



artefacts. Nineteenth-century baby bottles, with tubes that proved lethal because they could not be properly disinfected, are shown beside the original bottles and packaging for jars of embalming and preservation fluids. One case of objects invited death; the other preserved the illusion of life.

Amid all the creatures laid to rest, a single Arctic hare sits up, reminding us that the traditional aim of a natural history museum such as the ROM is to create an illusion of life. In the "bat cave," for instance, children squeal with excitement as they grope through the dark corridor and glimpse clusters of bats overhead. A sudden roar of a plane from hidden loudspeakers is followed by a rush of bat wings. Of course, the colony of bats pinned against the ceiling doesn't move, but a sense of "being there" takes hold nonetheless.

The Final Sleep pierces such illusions and presents the reality of death in a stylized, ritualized manner that invites contemplation rather than fear and horror. Hurlbut frames and classifies the widely disparate objects in a methodical, quasi-scientific presentation. But the aesthetic, highly stylized exposition of artefacts and specimens unblocks dimensions that are lost in scientific research when each

"thing" is framed separately, lit and probed by eyes and hands to yield observable truths.

In her earlier work of the '80s and '90s, Hurlbut brought a visceral reality to classical architectural ornaments by creating, for instance, egg-and-dart-patterned entablatures from real chicken feet and turkey eggs, suggesting that cultural order and conventions subliminate the messiness of animal and human existence. In the ROM installation, modern science is similarly revealed as an abstraction but, interestingly, cultural ritual and ornamental patterning are introduced to contaminate the scientific study of nature. In addition, Hurlbut adds things from her personal collection, a translucent purse and sandals as well as the '50s bra, thus upsetting the border between the private and the public, and casting herself, the subject, in with the objects.

This entanglement of subject and object does not preclude a curiosity into the intellectual and historical aspects of the objects. Indeed, facts such as names, species, ages can be read in folders hanging on walls adjacent to the cabinets. But here they provide a knowledge that is incidental.

If, in the end, "all things are equal in repose," what happens before the final sleep needs reconsideration. Hurlbut's rapprochement between the false dichotomies of animals and people, art and science, beauty and knowledge, the public and the private, learning and feeling, has as much to say about life as about death. ■

The Final Sleep/Le Dernier Sommeil: An Installation by Spring Hurlbut showed at the Royal Ontario Museum

(Institute of Contemporary Culture), from April 28 to August 12, 2001.

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VISUAL ART

Massimo Guerrera Core Generosity

by Jennifer Papararo

The artist's studio is a place of production, where ideas and objects are often formulated in isolation. The artist produces a work inside the safeguard of his or her studio before removing it from this original context to bring it to the exhibition site. In a way, isolated studio production and the installation of work in exhibition spaces can be seen as two distinct, though inter-related, practices. For "Darboral or some stories of internal cohabitation," Massimo Guerrera succeeded in bringing the artist's studio closer to the site of exhibition by offering the audience some of the tools of his production and setting up a space where his ideas and products are created.

"Darboral" is a staged environment that mixes sculpture, drawing, photography and performance. Squares of beige and pink carpet trimmed with red tape form a casual pattern on the floor. Arranged among the "rugs" are small pieces of makeshift furniture: cushions and other sculptural forms offer a place to sit, while large plastic containers with moulded lids become tables and bowls that contain fruits, nuts, olives and oils. Pale pink and blue styrofoam pieces lean against



Massimo Guerrera, *Darboral or some stories of internal cohabitation*, 2000, colour photograph, 40 x 50 cm. Courtesy the artist.

one wall. Guerrera has cut shapes into several of the pieces, joined some together with silver tape or added small appendages to others. The individual or attached pieces can be picked up, rearranged or worn (arms fit into the hand-cut holes and ears rest against funnel-like shapes). One of the more complex styrofoam sculptures is a full body suit complete with head- and footwear.

Dispersed throughout the room are several ceramic or rubber hand-held objects, which can be carried around while viewers are taking in the rest of exhibition. Photographs along one wall document people playing with the sculptures, enjoying food, lounging about and chatting with each other. They are images from his studio and from a previous mounting of "Darboral" for the Montreal Biennale of 2000. Beyond the fact that the photographs are compelling works in and of themselves, they also act as instruction and scripting of possible scenarios, giving viewers permission to go ahead and perform their own actions with the objects and for the space. Effectively, they sell the

merits of the exhibition and give a sense of its potential.

"Darboral" is a place to hang out—to peruse slowly while picking up objects, looking at photographs and drawings, playing with arrangements, snacking on an endless flow of finger foods and performing with or for whomever happens to be in the space. Although the overall exhibition is engaging on its own, with its formal and cohesive aesthetic, it is definitely a space that benefits from audience participation. The environment is meant to be used and the props ignited.

The use of the objects and the negotiation of the space by viewers is as much a part of their making as is their physical construction. The role played by the hand-held pieces, or the styrofoam sculptures in the creation of scenarios, or the making of other objects, is implicit from inception. For example, Guerrera used the sculptures or the staged environment to create elaborate photographs, which, in turn, perpetuated the manipulation of the objects and incited performances.

The fact that "Darboral" benefits from such interaction does not downplay the process involved in producing and compiling all the elements, but, rather, accents the language in which they were developed and, concurrently, the way they are consumed. Guerrera puts forth an aestheticized language that is learned and shared through its experience. You are pulled into his language by being offered the tools with which to participate. In a way, it reverts to the familiar stereotype of the anti-social or awkwardly social artist who, in order to compensate for social inhibitions, uses art as the primary mode of communication. It is not that Guerrera is this asocial stereotype; instead, the comparison comes from his control of the terms of communication through his art practice. In "Darboral," which is a formal play on "object d'art" and "oral," Guerrera's visual language flows as easy as talk.

There is a generosity at the core of the piece; namely, in the artist's desire to facilitate communication (even if it is under the parameters of his own art practice) and to provide a comfortable and playful place to consume the myriad of ways this exchange could happen. The sharing and building of a language occurs in Guerrera's offering of tools that moves beyond an isolated mode of production and invites individuals to commingle at a site of making and consumption. ■

"Darboral" was on display at the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, Ontario, from March 4 to April 22, 2001.

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