Horizons & Aphorisms

Jondi Keane

Institute of Modern Art 7-30 September 2000
A promising language describes light as if it floods, fills and bathes. Like liquid, light flows and streams around us. Our eyes search for it, for tiny particles of light in darkness, for the outline, for the limit between light and dark that draws a line between safety and danger. In the realm of light, there is certainty. Sight determines the lines of perceptual experience. Sight locates the point of view and the perspective, locating each person in space. In darkness, hands trembling and outstretched, skin tingling, we expectantly feel our way through unknown voids of time and space. Projected across reception and perception, light draws an 'improbable architecture'.

As installation, Jondi Keane’s wall paintings seem to occupy the juncture of cinema, architecture and painting. It is like cinema but not. It is like architecture but not. It is like painting but not. Integral to this work is Keane’s engagement with ‘EXIT genres’, a term he uses to describe ‘genres’ of suggestion: as systems of directed attention ... The aim of EXIT genres is not to dismantle genres but to focus on what they provide. In Keane’s work, we have only the idea or suggestion of these things, a lapse into what Jean-François Lyotard calls the différents where what “asks to be spoken cannot be put into phrases and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away.” This lapse in language suggests a lapse in time, a temporality like a pause.

In his writing about cinema, Paul Virilio argues that architectural spaces are not possible without light, interaction or perception, as if there is a pause between architecture and cinema. He describes how luminescent cinematic images allude to transformations (translations) from surface to interface, reception to perception, matter to light. These themes and transformations flow through the installation, Horizons & Aphorisms which ‘exists’ across genre and idiom. While Keane is not creating architectonics which fix the body within space, this work certainly implies the body, both sensory and conscious. ‘A main focus is to emphasise or produce awareness in the person that they are often in a fix, asked to choose between conscious category and sensory orientation.’ This body moves, disrupts and rearranges space. It is as if we are participating in a reconstitution of architecture through perception.

Light defines and redifines the surfaces of walls with layers of illusion. Because Keane has painted and written on the walls to emphasise the ‘images’ created by the falling light, it’s difficult to ascertain what is real. The viewer is immersed in an interactive environment as if in some kind of inclusive virtual reality. This is a VR without pixels, inscribed across the material world as ‘apparent’ experience. As the installation senses a presence, it responds and welcomes each gesture, creates moments of intimacy and invitation. The effect is similar to the logic of the paradox, where things are not as they seem, and where a shift of perception or perspective impacts. The space and the body are configured, not only in relation to each other but also in the process of relation to each other.

Arranging freestanding lamps throughout the gallery, Keane provides a responsive environment which reorients the viewer within its changing frame. The presence of the lights burning onto seemingly blank walls seems to parody and pare exhibitionary convention. While the space is emphasised, the focus is on the shifting horizon, the lines of (escape) on the walls. A repertoire of interaction, lights and shadow dramatically remake and delimit the spaces ‘where the imaginary is real—the real is the negotiation between imaginary and symbolic orders. The drama shifts from narrative drama to the dramatisation of our own thought (processes).’

Similarly, a drama unfurls in Horizons & Aphorisms which not only calls for a shift of perception, but also seems to propose that such a shift is inevitable. For Virilio, the horizon—
as both ‘ground line’ and ‘skyline’—presents possible and multiple points of view and convergence: ‘the horizon ... is also the very first littoral, a vertical littoral ... [which] unremarked invention of the art of painting and of distinguishing a ‘form’ from a ‘background’.19 The horizon is not a clean slice across perspective and perception, the ruse of ‘quattrocento’, but a site of merger and movement. ‘The horizon is an ability to shift positions, for the multiple perspectives a person can take.’20 However, for Keane, there is no movement, no shift, without a blindspot. ‘For me the blindspot is not a frustration [but] becomes a limit and structure which our system uses and begins to rely upon. In other words they ‘get built in’ to the production of both perspectives and shifts in perspective.’21

The aphorisms too provide a system of thought which might ask to be translated into another. Spilling along a vertical axis, each phrase encompasses or proposes a perceptual system, a world view, a point of view. The world view is a promise of a certainty whereby compliance with certain rules will produce certain results. We are again in ‘a fix’ when the symbolic becomes meaningless. Often the aphorism operates like commonsense, like the consensual philosophy of everyday life. However, as Lyotard contests, consensus is impossible. Again, there is the différence because ‘phrases from heterogenous regimes cannot be translated from one into the other. They can be linked one onto the other in accordance with an end fixed by a genre of discourse.’22

Keane explains that ‘genres still present totalising systems, however, the impact they have as totalising representations has shifted to totalising perspective used as Point of View for subjective transformation ... EXIT genres are the practice of convergence.’23 Within the frame of installation, cross-disciplinary linkage and slippage is more likely, more possible. Such a slippage is assigned corporeal value which prioritises and spatialises a notion and practice of embodied thought. This performative projection of illusory and illuminated dramas seems to reshape the architecture and the awareness of ourselves within its spaces.

LINDA CARROLI

Thanks are due to John Armstrong for his assistance with this text.

