



at the foot of justice

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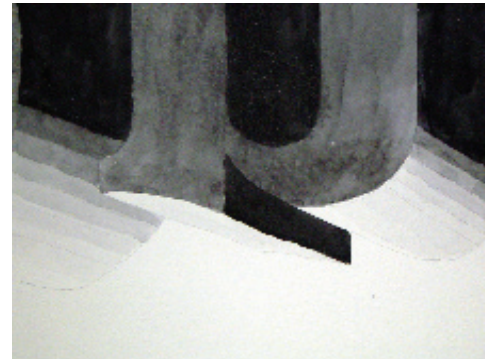
Often deploying text from sources such as news media and fine art, Mestrom produces site-specific works that investigate the political and cultural frameworks that produce ‘meaning’. In using these culturally ‘loaded’ signifiers to explore the dynamics of visual and spatial perception, the operative mechanisms in the psychosocial construction of meaning are also questioned in both private and public space.

This deployment of text as signifier is a method of critiquing the ‘text’ underlying all cultural production without being literal. By juxtaposing statements like “subject of production” vs “ production of subject”, or “site of cultural negotiation” vs “negotiation of cultural site”, the slippages of meaning that arise by shifting words raises further queries about meaning in relation to perception, positions of authority and the contextual readings of site.

Mestrom's early orthographic text-works were conducted in exterior spaces, eg. alleyways, underpasses, billboards, etc., where the personal/political addressed the dynamics of political/cultural meaning produced in a public "site of cultural negotiation" and/or its reverse. More recently, orthographic and stereographic projects have been executed in interior spaces, that is, within sites that are traditionally regarded as spaces of authority or "sites of cultural significance", such as municipal, artist-run and/or commercial galleries. But how does 'meaning' change in each of these contexts, and who decides?

The relations between author, object and subject are primary in this process. To explore the dynamics between them, the process of perception is explored in regards to their position with the text in the context of site. This also questions the notion of authority, as implied in her questions "Will judgement ... when it falls on me?" as opposed to "Will judgement ... when it falls on them?" in her exhibition *At the foot of Justice* at Conical Gallery, Melbourne, 2004. While the site locates the audience – in an art gallery and 'under' judgment – the floating signifier and missing word open up 'meaning' as they are compelled to ask questions like 'what is judgement?', 'what is being judged?', 'who is judging?', and 'what happens if judged?' and complete the statement/produce meaning in their own way.

As technology increasingly imposes itself upon our lives, and the corporeal spaces we have traditionally inhabited are replaced by the virtual, Mestrom's work shifts, as does the possibility for meaning, between the two. By physically painting ephemeral



3 - 18TH SEPTEMBER 2004
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THU - FRI 12 - 5:30; SAT - SUN 12 - 5

works on a wall, the conventions of meaning once represented in 'painting' – the one-point perspective of Renaissance painting, signifying a single position of authority and/or truth – are juxtaposed against her use of 3D stereographics, a virtual space that represents a shift in the position of authority, and audience, to open up the possibility for multiple meanings.

An interesting rationale behind these 3D techniques – orthographics and stereographics – also raises questions about how the brain functions ie. how aesthetic information is received through the eyes and meaning is produced from what is 'perceived'. While orthographics demonstrate the relationship between perception and meaning in relation to one's physical position to the object being perceived, her stereographic works critique the illusory construction of reality and/or meaning as the brain is tricked into perceiving 3D objects from 2D information.

This scientific understanding is employed as a rather sophisticated metaphor of the psychosocial constructions of perception/meaning and, in the cultural and/or political context of site, also explores the author/object/subject relations in the production of meaning rather more deeply than previous generations of text-based artists. Instead, Mestrom's site-specific work opens up the space of authority and the production of meaning to her audience.