

The patient, attentive touch of Irish artist Cathy Wilkes has always transformed mundane objects into disarmingly vulnerable artifacts. These seem to herald from a paradoxical realm where unmasked intimacy is the only possible mode of relationship, yet all intimacies remain totally remote. A number of these artifacts populate Wilkes' current installation at the Carnegie Museum of Art [November 12, 2011—February 26, 2012]. Some are stupefyingly powerful. Yet the show's most surprising revelation is a group of small, harrowingly wrought canvases. These punctuate the exhibition with uncanny vistas onto spaces, textures, and colors.

Wilkes uses three low, broad-surfaced display tables to loosely define zones associated with particular experiences or identities in the cool, stone-floored gallery. On the table closest to the entrance, objects and images related to World War I "doughboys" draw the visitor into a consideration of that international conflagration, which ushered in a century of bloody conflict and atrocity. As we approach the one-hundredth anniversary of that war, Wilkes fashions her own doughboys from mannequins with papier-mâché heads pinched and poked to resemble the stuff of their nickname. Loose-fitting civilian clothes hang on their skeletal frames, and their vacant expressions are among the show's most affecting images. Those faces, with tir

The objects on and around the remaining table seem intended to bridge the other two zones, and are more resistant to association. The overall effect is an effortless link between the impossible horror of trench warfare and the quotidian processes of enculturation, memory and relationship. As she has been lauded for doing in the past, Wilkes establishes these connections without relying on cliché or formula. Her stumbling veterans insist with startling clarity that, in the end, war always makes its way into the very homes it was supposed to protect. And the table of tortured mementos at which the monstrous woman bows insists that far from evaporating into metaphor, war remains a real presence in those homes for generations.

Merging these ruminations on the legacies of war, domesticity, and childhood, the small paintings resonate on a frequency distinct from all of the other works. Their cracked, flaking surfaces seem to betray a current of self-annihilation that harmonizes perfectly with the theme of war. And yet their forms are clearly the result of intense consideration and revision. In some, the familiar bell-curve of the doughboy's helmet transmutes into a the objects over display abstract cipher, and a reclining beer belly, while remaining just a helmet, as well. In another,

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: **Cathy Wilkes**, installation view at the Carnegie Museum of Art, 2011, mixed media (courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute, Glasgow; photo: Tom Little); **Adrian Kellard**, *Lovers*, 1986, latex on wood with trouble lamps (collection of the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art, Saint Louis University; photo: Jeffrey Vaughn)

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radically hampered by the AIDS pandemic—but also appears freshly as a remarkable artist in his own right. In *Prayer of the Faithful in Ordinary Time*, 1988, a red-and-white checker pattern curtain parts to reveal Jesus, haloed in bright yellow and orange beams, praying under the star-riddled light of the full moon. Characteristically integrating the everyday with the otherwise lofty, the moon is in fact a store-bought plastic clock, its hands marking the agitated passing of earthly time. *Lovers*, 1986, deploys a similarly hybrid approach. Jesus appears again, now cradling a portrait of the recumbent artist, while a looming Christ-figure, crucified, dangles two construction-grade floodlights from his palms. The central scene is brightly lit, while a populous, nighttime city spreads around them: a finely etched series of high-rises, tenements, and neighborhood churches, rendered in the manner of a woodblock printer—as with all of Kellard's imagery—framing the couple and scaffolding the crucified form. Each row of windows is an intricate pattern piled on top of other patterns. Dimly primary-hued, it recalls newspaper-printed comics. Time is always of concern: a reminder of something fundamentally common and a critical exigency to heed. In the hinged room-divider *St. Francis Screen*, 1985, the saint is carved in a pose quoted from Giotto's fresco *St. Francis Preaching to the Birds*, 1297–1299. The third panel of this piece is a functioning calendar. Not only were Kellard's days marked by this piece, his apartment was bisected by it: his art, so closely linked to his faith, was hand-etched in the stuff of daily life. It also formed a space for him to live fully.

Kellard's was an eight-year, compactly meteoric career. Since his death, however, his work has rarely been shown. What is its importance here? Irascible, irrepressible, and boldly honest, the work not only communicates a plain sense of humanity but a brave and uncluttered sense of self. Our current moment may well be marked by as much conflict with identity and meaning—spiritual and otherwise—as Kellard's not-so-distant era, making his story as pertinent as ever.