

LITE II:

Saturday 8th November 2003 – Bus Gallery, Melbourne

LITE II was the second Melbourne installment of the international *Faites de la Lumeire* festival, which started in Paris in 1997 – and has grown to incorporate many cities. This 'one night only' show is an exhibition with a festival atmosphere and this year, like last year, turned into quite a party. Again under the generous curation of BKK Architects, the exhibition brought together local young architects and artists under the brief of designing a light/light installation. The rooms of the Bus Gallery proved a great location for the jammed packed event – where everything was happening at once – the lights and projections aggregating visually, people wall to wall, photographers trying to capture the objects, DJ playing – even the large crowd on the derelict pavement added to the celebration of the temporary.

Like light itself, the show is temporal – you could not return later to look at the work – it had to be engaged with on the night, had to be talked about, had to be liked or disliked. From this point of view there wasn't much to dislike – the standard was high, even better than last year – with pieces ranging from well crafted objects, to projection, to performance. It was upon entering the building the latter took place – Tai Snaith and Narinda Reeders (Rollergroove) dangling from the timber stairs in their trademark roller skates, wearing miner's torches, heads lowered. Emotionally moving like many of their other still-ish performances their lights denoted entrance, shining down onto a floor that takes you up.

Pleysier Perkins' beautiful sphere of used paper coffee cups was placed at the top of the stairs, near the endless free beer bar and in front of the masterful Johno Bing on the decks. Inside these cups a series of conventional Christmas tree lights (minus the colour) flashed on and off, seemingly in time with the music. The piece has an appearance and craft and delicacy that belied its obvious cheapness – it took seriously the \$25 budget.

The main room of the gallery contained works by Marcus Fajl, cc_ark/Vanessa Mooney, Live Load, Andywong, Christian Froelich/Daniel Twomey and Buro North. Froelich and Twomey's translucent taught pillow caught images projected from above - just above head height it formed an engaging center to the room, a special hat of sorts, changing from subtle to vivid patterns. To the right, cc_ark and Vanessa Mooney's indoor park bench posed interesting questions about the object versus the gallery seat. Using a generic template for a park bench, this bench formed a tray for live hydroponically grown wheat-grass that grew in-between Perspex bench rails. Fluorescent lighting inside the bench renders it as a light – the laboratory type that grows flora indoors.

Live Load placed an architectural model into a pram with multiple light sources, projecting an array of coloured patterns on to the back wall of this room. The delicacy of the model (exaggerated by the use of the pram) was played out on this wall, and strangely animated backdrop – raising the interesting question of the light (fitting) versus screen. On the opposite wall, Marcus Fajl's rendered orthogonal animation was firmly on the wall, but was highly successfully at having no focal point, a field of drifting squares – a moving illuminated painting.

Andywong's *24 Hour Light* diagrammed a simple electrical circuit on the wall – two small lights powered by several lemons embedded in melting candles. Somewhere between science experiment and witty graphic, the piece deals well with the temporary; the lemons lose their chemical zest, the candles melt. Tape was used to represent the circuit and to conceal and mount the wire – this would have been even stronger perhaps if they were the same thing, like a printed circuit board – a sort of conductive drawing.

The black, back room was occupied by *Insomnia* by Truc Mai, Ashley Poon and Andrew Jacques. In one corner a vivid red light on the floor pulsed regularly, but was off more than it was on; next to it a speaker reproduced a heart beat. In a high corner a projected moving series of blurring light imitated cars passing a bedroom at night. Truc Mai, an insomniac, uses her personal experience to produce this beautiful and schizophrenic work. Attendees into this long night were encouraged to touch the red light, as it was cast in hard red Asian jelly.

The thin room was used by Staughton Architects and Katherine Huang for their piece, *Necromancer*. On the left, a series of parallel flat strips formed a picture of staircase caught in a shadow. On the right a circular blacklight (the sort that keeps insects away from food) dispersed purple light onto the other side. As the viewer walks up this corridor-like space there is a moment, between the light and 'painting', where the figure of the Grim Reaper comes into view with the blurry shadow of yourself. We stand with the familiar Reaper on this staircase, maybe going up or down, but ultimately frozen. Using retro-reflective sheeting as per road signs, the piece is dense in both abstract effect and iconic affect.

These former two works both enjoyed a separation from the principal *salon*, and perhaps become more (mentally) reflective as a result. Comparable to a nightclub as the night kicked on, the event seemed to work well as a whole, all the pieces very *bright*.

Stuart Harrison