

### *Is music the essence of words?*

Elena Bajo's "*Is music the essence of words?*" is both the title of her personal exhibition at D+T Project – Brussels in November 2010, and the name of a piece realised for her solo exhibition at Woodmill – London, in the spring of 2010. The piece is a fragile assemblage of found canvass stretchers, and is in itself an art of recuperation – the sine qua non of Bajo's practice.

Elena Bajo's work echoes a long history of temporary re-adjustment of reality as the means for art to be, a history that includes, among many others, Gustav Metzger, who for his "Cardboards" 1959's exhibition at 14 Monmouth Street – London, hung on the walls television cardboard boxes that were picked up in the street, temporary sculptures who were recycled from their reality until the artist returned them to the street once the show was over; Alan (Suicide) Vega, who for a solo show at OK Harris gallery in NY in 1975 used found TVs and garbage, turned them into artworks for the time of an exhibition and then took them back to where he found them; Laurie Parsons, who for her 1988 solo show at Lorence-Monk Gallery in New York City, collected and displayed detritus from the Hudson river bank, that she later disposed of; or again Emma Bjornesparr, who for her 2010 masters' degree show at Central Saint Martins in London – coincidentally where Elena Bajo also studied in 2005 – and just before being evicted from the refuge that she occupied, decided to encapsulate her own reality in storing all of her belongings in the school galleries, prior to returning these after the show to their reality, hers.

"*Is music the essence of words?*", in its own wording, is an invitation to consider the fleeting nature of a word over a crystallised thought. As sculptures put together with fragile tape, these empty paintings (the canvas having been torn away from the stretchers), become both a very modernist form (squares on squares – a composition of voids) and an encouragement to reflect on the waste created by our society.

Elena Bajo's recent body of work includes "pieces taken from trash at a framers shop, art school and flea market", all *un-wanted* pieces of art that were destroyed by artists "in the process of making their art", discarded papers "used by framers to paint frames for other artwork", or again a print that a "flea market vendor broke in pieces in order to make it unsalable". Through this constant re-use of materials that originated from various fields of art-making, this contemporary structuralist recycling is that of a system feeding itself with its own constituting material. So to say, a necrophagous and cannibal art that is only composed of the remains of past artworks and fragments once produced by its own work force.

"*Is music the essence of words?*" reminds us of an art industry where overproduction is the norm. It is a celebration of the transient nature of our lives, of the world that we inhabit, and of the detritus it constantly generates – yet through art, temporally re-arranged.

Mathieu Copeland, October 2010.

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