



Wall Bearer, 2011, archival digital print

Kate Gilmore

Kate Gilmore's video, sculpture, performance and installation work is shown internationally, including solo exhibitions at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum; Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland; Parasol Unit, London; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; and in Tel Aviv, Madrid, Stockholm, and Turin. Group exhibitions include the 2010 Whitney Biennial and exhibitions at MoMA PS1, New York, and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, among others. Her work is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Gilmore holds an MFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York, and is currently Associate Professor of Art and Design at SUNY Purchase College.



Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery | Staller Center for the Arts | Stony Brook University | Stony Brook, NY 11794-5425
Gallery Hours: Tues - Fri 12 - 4 pm, Sat 7 - 9 pm | Closed Sun, Mon and Holidays | Free admission
Also open during intermission and one hour prior to most Staller Center season performances.

Information: 631.632.7240 | ZuccaireGallery@stonybrook.edu | <http://ZuccaireGallery.stonybrook.edu>

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Front Image: *Built to Burst* (detail), 2011, archival digital print
Flap Image: *Top Drawer*, 2014, video still

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KATE GILMORE

Top Drawer

PAUL W. ZUCCAIRE GALLERY | STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY | SEPTEMBER 6 - OCTOBER 18, 2014



KATE GILMORE: CLAMBERING TO THE TOP

Kate Gilmore doesn't walk, or even climb, to the top. She clambers. She pushes, punches, stomps, smashes, bangs and shoves her way there. With each Sisyphean step, she overcomes a hurdle that she herself has placed in her way. Sometimes she slips, or even falls; often something gets broken. But in the end, exhausted and disheveled, she triumphs, creating work that is both visually intriguing and conceptually compelling.

Through her video, performance, sculpture and installation work, Kate Gilmore explores themes related to the construction of identity and the shaping of power structures and hierarchies. She constructs large-scale sculptural structures that present physical obstacles to the artist as she maneuvers around and through them. She performs these feats for the video camera alone, with no audience, unrehearsed, and shot in one take. The tasks she sets out to complete are physically-demanding—repetitively smashing ceramic pots of paint, pushing dripping baskets up a steep ramp, lifting heavy blocks onto a high shelf—and take strength and endurance.

In the video *Built to Burst* (2011), for example, Gilmore smashes pots of paint in a rhythmic, repetitive pattern as she hikes up a rectangular ramp. The end result is an overall splatter of orange and white paint that, when seen from the top-down vantage of her video, presents an abstract, expressionistic image. Pieces like *Built to Burst* and *Buster* (2011) recall the “masculine” performative action of Jackson Pollock’s drip paintings, while *Break of Day* (2010), in which Gilmore drops and breaks vessels of pink paint into a large, x-shaped structure, suggests the force of Julian Schnabel’s broken-plate paintings. While the end product of Gilmore’s works is often a colorful abstraction, her process presents a contemporary feminist challenge to her Abstract Expressionist and Neo-Expressionist predecessors.

Wearing a dress or skirt, Gilmore’s protagonist is decidedly a woman, fiercely working her way up

or stomping her way down, lifting or smashing heavy objects, creating as she destroys what’s before her. The sheer physicality of Gilmore’s movements is seemingly at odds with the quintessentially feminine clothing she wears while completing the tasks. Her actions become a statement of female strength against the traditionally-male establishments of the workforce, the financial market, the entertainment industry, and the art world.

For all the literal and figurative weight of Gilmore’s work, there is also quite a bit of humor. She has cited Buster Keaton, Lucille Ball and Charlie Chaplin as her heroes. Not surprisingly, Gilmore’s historic comedians made their name through their performances on film or television. Through slap-stick and physical humor, these actors put their dignity aside to make others laugh. Gilmore, too, puts herself in situations that most people would eschew. Her heels break, her stockings rip, her dresses are covered in paint, her hair is a wreck, she gets sweaty and messy. She puts her vulnerability on display—making her audience laugh, cringe or empathize—just to prove she can accomplish the challenge.

Like other performance-based artists before her, Gilmore uses her body to test limits and push boundaries. Yoko Ono invited audience members to cut off pieces of her clothing in 1964; Chris Burden famously had himself shot in a 1971 performance; and more recently, Marina Abramovic sat and faced her audience, one by one, for nearly eight hours a day in the atrium of

the Museum of Modern Art. More direct artistic predecessors are the early feminist performance and video artists of the 1970s, including Martha Rosler, Hannah Wilke, Shigeko Kubota and Carolee Schneemann, who used their bodies to create bold feminist statements.

