

DIANE ROSENSTEIN

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ARTS & CULTURE

Review A heady jumble of a show by David Schafer, by Leah Ollman (February 13, 2015)

David Schafer's work exists at the intersection of architecture, sound, sculpture, language and theory — quite a congested place.

At Diane Rosenstein, the collisions, contradictions and convergences between those formidable entities play out loudly and confusingly, but not without delivering some wry provocations. The heady jumble of a show features work that spans the past dozen years or so. Most of the L.A.-based artist's installations involve several components: a free-standing built structure; printed texts framed and hung on the wall; and speakers emitting speeches, songs or sound effects.

"What Should a Painter Do?" (2011), for instance, centers around a scaffold of slender poplar planks, some dyed in primary colors. The structure brings to mind the elegant purity of De Stijl architecture and the reductive abstraction of Barnett Newman, whose comments from a documentary film issue from one of three attached speakers.

It's rare when the artist's words can be heard clearly, but a text piece nearby spells out the fundamental, titular issue with graphic punch, repeating the question, "What should could would can do does did will shall a painter do?" in a continuous, unbroken stream. In each iteration, all but one of the verb choices is struck through. The piece reads as a coy but earnest chant, an imploring work of visual poetry.

Schafer disrupts communication intentionally, incisively, in his work, through strategies of fragmentation and interruption. The frustration is real, on both meta- and ground levels, but, thankfully, so is the fascination.