

JULIA DAULT

BORN 1977, TORONTO

LIVES AND WORKS IN NEW YORK

In the works of Julia Dault, gesture is drained of illusion, of wanton or wild expression, and carried into the territories of process and performance. Each of her paintings involves a high degree of physical effort; in the artist's words, she wants to "blend the craft of painting with the industrial aesthetic of post-studio production."¹ With materials such as vinyl and pleather, and ad-hoc tools such as metal rulers and branches, Dault renders compositions through stripping, carving, and peeling away. For example, to make *Bunga Bunga*, 2011, Dault coated golden-hued costume pleather with a thin layer of blue oil paint, which she then methodically scraped away with a rubber comb. The resulting canvas is a play between the swooping lines left by the comb and the vibrancy of the shimmering underlying surface. Visually, the work would seem to fit within the language of Abstract Expressionism, but its systematic markings divest the canvas of paint rather than splatter it, pulling the piece out of this trajectory. In other works, such as her draped paintings *Silver Surfer* and *Sure You Can*, both 2011, the materials themselves are moveable—unfurling, bending, and arcing with gravity—these constructions seem to carry on a life of their own, making them unpredictable or nomadic, as opposed to stationary canvases.

Location takes on greater importance in Dault's sculptures, as their constitutive materials—disused or forgotten—are often scavenged from the site where they will ultimately be displayed. The titles of these works point to the specific details of their production: for example, the time required to make the work and the day on which it was made, as in *Untitled 17, 11:00AM–4:00PM, January 20, 2011*. Built out of commercial products, *Untitled 17* contains three sheets of Plexiglas and Formica that have been forcibly bent, strapped into place, and stacked against a wall one on top of the other, forming a vertical of industrial materials constrained into a repose of pliant submission. At first glance, the work appears indebted to a minimalist aesthetic, and yet, on closer examination of its title and precarious strings, it becomes clear it has been wrangled into position through an act of force and will, and that its taut form is vulnerable and could quickly combust or unravel. The static end result belies the labor and risk that went into its construction, leaving the viewer to wonder about the drama between artist and materials that took place.

Like Dault's paintings, her sculptures are performative objects; they emerge from choreographed actions related to materials, time, context, and condition. In appearance, they sit smartly within the traditions of abstraction and Minimalism, but their position is one of disguise, as the artist has both torn away notions of subjectivity and imbued spare form with labor and effort. Her works defy the formal poles of cold, conceptual, outsourced fabrication and unfettered, inarticulate personal expression, in order to locate a middle ground that engages tools, site, and her own human resources.

—Lauren Cornell

1. Julia Dault, artist's statement: <http://www.local-artists.org/user/6109/profile> (accessed December 4, 2011).





Julia Dault: *Unified 17 11:00am – 4:00 pm, January 20, 2011*, 2011. Flexiglas, Formica, Everlast boxing wraps, string, dimensions variable. (here 88 x 66 x 52 in [223.5 x 167.6 x 132.1 cm]). Installation view, Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2011. Photo: Bob Goedewaagen



Julia Dault: *Unified 18 14:00am – 9:00 pm, January 20, 2011*, 2011. Flexiglas, Formica, Everlast boxing wraps, string, dimensions variable. (here 96 x 85 x 43 in [243.8 x 215.9 x 109.2 cm]). Installation view, Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2011. Photo: Bob Goedewaagen