

# ART LIES

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Urban Myths



L. Kate Gilmore, *Endurance Makes Gold*, 2008; video still; originally commissioned by Artpace San Antonio

R. *My Love is an Anchor*, 2004; video still; courtesy the artist and Artpace San Antonio

## SAN ANTONIO

Kate Gilmore

Artpace San Antonio: Hudson (Show)Room

*Girl Fight* is the latest installment in a series of videos in which Kate Gilmore engages in adversarial relationships with various inanimate objects. One of Gilmore's "rules" is to be alone while performing—the camera as her witness—documenting what appears to be a struggle between the artist and her own body. Gilmore's commitment to self-imposed regulations is steadfast, somewhat restrictive and even slightly dangerous. (During one performance she had to call 911 after spending hours with her foot stuck in a bucket of plaster.) However, her dogmatic approach does allow each fight/performance to move beyond documentation and into something else entirely, more in the vein of a confessional—an intimate portrait of one woman's struggle to overcome her own limitations, be they emotional, psychological or physical.

A tower of furniture on the exterior of Artpace—a cascade of personal belongings seemingly tossed out a second-story window (in actuality stacked from the street level)—is the first element one encounters. In the gallery, two large-scale projections, *My Love is an Anchor* and *Main Squeeze*, play on opposite walls, along with two monitors displaying a rotation of three additional videos. Stretching across the room is a wooden ramp covered in carpet, which Gilmore used for her "grand entrance" to the space after climbing the tower of rubble and through the gallery window. At the end of the ramp, a monitor plays *Endurance Makes Gold*, which documents that performance.

Downstairs, *Blue Ribbon* documents another act of stacking. As the artist, sporting high heels, stacks giant hay bales and climbs upon them, she ties a blue ribbon around each indicating the completion of a level. She

continues this repetitive action until she rises out of the frame. Like the heels and blue ribbon in the aforementioned piece, each video involves some element of costuming, be it the elaborate taffeta bridesmaid's dress in *With Open Arms* to the conspicuous shade of lipstick that matches the red wooden star cutout Gilmore squeezes her head in and out of in *Star Bright*, *Star Might*. These outfits and minimal details set the tone and stage for each action/performance.

Downstairs is *Before Going Under*, a video Gilmore made two weeks before tying the knot, and it is the most comical of all. She stands in a large field, bouquet in hand. A giant lasso encircles her. She struggles, trying to break free as the love ballad "You Belong to Me" plays in the background. Another video, *Baby, Belong to Me*, has a similar tone: a static shot of Gilmore's foot in a red flat hanging in the air, suspended by a black rope. It appears as if the artist is dangling in the air, trying her best to release her foot from the knot.

With this series, Gilmore has tapped into a distinctly human drive: the desire to push our bodies to their limit. Unlike an athlete, however, Gilmore uses this drive not to get ahead of herself but to peel back the emotional layers of the struggle, often sans reward. To say I admire Gilmore's struggle would be a conventional way to categorize what she is doing. To say I am envious and somewhat confused by her drive and commitment would be slightly more accurate.

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