

Francine Savard

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

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The 63 works on display in Francine Savard's mid-career retrospective, curated by Lesley Johnstone, express intellectual and philosophical concepts with refined, graphic precision. Drawing on the Québécois *Plasticien* movement (which included Guido Molinari, Claude Tousignant and Fernand Leduc), Savard has produced work ranging from painting to sculpture and incorporates text, typography, colour and structure in a self-reflexive way that encourages the viewer to rethink art history, geography, analysis and representation.

Savard, a Montreal-based artist and graphic designer, has a talent for systematic analysis and translating the process of cataloguing into visual form. In her *Partition Series* (2007) she has encoded texts, picking descriptive words and then blacking them out to create a unique piece of art. When we look at works that use a similar process, like *P = 8%* (2006) and *Sans problème, sans emploi (Photographique)* (2009), the text Savard started with and the process of analysis she has undertaken are not immediately apparent. However, punch card-like imagery points to the act of analysis and showcases it for visual consideration.

Savard excels at turning art criticism back into art. For works such as *Une étendue jaune* (2001), she extracted from critical texts words used to describe the work of the non-figurative artist Fernand Leduc. Connecting these words to shapes in Leduc's paintings, she then created her own shaped canvases with these words inscribed within them. In so doing, Savard considers the limits of language in describing art and questions our modes of analysis. Similarly, in *Les Couleurs de Cézanne dans les mots de Rilke 36/100 – Essai* (1998), Savard takes expressions used by Rilke to describe the colours of Cézanne's paintings and creates her own expressive palette, thoughtfully reconsidering the viewing of art and its interpretation.

This rewarding show leaves the viewer pondering questions of language, interpretation and classification. But with all its intellectual content, Savard's retrospective is not without poetry. Her minimalist art pieces are the result of thoughtful meditation; the viewer can sense the considered quality of her work. In the final room, epigraphs from famous books (with words selectively omitted) form a wall of poetic snippets, pointed moments of personal inspiration. Throughout her work, Savard emphasizes her careful consideration of text and structure, ultimately taking her viewer beyond the canvas.