Unlike most of these forbearers, Gilmore’s performances are private, staged only for the video camera. Her audience sees her spectacles on video monitors or projected onto screens in museums and galleries, alongside her sculptures, which, in the aftermath of the performance are now covered in splattered paint, broken ceramics, splintered wood and, in many, drops of the artist’s blood and sweat. The galleries reverberate with the sound of the artist on video grunting and catching her breath as she struggles to complete her task.

In addition to her private, videotaped performances, Gilmore also creates works in which other women (and in one recent piece, women and men) act to her specifications in live performances. In *Wall Bearer*, six women wearing matching Pepto-pink dresses stand in a line divided by walls of the same shade of pink for three hours at a time. The women are on display like items on a vertical shelf, as they endure the internal discomfort of standing for hours on end and the external discomfort of being the object of observation. The title *Wall Bearer* suggests that they are holding up the wall, imbuing them with strength and purpose.

For the current exhibition, Gilmore created a new, site-specific piece that, like her previous works, combines sculpture, installation, performance and video. Entitled *Top Drawer*, the work consists of a structure reminiscent of an over-sized bureau, with drawers that hinge open, along with more than forty ten-inch-square cast plaster cubes. Her performance, filmed in the gallery with no audience, presents Gilmore

heaving the plaster cubes into the bureau drawers. The cubes are heavy, the drawers are comically large and some are quite high off the ground and red paint bursts out every time Gilmore shoves in a cube.

Like a child dressed in her mother’s clothes trying to reach the tauntingly-high top drawer, or like Alice in Wonderland after drinking from a bottle and shrinking, Gilmore is dwarfed by the scale of the bureau and the task at hand. *Top Drawer* recalls the childhood temptation of mother’s bureau. The top dresser drawer contains secrets: special jewelry, love notes or a stash of cash, perhaps, all too high for a child’s reach.

The piece also references the adult artist’s concerns with the power structures of the art market. Gilmore’s plaster cubes recall Minimalist sculpture, and could also be seen as miniatures of the proverbial White Cube—the empty gallery space that defines an artist’s success. Here, the artist isn’t attempting to get her work into the conformity of the white cube, she is forcing the white cube into her work. She is rearranging the white cube gallery space—pristine, precise, commodified—into the domestic sphere of the dresser drawers. Homey yet giant-scaled, Gilmore’s bureau becomes a monster. It consumes the cubes, spits them out, bleeds AbEx drips of red paint as the cubes hit its shelves.

Gilmore lifts and heaves the cubes into the drawers. The top drawer—the best of the best, the top of the heap, top notch—is the goal. Gilmore doesn’t so much attempt to achieve balance between the *Top Drawer’s* domestic and corporate connotations as much as smash them together. She laughs in the face of conformity while clampering, successfully, to the top.

—Karen Levitov



Come Around, 2009, archival digital print



Built to Burst, 2011, video still



A Tisket, A Tasket, 2013, video still

Checklist of the Exhibition

All works courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery

A Tisket, A Tasket, 2013
Single channel video, 32:14 minutes; color; sound

Between a Hard Place, 2008
Single channel video, 9:44 minutes; color; sound

Between a Hard Place, 2008
Archival digital print, 40 x 30"

Blood from a Stone, 2009
Archival digital print, 30 x 40"

Break of Day, 2010
Single channel video, 18:35 minutes; color; sound

Come Around, 2009
Archival digital print, 40 x 30"

