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Brendan Lee, Shaun Wilson, Alexandra Gillespie

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
1 September to 9 October

Reviewed by Leon Marvell

The work by these artists was somewhat overshadowed by the simultaneous exhibition of the work of Peter Hennessey, which included a life-size replica of the Voyager Space Probe. Either by chance or design, the huge parabolic dish of the probe seemed to find its focus trained on the prints of Brendan Lee.

_Shootin’ from the Hip_ was composed of several large photographs derived from a film shoot that was also exhibited in dual-screen. The photographs arrest moments of cinematic gun-play, like stills from a Sam Peckinpah movie. The direct inspiration for this work however was not the Western but the work of John Woo. Lee reproduces key aspects of a Woo mise en scène - the rain of torn paper, a reference to the fireworks of Spring Festival; the bird cage, a foreshadowing of the doves that inevitably appear in Woo’s films - yet in Lee’s work these become little more than ‘floating signifiers’ ripped from their cultural matrix.

According to the catalogue essay, the accompanying video is an attempt to "deconstruct the time of the shootout". Yet, as Woo performs this self-reflexive move with considerably more bravado and finesse himself in _Hardboiled_ (the film to which _Shootin’ from the Hip_ clearly refers) this hokey DV camera version affords us little or no insight into the cultural specificities of Hong Kong gangster films or of their cross-cultural influence.

If this piece constitutes deconstruction, the term has suffered a considerable diminution of meaning since it first kick-started the poststructuralist bandwagon.

On the other hand, Shaun Wilson’s _Filmic Memorials_ is an ambitious and exquisitely realised exploration of the tension between artefact and memory. Wilson’s work takes as raw material 8mm and 16mm home-movie footage, which he has digitised and reconfigured into a lambent, dream-like procession of slowly transmogrifying images. Completely undermining the structure inherent in their celluloid origins, Wilson manages to produce the illusion that individual sequences are enfolded into themselves, allowing the viewer to perceive the smallest detail, the most subtle of changes within the image. With the inevitability of the succession of frames erased, the viewer was left with the experience of a kind of ‘deep time’. This vertical movement transformed them into strange, almost talismanic images.

Part soundscape, part installation, Alexandra Gillespie’s _Motion After Effect_ explores the eponymous phenomenon whereby a moving subject coming to a halt perceives the surrounding environment as moving in the opposite direction to that in which the subject was originally travelling. A metaphor for the transition from urban to non-urban space, Gillespie’s work came with no instruction manual – rather an oversight, as it was only after an exploratory walk and a quick lie down on the astro-turf that viewers experienced the desired effect. The whole thing is reminiscent of a visit to an interactive science exhibit - it’s just that Questacon does it better.

With the notable exception of Wilson’s work, one could not help but notice that there was not only a disparity of scale between Hennessey’s Voyager and these photomedia works, but also a disparity in terms of craft and engagement with ideas.

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