



MICHAEL A. ROBINSON *Various Studio Essentials* 2004 Mixed media  
Dimensions variable

## Michael A. Robinson

◀◀ PIERRE-FRANÇOIS OUELLETTE ART CONTEMPORAIN, MONTREAL

The works in Michael Robinson's exhibition are dazzling for their conceptual virtuosity, playfulness and technical wherewithal.

*My Own Private Modernism* (2004) is an aptly titled seven-foot cube, comprised of varying lengths of inch-thick cedar, that is capable of drawing on memories of the unadulterated pleasure of constructing huge Meccano sets on the kitchen table as children. Extraordinarily intricate in its construction, and as a sculptural volume that is void but also plenum, it made for a litany of wonderful intricacies in the seeing.

In the gallery's recently added third room, the exhibition's showstopper, *Various Studio Essentials* (2004), looks as though a huge, invisible vertical-rod magnet has been magically transported from the artist's studio, with everything sucked in and locked down along its central axis: ladder, tripods, saw, functioning lamp, mop, brooms, working fan, paint roller, coat rack and so forth—all indissolubly wed by a vast assortment of clamps. The work is a magnet for our empathic capacities. To study the myriad contents of the artist's studio is to commune with the artist himself.

The installation *Theory of Other Minds* (2004), in the rear room, is a structure made of similarly clamped pieces of wood on a maquette table surmounted by a taxidermied crow. The black bird appraises visitors with its beady black gaze and is obviously a surrogate for the sculptor himself. Accompanying the sculptures are three sumptuous large-scale prints—digital ink-jet printouts of a virtual three-dimensional object—as well as ink drawings and some haunting black monochrome plaster castings rife with recesses that suggest openings onto the depths of the artist's own mind.

The show is akin to a cornucopia issuing forth a bevy of arresting artworks—the racing thoughts of an inordinately agile mind. Robinson's empathogenic sculptures have real impact. Indeed, the word on the street in Montreal is that his exhibition is one of the finest of the season—a view with which I readily concur. JAMES D. CAMPBELL