1 Paul Virilio, The Lost Dimension, trans. Daniel Moynihan, Semiotext(e), New York, 1985, p. 71
2 Jordi Keane, EXIT Genres and the Experience of Reading, catalogue for EXIT Genres, Soapbox Gallery, Brisbane, October 1999, p. 0
Hlibchuk states that Keane’s wall paintings have ‘collapsed under the situational pressure. Floor lamps with halogen lights illuminate the painted surface with a tonal presence, a middleground between viewer and “painting space” ... We leave only with the idea of a painting.’
5 Virilio, op.cit., p. 71ff.
6 Jordi Keane, email correspondence, July 31, 2000
7 ibid.
9 Jordi Keane, In conversation, July 19, 2000
10 Jordi Keane, email, op.cit.
11 Lyotard, op.cit., p.xii
12 Jordi Keane, EXIT Genres and the Experience of Reading, op.cit.
JONDI KEANE  Born 1959, Danbury CT, USA

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2000  Horizons & Aphorisms, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
1999  EXIt Genres, Soapbox Gallery, Brisbane
       Points of Readiness, Smith + Stoneley Gallery, Brisbane
       How to Aim, University Art Gallery, USQ, Toowoomba
1998  Spectre, Smith + Stoneley Gallery, Brisbane
1996  Auto-Curation, Flon-Flon, Lausanne, Switzerland
1993  One Person Show, wall paintings and light, Gallery M.I.S.S., Geneva, Switz.
       One Person Show, wall paintings and light, Ruine Gallery, Geneva, Switz.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1999  Oration, performance, Soapbox Gallery, Brisbane
1997  Writing & Voice as Sculpture: A Book Symphony and Pulp, Soapbox Gallery, 
       Brisbane

SELECTED COLLABORATIONS
2000  Lines of Site, IMA, collaboration between Co. Mafé-Siegenthaler-Keane
1998  Lines of Site, Qld Art Gallery, Brisbane, as part of APT3, collaboration as 
       above
1999  Calumet Notebooks, IMA, Performance for Vlat Festival, collaboration 
       between Co. Mafé-Siegenthaler-Keane
1991  Painting Installation, part 1, Palace Gallery, Brisbane, collaboration with 
       Dan Mafé, Jill Barker and Carol Fastuca
       Painting Installation, part 2, IMA, Brisbane, collaboration as above

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THE ARTIST WOULD LIKE TO THANK LINDA CARROU AND RAY O'LACUTT
On Writing With Emblems, 1996
Wall painting, halogen light, size variable
Systems of Attention, 1991–92
Wall painting, halogen light, objects, 2.5 x 2 x 0.75 m. Photograph: Judy Hendrickson
Horizons and Aphorisms
Jondi Keane

1. affect and effect overflow to congeal as æffect
2. affect and effect work together to preserve autonomy whereas æffect values configuration
3. the advent of autonomy turns into a drizzle of adventures in totality.
4. nothing matters but the quality of æfection
5. æfection fastens to each direction of possibility a continuum of qualities
6. æffections accrue to form geometric points from which to contemplate possibility
7. light excites points in geometry to become handrails for the shadows
8. light is an ink wash that splashes into the shadows
9. (con)-tourism is a position that goes with or against the guided tour

10. (con)-sequences use ongoing sequences to draw lines in the sand
11. walls that no longer give resistance go AWOL and join perception
12. walls are spiritual gossip and “intramural and extramural” are religious distinctions
13. the organism petitions its own organisation for a new rate of change
14. facts are events that can no longer maintain velocity and develop an æflection for walls
15. horizons are the lived experience of ideas and aphorisms are horizons that presume universality
16. aphorisms are the architecture of genres & genres are the architectonics of horizons
17. the pollution of the rainbow in me
18. the rope we barked at the moon ...was a short lived horizon
4 HORIZONS DOMESTICATED TO MAKE

living/room

There are four smaller installations in gallery 2
of the IMA, which accompany the larger work
"Horizons and Aphorisms", and function as
supplements or commentaries. These smaller
works provide samples that focus on
subjective point of view. The logics at work
apply to the objects in relation to a single wall.
This idea is expanded in "Horizons and
Aphorisms" to apply to the architectural space
in relation to the Imaginary space created by
the aphorisms. The title, "Horizons
domesticated to make living room" may be
read in two ways. First, if the word "living" is
emphasised, then the implication is that our
possibilities for having a life are delimited by
our abilities to fix the world in our view.
Second, if the word "room" is emphasised,
then the implication is that we administer
knowledge in hopes that the open space does
not come with strings attached. Both
interpretations are bleak. From these dead
ends we may turn our interest to the uses we
can make of these domestications -- as
systems of attention. We would benefit from
an awareness of the constant and uncanny
insertion we make of horizons (worldviews,
totalities, and imaginary wholeness). This is a
strategy to insert ourselves into the world. I am
not suggesting that we eradicate this process
but become aware of it as Abstraction and use
it accordingly or otherwise, as we do
Language. We may intervene with our
involuntary functions and default settings by
attending to the dispositions and orientations
we utilise in forming knowledge. This process
of auto-affectation or self-organisation depends
upon forms of attention that are pre-linguistic
and pre-geometric but that are nevertheless
embodied cognition. There are many ways to
intervene and re-configure or re-imagine our
systems of thought. One alternative system of
attention is micro-beckoning. It proposes that
since our cells all have retinal vestiges, they
are sensitive to light events, and consequently,
groups of cells turn toward events before an
organised perceiving is initiated. This activity
registers as a suspicion or a sensation of the
thoroughgoing(ness) of person with/in the
surroundings. This kind of embodied
intelligence may be described as chlorophyll
consciousness and is only one of many inter-
articulations of person and surround that have
yet to be explored in relation to thought,
attention and "living" "room"

Jodil Keane  September 2000