

011 OSTRALE'011

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WONDERFUL MAN III

AUDIO VISUAL INSTALLATION

SHATTERED TEMPERED GLASS AND PROJECTED LIGHT

4-CHANNEL SOUND BY ROB PETERSON (USA)

NORBERT
FRANCIS
ATTARD

TEXT BY ELISABETH KUON

WONDERFUL MAN III

Audio-visual installation.

Shattered tempered glass, LED projector with gobo slide.

4-channel sound by Rob Peterson (USA).

Futterställe (fodder barns), Ostrale 011, Dresden, Germany, 2011.

For thousands of years, man has dreamt of being able to fly like a bird. The first aircraft designers, like the Wright Brothers, certainly did have this dream in mind. Perhaps they thought of collateral commercial applications but surely their dream was one of simply reaching the sky to discover and feel the freedom and yet the supportive reliability due to mankind's inventions of winged flight.

Wonderful Man combines shattered tempered glass with a light projection through a gobo slide. It seems to reflect one of the great paradoxes of life: man's capacity of brilliant innovation being matched only by his capacity of total self-destruction. One wonders sometimes how long we can continue to live this paradoxical life. It may come to one's mind that a certain degree of destruction is necessary to leave space for inventions or innovations.

Many of mankind's great inventions date from periods when man had a huge desire or even a huge need for protection or defence like in times of crisis or wars. Thus, in such a context it is convenient that the artist creates a new form out of remaining material. The glass sheet, intact as it was in the beginning, needed to be destroyed before it could be transformed into a military aircraft. The aircraft's reflections point out the powerfulness not only of this outlasting material but as well of the power that is inherent in those constructions.





As the artwork reflects and projects the light on the two walls behind and in front, it likewise affects the visitor with its brightness (contrasting the dark room) and with the sound of an aircraft on-stream. This installation might even have the power to intimidate. As it is embodying the power of flight and in consequence also its destructive power, it is at the same time revealing its weakness or vulnerability as one can clearly see that it consists of fragments which are only assembled and thus easily destroyable. The power of mankind is without doubt great but at the same time this power is – like its own legacies are – not durable, it is vulnerable and reversible.

We all take part in this great paradox of being affected by something that is at the same time both dangerous and helpful. As the aircraft is most beneficial to us, we associate it with transport of goods or traveling for holidays and business. On the other side these machines frighten us, for the military aircraft as an offensive weapon has only one main function: to destroy. Nevertheless, mankind is always willing to innovate, striving to make the earth and the sky a place where life offers a lot of pleasant sides. The light that makes Attard's work glitter represents the benefits of aviation and the peacefulness and freedom it affords.

Norbert Francis Attard's work is reflecting this ongoing process of destruction and recreation. Furthermore, it can be understood as a non-verbal allusion to the bombing attacks of February 1944 in Dresden. During these attacks a sports stadium near the former slaughterhouse – nowadays the place of one of the biggest festival of contemporary art in Europe – had been the spot-center for the British Army. After World War II this area was made a dump for the debris of Dresden, of which one little hill has been left until today. Attard's work refers to all these circumstances, so it is to some degree site-specific in the way that the artist allowed history and environment to coproduce his artwork.

ELISABETH KUON



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CRITICAL ESSAY

Elisabeth Kuon

TEMPERED GLASS

Schmidt Glas, Dresden, Germany.

