

Daniel Lefcourt
Put All Doubt To Rest

by Gabrielle Giattino, November 2004

For his first solo exhibition, Daniel Lefcourt will present a series of new paintings and a work for video. Depicting inanimate masses, rocks or chunks of black and gold matter, Lefcourt's handsome work is infused with both tragic emptiness and humorous absurdity. At once utterly flat and intricately dimensional, his works can be seen as nihilistic one-liners or saturated meditations on the nature of language or the vulnerability of the material world.

In the corner of Daniel Lefcourt's studio sits a handmade tool for scraping the surface of thickly applied oil paint. A small, well-worn wire rake, this object is evidence of Lefcourt's inventive technique for building the illusion of depth and weight with a pared down palette of only black oil paint. While the sublimely non-reflective quality of the deep well of black pigment draws the viewer in, Lefcourt controls the appearance of reflected light through his meticulously scratched surface of oil. Heavy dark masses of rock, elaborately faceted, sit in the spotlight of his stretched linen.

By repeating an iconic, but utterly generic subject matter, in both his painted and video works, Lefcourt introduces us to a kind of new vocabulary of signs that confronts the viewer point-blank with its physically and intellectually dense blankness. Images of a mutating chunk of gold ecstatically flicker in Lefcourt's stop-animation video while painted stones sitting on slight shadows, so conscientiously illustrated, seem to exist as if stopped dead in an a-temporal realm. The repeated iconography perceived with a bi-polar attention to the passage of time, activates a vigorous dialogue among what would seem to be a group of pictorially depicted objects innately devoid of content.

In response to the emptiness of his subject matter, Lefcourt says he sees his paintings as tragedies. Titling his work to refer to structural elements of tragedy or allegory, Lefcourt aims to create a serious body of work, but not at the expense of the important quality of absurd humor. 'It's always when my thoughts turn to Sisyphus that I start realizing how silly I've gotten.' They are, after all, sumptuously painted and scrupulously conceived, funny pictures of rocks.