Michele Zarro's exhibited works are highly considered and a refined integration with the space in which they are manifested. However there is an edginess and a raw materiality in her use of found objects and crafted overworking; indeed there is an energy that belies the fact that these installations display a performative strategy. The exhibitions are usually made at the point of installation of the show, a few days before an opening. I am, in fact, writing about an exhibition here that I cannot see, as yet.

Two factors are operating in a dynamic ‘call and response’ relationship in this situation. One is the immediacy of placing herself in a highly pressured situation, and the other is the self-conscious, determined existential philosophy that qualifies her doing so. On the one hand I can verify, personally, that she has always had a fairly highly strung, even obsessive approach to being a ‘maker’ and a painter, before she went to Sydney College of Arts. And now I can survey the shifts and extrusions in the topography of her research-led-practice, from a distance, punctuated by the thousand kilometres between her home in Byron Bay and her postgraduate studies in Sydney. She has become an installation artist. This first part is in fact the second component in my analogy; it’s the ‘response’.

On the other hand the ‘call’ remains and thence appears to fold back upon the echo of its origin, in the other. She has, quite brilliantly, taken the immediacy of her early obsessive, repetitive mark-making in overly thick wax media oil paint and translated it into the expanded field of a highly conceptualised practice. Now we find her an eccentric collector of found materials and objects, performing the morphology of materiality in shifting designating and placement of meaning, under the uncompromising glare of the gallery lights, bare walls and a Balmain Rentals truck of stuff outside, with four days to work with. What a palette!

There has always been a certain brash, ‘in your face’ approach to her production of works and, ironically, a resulting aesthetic quality that seems poised between a nervous kitsch and a sophisticated visual composition, balancing, alluring and quite beautiful ‘on the eye’. I don’t know if it is the ‘iron in the soul’ or the ‘soul in the irony’. It redoubles, it’s the mise en abyme, it’s her carnivalesque laugh, her preoccupation with Sartre and perhaps her desire to come home.

Time may wait for no man but Michele pushes it about with an edgy energy and risky confidence that relies uncompromisingly on her natural abilities, her make-do attitude and the strong intellectual scaffold she has developed to build this strategy upon in developing her practice. And I wait for this exhibition, like a piece of her found materials or a component of her performance, with keen anticipation to see just what it is that I am writing about and how she will probably paint over what I have written.

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