicting skaters at work on modern art sculptures in public places, and a modernist sculpture by Kobra. A significant aspect of Raphael Zarka's work thus appeared between the lines: his interest in the migration of forms, from Renaissance scientific objects to the skate-board ramp by way of modernist sculpture. In the exhibition at the gallery, the artist will be showing, in particular, *Tautochrone*, a replica sculpture of an object developed by Galileo to study pendulum movement. Through the replica, the artist reveals several meanings for one and the same form, as if to play on a collective unconscious encompassing 21st century urban culture as much as humanist inventions from the Renaissance.

*Ratiocination*, the title of the show chosen by the artist, illustrates his soft spot for things with many meanings, and games. It is a word borrowed from Edgar Allan Poe which the writer used to describe his most cerebral stories, such as *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, with which he invented the genre of the detective novel. "To ratiocinate" means, in both the literal and the literary sense, to apply an ultra-rational method to both writing and investigation. In the pejorative sense, it also means a misuse of reasoning, otherwise put, the imitation of rationalism without any real scientific content.

In his plastic work, Raphael Zarka plays with this plurality of meaning. With much precision he handles the art of the replica and of reconstruction (as is evident from his sculpture re-creating the Study of St. Jerome, as painted by Antonella da Messina), and deduction (some of his sculptures are forms found by way of deduction from other sculptures). In so doing, he faithfully follows Poe's principle of "ratiocination" and tacks close to the artist-architect-scientist model dear to the Italian Renaissance (Da Vinci and Alberti). But he is also attached to error, poetry and the free association of forms and ideas, which illustrates the second meaning of the term "ratiocination" and likens him to the work of artists belonging to the same generation, like Ryan Gander.

The *Rhombicuboctahedra*—replica sculptures which Zarka will be showing in the exhibition-- may resemble scientific objects, but they also come across as unusual phenomena when they appear like readymades in the series of photographs titled *The Forms of Rest*. Once again we can find these objects in a painting produced by the British artist Christian Ward for the show, which serves to bolster the strangeness of their existence.

Somewhere between science and fiction, Raphael Zarka's work gives rise to many different interpretations, from a scientific-cum-historical vision which will delight nerds, to the more Pop vision adopted by the skaters' friend. The reality of his work is possibly situated this side of all this, in a poetic interstice where the forms can be read in several ways without these different meanings being mutually exclusive.

Raphael Zarka has had many solo shows in France and abroad, including *Foundation* at the Galerie 1m3 in Lausanne (curated by Julien Fronsacq), *En Milieu Continu* at the Gallery of the Nantes School of Fine Arts (2007), and *Padova* at La Vitrine in Paris (curated by Mathilde Villeneuve, 2008). The exhibition *Ratiocination* is the fourth part of this series of solo shows. He also took part in Paris in the group show project *220 jours* (curated by Elodie Royer and Yoann Gourmel).

Isabelle Alfonsi

\* *Chronologie lacunaire du skate-board, 1779-200 – une journée sans vague* (ed. f7, 2006) and *La conjonction interdite, notes sur le skate-board* (ed. f7, 2007)

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Images available upon request, please contact Loïc Chambon: galerie@michelrein.com  
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Next exhibition: Armand JALUT, *Doigts, cannelés, chaton*, June 24 - July 26, 2008