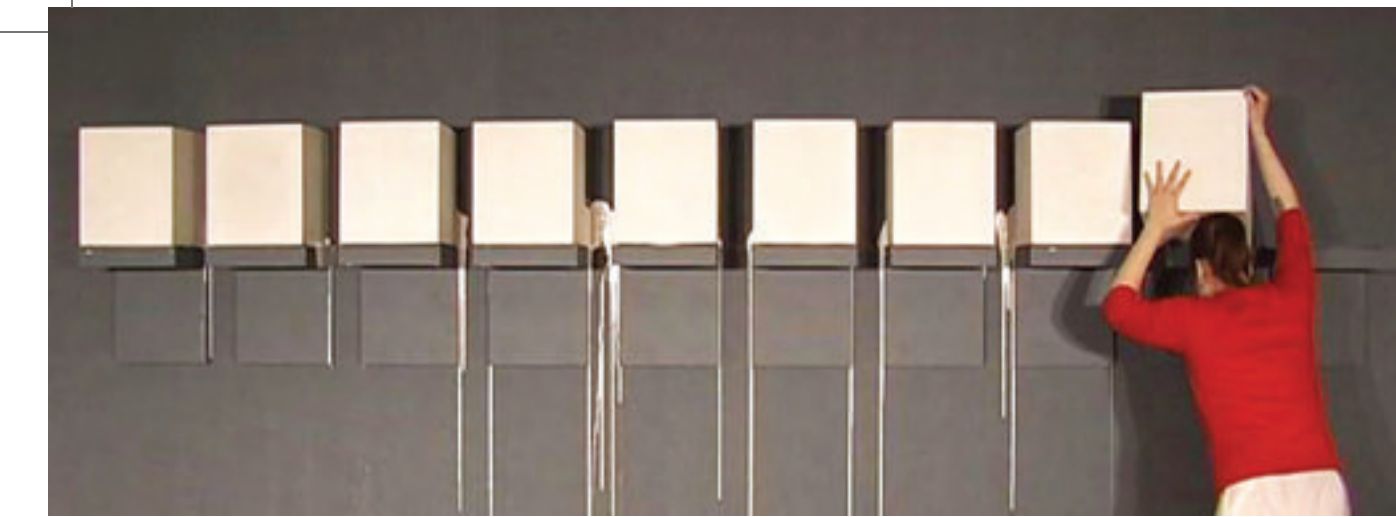
Built to Burst, 2011
Single channel video, 5:55 minutes; color; sound

Built to Burst, 2011
Archival digital print, 30 x 40"

Top Drawer, 2014
Sculpture and single channel video, 29:31 minutes; color; sound
Commissioned by the Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery, Stony Brook University

Wall Bearer, 2011
Archival digital print, 30 x 40"

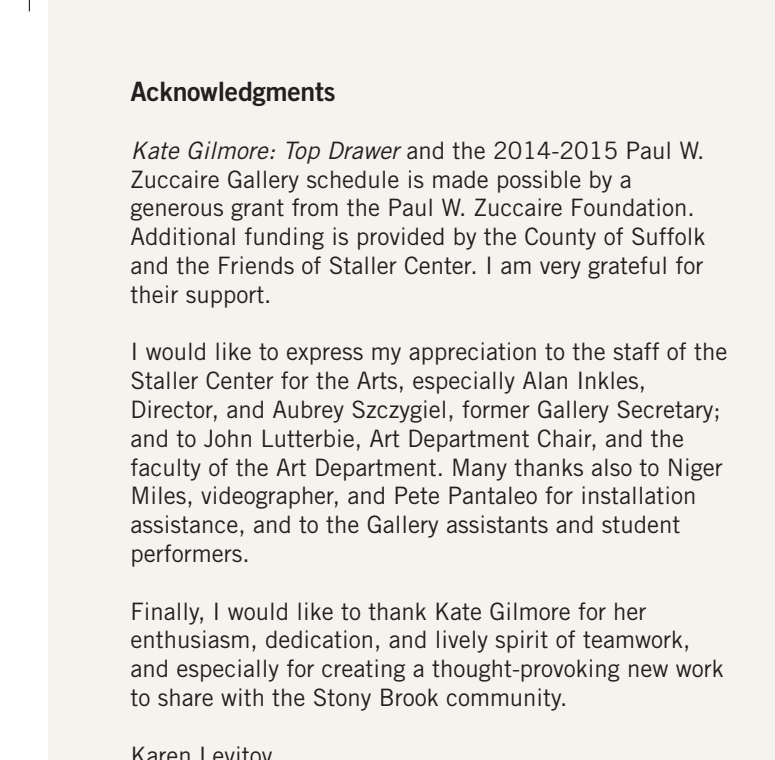
Performance
Red Carpet Welcome, September 27, 2014



Blood from a Stone, 2009, video still



Above left: *Break of Day*, 2010, video still
Above right: *Break of Day*, 2010, archival digital print



Between a Hard Place, 2008, archival digital print

Acknowledgments

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I would like to express my appreciation to the staff of the Staller Center for the Arts, especially Alan Inkles, Director, and Aubrey Szczygiel, former Gallery Secretary; and to John Lutterbie, Art Department Chair, and the faculty of the Art Department. Many thanks also to Niger Miles, videographer, and Pete Pantaleo for installation assistance, and to the Gallery assistants and student performers.

Finally, I would like to thank Kate Gilmore for her enthusiasm, dedication, and lively spirit of teamwork, and especially for creating a thought-provoking new work to share with the Stony Brook community.

Karen Levitov
Director and Curator