Sunday Ganim, Sarah Lake, Adele Psarras, Niambh O'Reily, Luisa Rausa, Elizabeth Sampson, Jessie Scott, Salote Tawale & Jody Woman

Raja Pink

Platform2 Gallery
15 November – 2 December 2004
by Veronica Tello

Step into the world of *Raja Pink*: a phantasmagoria of the fantastical, the degenerate and the banal. Such a myriad of thematic and visual content can be directly attributed to the broad curatorial theme of the exhibition – to respond to the location, context and audience of Platform2.[1]

Situated in Campbells Arcade, one of the subway tunnels connecting to Flinders Street Station – Platform2 is consequently subject to flows of human traffic. In response to the monotonous pedestrian rhythms that echo throughout Platform2, Elizabeth Sampson – one of the nine artists exhibiting in *Raja Pink* – composed an immense black pen drawing – on white tracing paper – of numerous people walking in various directions. Effectively, Sampson's illustration elicited a mis-en-abyme effect: a mode of self-reflexivity in the audience as her drawings the reflected and mimicked the actions of pedestrians who walked past the gallery.

Like Sampson, Jessie Scott also drew her inspiration from pedestrian activities – namely window-shopping. Employing the design of Platform2's gallery space – a series of glass cabinets set within the walls of Campbells Arcade that resemble a line of shop-windows – to her advantage, Scott was able to emulate a shop-window display by installing multiple yellow paper hair sculptures, hung in formation. Within the context of Platform2, a gallery neighbouring a number of small retail outlets, including a wig shop, Scott's installation propelled a simultaneously comical and self-conscious mode of spectatorship.

In contrast to Scott's tongue-in-cheek response to Platform2, Luisa Rausa investigated a significantly darker facet of subway tunnels: their sterility and bleakness. Her installation – multiple and variously sized cylindrical shapes, wrapped in black cloth and silk set against a stark white background – projected a distinctly affective and distancing aura. As a result, Rausa's installation brought to light the desolate, isolating and potentially horrific experience of subway tunnels – as has so often been represented in Slasher films, especially in their representation of women as abject.[2]

Below: *Jessie Scott*
Untitled, 2004
Found images/photocopies, acrylic paint & fishing wire
300 x 110cm
Photo credit: Elizabeth Sampson
Image courtesy the artist

The diversity in *Raja Pink's* aesthetic was epitomised by the juxtaposition between Rausa's distancing response and Tawale's warm and inviting installation: images of the artist transposed onto a garish yet idyllic Fijian landscape. Tawale's Fijian-scape provided an opportunity for pedestrians to transcend their drab surroundings and vicariously journey to a fantastical landscape: a quintessential imaginary paradise.

From Tawale's escapist imagery to Scott's parodies of shop-window displays, *Raja Pink* presented extensive but disjointed thematic and visual content. Despite the disparity there was a consistent conceptual thread woven through the exhibition – a critical address of the everyday. And, it is precisely within this area of cultural commentary that the artists discussed here were able to extrapolate the most poignant and gauging observations on the activities and cultural life that exists within Platform2; pedestrian acts, consumer culture and the banality that pervades in metropolitan life.

Veronica Tello is a Melbourne based writer.

<notes>
[1] Only four artist's works from *Raja Pink* have been discussed, as they epitomise the core conceptual threads of the exhibition
[2] For further reading on the subject see: Carol J Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992 and
Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis,* Popular Fiction Series. London; New York: Routledge, 1993