



Bus Projects

HELEN BERKEMEIER 20 April 2011

Walking down a narrow and industrial dark set of stairs lit by hanging fairy lights one arrives at [Bus Projects](#) new gallery space in Melbourne's CBD. Just off from the bustling Spencer Street Station in a heritage listed, 120-year old Venetian Gothic stone and brick building lies the labyrinth-like basement where Artist Run Initiative, Bus Projects, calls home.

Recently opened, this is Bus Projects' second gallery space, after they closed the doors to their Little Lonsdale Street base in March 2009. The inaugural exhibition *Body Language (Getting Lost in Translation)* is a group show exploring broad themes concerning the body, gesture and action with a focus on video based installation, spatial and performance practice. Curated by Drew Pettifer, the exhibition features Melbourne based artists Simon Pericich, Lane Cormick, Ross Coulter and Hannah Raisin.

Their artworks are installed throughout Bus Projects' three gallery spaces; each room joined by a long domed hallway with arched doorways. There are no 'white cubes' here – with vaulted ceilings, cream and maroon painted brick walls, it is a demanding space to adapt and use. In spite of that, the space also opens up a variety of opportunities for artists and curators to experiment with it's damp, dark and intriguing spaces, basement windows and tunnel-like structure. Ross Coulter's work employs arched walls and a covered basement window used as screens for his three video art installations, which are projected onto these surfaces from projectors sitting atop three ladders arranged in the narrow room. By choosing to display the work in this nature, the arched frames around the projections become part of the work, playing a defining role in the installation. Unfortunately, however I felt that the frames did not centre or enclose the work. Instead they encouraged my eye to linger around the room and my attention was drawn away from the installation and focused on the unusual gallery structure and intriguing atmosphere - narrow and dark with minimal lighting filtering in from street level through a basement window cover.

In contrast, Hannah Raisin successfully met the demands of this challenging space. Her work *Performance Sculpture: lying in concrete*, 2011 sits entombed in a small room, the first gallery I encountered entering Bus Projects. An imprint of her body lies there in the space, embedded into a large concrete slab. Lit by a single light bulb, this space is dark, curious, somber and heavy – just like the work itself.

Although a difficult and challenging space to reconcile with, Bus Project's new space offers many exciting and rewarding possibilities for artists and curators, particularly those focusing on site-specific installation, spatial or performance practice. It is not, however, a space easy to adapt for all artists which is why it is probably an ideal place for Bus Projects to call home, as they focus on exhibiting the work of emerging artists investigating spatial art practice. I look forward to seeing how the space is adapted in future exhibitions.

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