

— one in favor of a gender identity that is essentially self-selected rather than culturally imposed: even if the girl does love to wear high heels. After all, isn't the idea that drywall, power tools, sledgehammers and breaking stuff are inherently masculine constructs as sexist as claiming that "women's place is in the kitchen"? And yet, even if we don't believe in them, we can't not have these stereotypical notions in our own heads, right? At any rate, Gilmore revels in the possibility of embracing symbols of femininity as well as raucously rejecting conventional gender constructs.

Another typical Gilmore move is to play formal games with loaded signifiers or to use cutesy, whimsical touches to undermine an otherwise (seemingly) rigorous enterprise. In *Down the House* (2008), for example, Gilmore stands amid a pile of debris, plywood and plaster blocks splattered with paint and hot pink tape that matches the bow in her hair. The debris, seen from directly above, flattens out and becomes abstract with Gilmore hovering above it. The pink bow in her hair links the nearest foreground element to the hot pink tape in the literal and figurative ground.

Similarly, in *Between A Hard Place*, Gilmore breaks down walls, literally, smashing through five layers of drywall and plywood. She creates a tunnel through these walls, all of which flatten together on the screen — a corridor that only leads straight back to the picture plane. The walls are painted battleship grey on one side and canary yellow on the other side (to match her high-heels) in a way that causes the flaps of drywall, smashed and hanging by their paper skins, to create random formal effects. By punching through space she collapses it, paradoxically, together — which might also be part of her allegory (her formal elements are always that but not just that): oppositional categories (not just male and female) collapsing together, equally valid though partial, even when wildly, incongruously conjoined; and the experiential impact of the visual evading language's (our) tendency to place things into pat categories.

—Elwyn Palmerton

KATE GILMORE

Amy-Smith Stewart Gallery

BY SETTING UP SIMPLE SITUATIONS AND performing repetitive acts in sometimes dangerous surroundings, Kate Gilmore creates surprisingly compelling experiences from deceptively effortless means. A typical Gilmore video involves her wearing tasteful clothing and high heels and performing some type of violent, strenuous, or cringe inducing activity, usually involving a makeshift set.

In one video, Gilmore kicks a high-heeled foot through unpainted drywall. The foot momentarily seems to exist independent of the body that we know must lie behind the wall. It's iconic and nearly perfect as an image (outside of Philip Guston and, of course, *Lost*, I can't think of a more memorable disembodied shoe/foot.) Possibly it's a Nauman-esque riff on the artist trying to break through to the viewer, but it's also, obviously, some type of feminist statement

Kate Gilmore, *Down the House*, 2008

