

Kate Gilmore
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A still from "That Human Touch" (2010), a Kate Gilmore performance video.
Photo: kate gilmore / catharine clark gallery, s.f.

Gilmore girls: The fearless Kate Gilmore makes performance videos that can be unforgettable at best. Three recent ones play at Catharine Clark's.

Gilmore shares an interest in physical risk common around the turn of the 1970s to artists such as Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, Marina Abramovic and Carolee Schneemann. The all-out commitment of effort that Gilmore demands of herself keeps at bay an obvious question: whether she acts as herself in her work or plays bizarrely motivated and situated characters.

"By Any Means" (2009), shot from above with a fixed camera, opens with Gilmore sitting in a hole in the ground, wearing a pink and white dress and heels, caged in a towering - so it looks to the camera - lumber lattice. The video ends when she escapes, after gouging and heaping up enough earth to support her in a standing assault on the cage, which proves a lot more durable than it looks.

Not she but the camera gets liberated in the shortest, most effective piece here, "That Human Touch" (2010). It begins in near blackness to the sound of a sort of grating percussion, reminiscent of David Hammons' video classic "Phat Free" (1995-97). Soon light and color blast into the frame, and the camera gets repeatedly jostled. Finally the viewer sees what's happening: Gilmore punching her way into a drywall enclosure in which the camera dangles. She stops just after we have enough visual information to figure out what we've seen.

The third piece "Higher Horse" (2008) has Gilmore in heels and skirt, her face mostly cropped out of the frame, struggling to stand atop a heap of plaster blocks as two men with sledgehammers break it down.

Gilmore reels uniquely between feministic self-celebration and Beckett-spirited ridicule of every sort of striving.

Stephanie Syjuco's over-theorized installation occupies most of the physical space at Clark, but Gilmore bestrides the psychological space.

Kate Gilmore: Three Video Works; Stephanie Syjuco: [Raiders](#): Installation of mixed-media work and video. Through July 16. Catharine Clark Gallery, 150 Minna St., S.F. (415) 399-1439. www.cclarkgallery.com.

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