



Kelly Lycan *Objects in Waiting (left) and Still Life for Someone Both 2014 Mixed media Dimensions variable*
PHOTOS BLAINE CAMPBELL

ABOVE: Kelly Lycan *Mr. Brown 2014 Mixed media Dimensions variable*

REVIEWS

BURNABY
SFU GALLERY

KELLY LYCAN

by Marina Roy

Entering Kelly Lycan's exhibition "Autobiography for No One," one immediately felt as if the artist's studio, domestic space and the gallery had rolled into one configuration. We were confronted with a decidedly blanched installation, with its objects, furnishing, walls, floor and ceiling offering a panoply of shades of white, except for the odd patch of brown, black, pink or red, which were undoubtedly left there to accentuate the whiteness

all the more. One thinks of the colour-matching displays of bowerbirds.

In the back rooms of the exhibition space, outlandish hybrids confronted us at a number of interconnected "stations": stacked, piled, scattered, wound up, made into moulds, cast, lined up, on tables, on the floor, against the wall. Pourings of plaster, glue and paint onto and over objects were a constant. One table looked as if there was a mere pause in production: an assemblage/bricolage of raw materials, commodity objects, leftovers of production, at once aesthetically and haphazardly placed. Objects appeared to be in a variety of states of completion—containers and stir-sticks, heavy with material residue, cluttered the tables and a variety of sheet and board materials were leaning against the wall. Around the corner, in the second room, an almost empty table signalled a state of sheer potentiality. Each of the two altar-like assemblages had a photo stand in front of it, on which was hung a large piece of acetate with the ghost of a square format integrated

into it—as if the scene were being framed, waiting to be photographed.

The first room of the exhibition space was rather bare in comparison, and it was this room that provided the key to understanding the rest. It was dominated by a sculptural work, *Delacroix's Stove from Delacroix's painting "Corner of a Painter's Studio, the Stove" c. 1830–1855* (2014). Lycan made a white replica of Delacroix's stove using the materials she had on hand. Critic Brian O'Doherty, in his book *Studio and Cube*, describes the original painting as recording "the studio's most durable inhabitant—apart from the artist: the mundane stove. [The stove] becomes the source that, when depicted, makes the paint—but not the subject—the hero. Paint as medium and the artist as medium begin a curious mirroring.... In representations of the studio, we gain access to privileged spaces." The stove makes the paint the hero, not the artist. Similarly, Lycan's sculptural installation points to process and materials. One might also be reminded of such studio-cum-museum spaces as the reconstruction of Brancusi's studio in Paris. In fact, one might detect a reference to Brancusi's *Bird in Space* series in the many looming phallic objects on display in Lycan's exhibition.

"Autobiography" signals a kind of mirroring of the self through the manipulation of materials existing outside the self. But who is "No One"? It is as if the artist were whitewashing her personality from the scene, offering it for "No One." If a work comes out of something autobiographical, this does not mean that the artist is alone in the pursuit. A life is necessarily made up of collected objects, acquired knowledge and shared lived experiences. The work reveals a lifetime of stuff gathered, influences and encounters, most unnamed within the exhibition itself, but many purposefully named in enigmatic fashion: Mr. Wall, Mr. Brown, Delacroix. The title might also evoke the idea that once art is made and put out there, it belongs neither to the artist nor to anyone else. Unmoored from any fixed context, the work is its own gratuitous entity, in a state of constant flux, divorced from any provenance or property. I would go so far as to say that the artist also needs to become "No One" for the work to come into being.