



COOL  
SILICON  
ART  
AWARD  
EXHIBITION

WITTGENSTEIN'S LADDER II

BY NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD

HELLERAU 2011



WITTGENSTEIN'S LADDER II BY NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD

INSTALLATION: METALIC SPRAY ON WOOD, 94 LED BULBS & LED STRIP LIGHTING

GEBÄUDE ENSEMBLE DEUTSCHE WERKSTÄTTEN HELLERAU, GERMANY

GALERIE SAAL 9-11 DECEMBER 2011





The ladder is at once a passageway and a membrane. In the middle of the ladder we are nowhere. We are neither here nor there. We are in a state of emergence. Again Attard brings us to the place of one who is comfortable talking about the in-between. He's comfortable with what is possible there. With this work, a ladder fashioned out of light, Attard reaches out into the fields of philosophy, symbology, even his own history to discuss the mythology of progress. Once again a conundrum arises in Attard's research. Wittgenstein used the ladder to illustrate the need to discard of a way back from current achievement or understanding. Once one achieves a thing, climbs up the ladder so to speak, it is imperative to kick out the ladder from underneath oneself in Wittgenstein's perspective. Conversely in Malta, Attard's home, the Great Siege of 1565 brings other connotations to the table. When the Moors attacked the redoubt of

Valletta they used ladders to scale the high fortress walls surrounding the city. Progress of another sort is representable by the ladder here, not through a war from within oneself, as the quest for knowledge often is, but a war brought about from a foreign enemy. One could argue that war is, at least in the perspective of the victor, a progressive act with potentiated space the gain of the conquest. The ladder intact and crafted of light thus could be arguably be a symbol of victory. With Wittgenstein's Ladder Attard is trying his hand at symbological construction, the establishment of new symbols for a new time.

ROBERT PETERSON Curator, Elsewhere Museum, Greensboro, NC., USA.



*“My propositions serve as elucidations... anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them - as steps - to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.”*

Ludwig Wittgenstein Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1922)

Roads, paths, stairs and ladders... they all lead somewhere. But does man ever truly reach the summit? Or does he come crashing down as soon as this pinnacle has been reached and achieved?

Life is merely a complex arrangement of stages, levels and phases – which could easily be symbolised as steps/rungs inevitably leading somewhere; each step/rung being as representative and meaningful as the previous or the next. That is what keeps man striving to reach a destination which is totally unbeknownst to him.

Ironically, on arriving at one's destination, the journey is over. Just as abruptly and unexpectedly as it began. But what if this pull, drawing us further into its core, making us climb higher and higher, were just a fascination with a mystery? Those many unanswered questions spur us on; unconsciously seducing us with the possibility of some great revelation or epiphany. Thus the ladder – this simple 'tool' which raises so many questions and which has aided man throughout the ages - becomes the subject of an art installation by Norbert Attard who became intrigued by its many connotations, references and meanings.

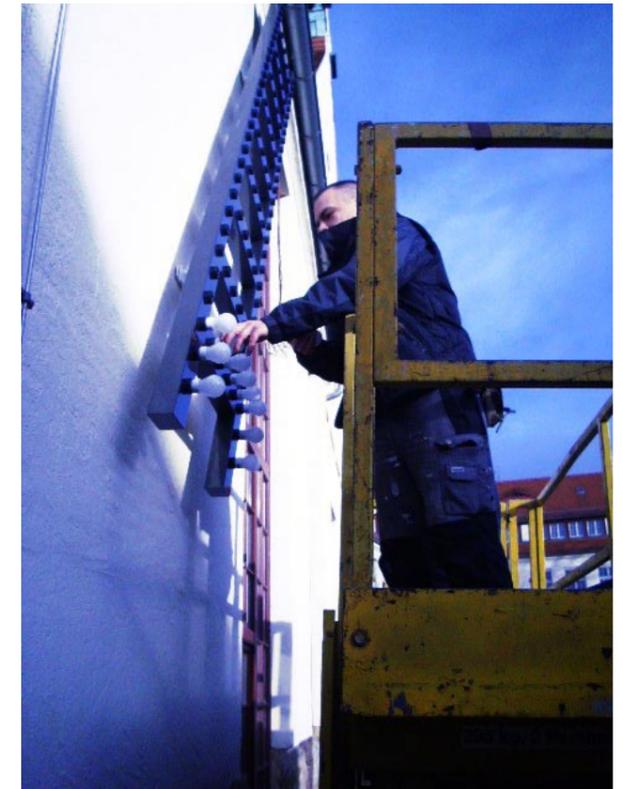
Attard draws inspiration from the biblical story of Jacob's ladder among others, which uses the ladder to symbolise the communication between the physical and spiritual worlds. Similarly, in Mesopotamia the Ziggurat was named 'the ladder to heaven'. Whilst in psychological terms this mystic symbol can be understood as the communication between the true self and the ego.

But closer to Attard's home and roots, the ladder can be associated with the extensive bastions surrounding Valletta - Malta's capital city - and in turn also with The Great Siege of 1565. The universal method for defending a town/city against enemy threats was the use of fortifications - high walls and ditches which supplemented natural features. Thus, fortifications played an all-essential role in the defence of towns and cities. Nevertheless, walls were beaten down, and broken into or escalated relatively easily through the simple use of ladders.

With all this context and history borne in mind, Attard has developed his ladder installation – a propped up illusion of a tool which appears to have a function but which in reality only possesses form and meaning. This luminous ladder is there to remind us of the light at the end of the tunnel; of the overcoming of obstacles; of the phases in life. This ladder need not be fixed to any one space, site or context but can be adapted, reinterpreted and relocated to suit several. Just as Wittgenstein used the ladder as a metaphor to signify the transcendence of his propositions; Attard has devised his own ladder to manifest a similar premise to Wittgenstein's - yet through physical rather than linguistic means.

LISA GWEN BALDACCHINO Journalist based in Malta





INSTALLATION PROCESS OF THE LADDER: CHERRY PICKER SPONSORED BY UKA+HAUKE

COOL SILICON ART AWARD JURY  
PROF. ELIZABETH HOAK-DOENING  
ANDREA HILGER  
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WOODWORK AND METALLIC SPRAYING  
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LED STRIP LIGHTING  
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