



▲ | Swords in stones? Nope — shovels in screens.

RUB LONG

ELECTRON FLOW

Forget water into wine — Fabrizio Plessi turns video into water in his new Wood Street exhibit.

BRONX

BY FABRIZIO PLESSI
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FABRIZIO PLESSI — ITALIAN, classically trained and a longtime veteran of the video form — has an approach to video that's a bit nontraditional compared to the bulk of work out there. Rather than create video pieces that retain television's original creator-audience relationship, Plessi works with video, making it not just an approach but rather a malleable and amorphous medium.

Two of his three pieces on display at Wood Street deal with the translation of water into a video substance. The title work, "Bronx," consists of 20 shovels "driven" into 20 television sets, each set's screen filled with an image of a pool of water. These TVs and shovels are enclosed in a metal "room" and blocked off from interaction by a large iron mesh gate. You, therefore, can't enter the piece's space, but can only look at it from a distance. Yes, we do immediately have an audience-type relationship set up here — these multi-metal creations are, in a sense, onstage — but Plessi turns this idea around on you, assembling "Bronx" in audience formation and thus putting you yourself onstage in front of a crowd of shovels.

Upstairs, there's "Liquid Crystal," which somehow places a table and an empty

glass up on the ceiling and a bucket right below, on the floor. The glass is right above the opening of the bucket, embedded in which sits a video screen of another pool of water, this one collecting drops. The great thing about "Liquid Crystal" is its ability not only to create something out of nothing — of course you never actually see the water falling into the bucket, because there isn't any — but also to cleverly dissolve the boundaries between natural and physical (water) and synthetic and intangible (video). One becomes the other while making the other into itself.

Confusing, yes, but only in the metaphysics. While Plessi's work does wonders to ignite the art-geek minds of critics and frou-frou intellectual types, it's also completely accessible and fun. Quoting the man himself from a photocopied interview you can pick up at Wood Street: "I use video in the same way as I use the refrigerator."

This is perfect. For one thing, if Plessi doesn't have to concern himself with the inner workings of cathode ray tubes, there's really no reason you have to, either. But also, his statement gets right to the heart of what makes his work so admirable. *Bronx* shows video at its smallest and purest — as brushstroke rather than brush, to be used as freely and effortlessly as a magic bubble wand. **IP**