



Indepth Arts News:

Uplift: The Mountain Premises - Sean Slemon 's Newest Work

2005-06-11 until 2005-06-27, *Premises Gallery at Johannesburg Civic Theatre, Johannesburg, ZA South Africa*

“As for carpets, originally they were reproductions of gardens. The garden in which the entire world attains its symbolic perfection, and the carpet is a kind of garden that moves through space. The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and the whole world at the same time”. Michel Focoualt, on the origination of Persian carpets. Sean Slemon’s new body of work interrogates space through his installation of carpet, defined by the architectural dimensions of the gallery in which he is exhibiting. Slemon is best known for his sculptural work and graduated from the Michealis School of Fine Arts, with distinction from the University of Cape Town in 2001. He was included on Dean’s Merit list and awarded two Irma Stern Art Scholarships.

‘Uplift: The Mountain Premises’ is a site-specific installation of carpet where layers of carpet trace the contours from the gallery footprint and gradually reduce in size to create a mountain.



Maquette, aerial view, laser cut mild steel

The installation is informed by the space of the gallery in which it is installed, in dialogue with the inner city and the history of Johannesburg. This two and half ton mountain contemplates both personal and public control of the spaces we occupy. On a broader level this alludes to the ongoing land/architecture debate wherein architecture and its control or change of land is put into question. Should architecture be dictating the natural space we inhabit or should we make land work to accommodate the architectural dreams and fantasies we create?

Marcus Neustetter co-director of The Premises Gallery and Trinity Session comments, “Sean Slemon’s installation is not only relevant to the space because its site specific, but its methodology appropriately indicates the shift in focus of The Premises. As a gallery space The Premises aims to promote work that takes its environment into consideration, reflects on its process, and presents itself in a resolved and considered manner in challenging the audience. Slemon’s work touches on all of these aspects.”

Today we control space in such a drastic manner and it is rare that one sees the land being used to facilitate space: the use of natural space is limited and more often than not architecture is a tool we use to create spaces that suit our contemporary lifestyles.

“I want to create work that interrogates ways in which people approach space. Land as a commodity and politically charged area in South Africa represents growth and improvement for many and is a driving force in our society. The implications of land in society, and how architecture adapts to land has become central to my work. Public artwork is an important component in this debate: crucial to the community and the dialogue of public space,” says Sean Slemon.

Slemon has produced commissioned sculptural work for Hollard Brokers, Hollard Insurance and KVV in 2004, Kimberley Department of Arts and Culture, 2003, and has participated in numerous group exhibitions including the

MAGNANMETZ GALLERY

Spier Outdoor Sculpture Biennial in 2002. He serves on the committee for Visual Arts Network of South Africa and assisted Clive van den Berg with the artwork for 'The New Northern Cape Legislature Buildings' in Kimberley. Since 2003 Slemon has been involved with the production and installation for the museum and heritage site Constitutional Hill and is currently an exhibitions manager for the project. In 2004 Slemon has managed the installation for 'International Aids Conference' Department of Health-South Africa, Bangkok, 'A Prisoner Working in the Garden', Nelson Mandela Foundation, 'Woolworths Gallery Project' Standard Bank Young Artist award winner, Bernie Searle-'Float' and earlier was involved in the installation of 'Homeport' at the V& A Waterfront, Cape Town, and 'Juncture' - Cape Town and London'.

- June 13, 2005