

DOMOBAAL

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writing about Lucy Pawlak's work, extracted from the essay for 'Oyster Grit' - a group exhibition introducing a line-up of domobaal gallery artists as at September 2007.

..... Lucy Pawlak's alteration of everyday sites (often her studio) is motivated by filmic as opposed to sculptural concerns. Over time, interior habitats become filled with objects, notes, drawings and wall daubing in the creation of sets for her videos. Similarly to Vari and Epaminonda, Pawlak's material curiosity is palpable, but her means of production is, by contrast, unbridled. Somehow though, against the cluttered odds, all elements feel essential to her creative objective. Pawlak's unfussy but naturally discerning eye seems guided by an internal directive that, while obviously self-referential, brings a sense of playfulness and an honesty to her work that collude to mystify categorisation.

Pawlak's films, in which she always stars, have an experimental, avant-garde quality to them that while reminiscent of Bloomsbury or Beatnik escapades, retain a genuine sense of spontaneity and the artist's delight with the possibilities of the medium. They are not, however, openly naïve. The character studies, which inform, for example, 'Naked Woman' (the artist's ludicrous, but touching nude nocturnal communion with the plant and animal life of Hyde Park), and 'Bearded Man' (Pawlak, or Naked Woman's male 'nomad' alter-ego without a mission), allude to the faint but ever-present boundaries of normalcy and a conceptual space disconnected from the past and present within which these characters reside. In 'Revenge of the Insides', Pawlak guides us around the live/work space she has customised for this film 'in which nothing happens'. The camera pans and lingers with an intimacy that feels like the preservation of data for memory. It's as though the privileged access we are given to Pawlak's inner sanctum goes some distance towards describing the way she feels about her practice, for the tentative process of filming fits with the prolific amount and nature of the stuff at our visually limited disposal. There is something unnerving and a bit CSI about the intense combination of elements in this well-packed grotto: a blurred photographic glimpse of Brian Sewell and images of Pawlak in her many actor guises, innumerable retro trinkets and evidence of a frenzied fresco attack in which the walls appear to partially absorb the many things adhered to them. It all sounds a little contrived, but the experience is strangely compelling. This intense mix of critique, humour and invention is so carefully arranged within the junkshop window of the personal that it's hard to differentiate between ruse and revelation.
