

The Dragon, The Purple Forbidden Enclosure

Remnants

One might picture it rains in the room. Starkwhite's walls give out vibrations of music, sounds of steps and negotiations of the past lives they contained. Logical meanings are off center. Dane Mitchell's *Dragon* was born for Singapore as a magic enclosure conceived by the New Zealand artist and imbued with energy by a local medium – a *feng shui* geomancer. From March to May 2011 the linear architecture of the *Dragon*, in a room of the abandoned Old Kallang airport, was filled with spirits; but every object as well, forms whose physicality is a vessel for a meaning that remains secret, absorbed the energy activated in the enclosure. After the act of undoing the magic at the end of the Singapore Biennale, they still radiate their mystery. As we follow the metal outline, we cross the line of a certainty based on empirical propositions: even grounded and scattered on the floor, brought back to their material evidence, the remains of a spell pierce a passage toward un-measurable, intangible realities. Although sacrificed to its physical details, also being not, the idea of the spell guides our perception to the edge of the unknown.

A clean investigation of what life leaves after, either human (museums' geological strata, dust, images of barricades) or celestial debris, only brings up dissipated particles. The artist collects their physical traces with magic or scientific proceedings, and displays them in a way that challenges our senses when we gaze on stars' dust, or breathe the smell of an empty space whose chemistry has been artificially reconstructed. He places remnants within a limited portion of our time. And they last longer than personal stories, artifacts, or monuments. Natural decay is stronger than history.

In other 'spell' pieces he made in New Zealand and in The Netherlands he did not directly place personal elements. But in Singapore, he brought *The Dragon*; his own birth hung from the sky as many others'. The line of tubes around the spell's remnants looks earthly and plain, as if the stars had dropped their desire to become a recognizable shape, and could only do it geometrically.

But the intangible clue of our lives – including before and after – does not have geometrical or historical edges. We call for spirits to get in touch with our own invisible beings. What remains is a human, imaginary thread, a silk ladder toward the unexposed: a landscape of water in plastic bottles, magic words transformed into glass, and the truth of the matter in a black stone.

Hidden stories of human desire.

- Rosanna Albertini