

Subtle Aldrich Installation Tricks the Visitor's Eye

by Alison Pratt

Aldrich Museum

With the notably sunny March we had this year, overlooking Mary Temple's installation at The Aldrich Museum would not be difficult. But missing it would be regrettable. Here's how to view her work at the museum. First park your car, your scooter, or your bike in the museum's parking lot. Then look up at the right side of the building. Is that a shadow? It appears to be, but on the second inspection it is trompe l'oeil, an illusion, painted by Mary Temple, using large lights at night.

Take a second to imagine how confusing the museum must have looked to cars driving on Main Street while she was installing her work – a lone figure high on a ladder, flooded in large lights, holding branches at 2am.

Now enter the museum, check in at the front desk and go upstairs, passing by the camera obscura and the Opatrny galleries, into the second floor hallway. Now look. Again, a mysterious shadow crosses the bridge, and again it is just an illusion of the same light, passing from outside the museum to inside and back outside the museum. You will see the shadow of branches continue across the museum, linking the interior of The Aldrich with its exterior.

Finally walk past Doug Wada's massive Cadillac paintings and Sarah Bostwick's hydrocal and wood landscapes and go downstairs into the Project Space. Here, Temple's shaft of "faux" light hits the wall and rests in a puddle on the floor. Now, we can appreciate Temple's remarkable achievement. Not only has she been able to paint shadow and light in an installation so subtle and skillful that we can walk right by without noticing that it is a painting, not a shadow, but she has joined artists like John Constable, Claude Monet, and James Turrell, who have been obsessed with capturing light.

A Brown Bag tour of Mary Temple's work will take place on Wednesday, June 7, from 11 to 1. Enjoy a docent-guided tour of the exhibition and then discuss your observations over lunch. Bring your lunch, and the museum will provide coffee, tea, and dessert. Registration is required, call 438-4519. Brown Bag Tours are made possible by Purkiss Capital Advisors LLC.

Mary Temple lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.