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**Jean Dupuy** at Loevenbruck
by Wade Saunders & Anne Rochette

The French octogenarian Jean Dupuy was an abstract painter until the mid-’60s, when he moved to New York and began pursuing technological and optical experiments and performance. In 1984 he returned to France, to a village near Nice, where, ever since, he has made paintings and objects that are often driven by language games. Many of the paintings consist of anagrams, always rendered in colored uppercase letters. Dupuy typically combines paintings and sculptures, sometimes from different periods, into always-shown-together wholes. Eight of the nine pieces in his exhibition “Four Million Three Hundred Twenty Thousand Seconds” consisted of such diachronic linkages. Though visually direct, the works become complex for those willing to take up their perceptual and linguistic conundrums.

*The Printing Table* (1974-84) combines a sculpture, first shown in 1974, with a 1984 painting and an undated print. In the sculpture, a sheet of rag paper largely covers the top of a 3-foot-high table; an attached lamp illuminates the paper and draws our gaze toward an eyepiece set into the sheet. Peering into the eyepiece, and thus resting our foreheads and noses on the paper, we see the magnified tops of our heads, a view rendered by a periscope under the table directed at an angled mirror. In a sleight of optics, Dupuy’s device turns our curiosity into self-reflexive discovery. Viewer after viewer pressing flesh to paper builds a golden stain. Slowly a sequence of handsome “prints” is produced, one of which hangs near the table.

The associated painting *Lazy Art: The Printing Table* is a tall, 72-by-54-inch white canvas divided into three horizontal sections, each filled with myriad hand-painted letters. The upper block comprises 15 lines of short English words, the second 14 lines of running English text, and the third, “Notes,” four lines of scrambled letters ranging from A to G, which can be read as musical notes. The words in the top block are listed alphabetically; most repeat many times. Each word suggests a color, for example FIG and MUD, and is painted the associated hue. The middle block describes how the adjoined sculpture, Printing Table, functions; the colorful text is anagrammatically fashioned from most of the letters in the word list above. The “leftover” letters constitute the bottom block. The piece unfolds in time, be it the seconds of our looking into the eyepiece, the sequence of thousands of viewers who cause the prints to appear, the decade between making the table and the painting, or our gradual deciphering of Dupuy’s puzzling methods.

In the show’s most recent work, *Concert of Seconds* (2011), 19 small, battery-powered clocks are aligned on the wall; their faces are replaced by paper disks or squares bearing words or short phrases, many referring to time or sound. Grandchildren of Duchamp’s Rotoreliefs, the disks go full circle each minute, some right, some left. In turning, one of the words, “InouI” (inouï, or “unheard” in French) becomes a palindrome when seen upside down, the “u” switching roles with the “n.” Each clock has a little microphone linked to small speakers on the floor. Dupuy’s clock orchestra produces a quasi-natural sound, like rain on a hard surface. The work is funny and poetic. No psychological reading, no affect. All fun and brains.