

blue angels

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Virtual Realities.

This sculpture takes its inspiration from the virtual reality worlds and artificial life experiments of computer culture, setting up conversations with new media works (for example, Jon McCormack's virtual botanies to be incorporated into Federation Square). Like other virtual life forms, this virtual garden represents nothing, and is nothing but itself, product of its code: the elemental modules of plastic scourers have nothing to do with Nature. They do not imitate her exteriors, mimicking flowers or lichens, but rather multiply through reduplication of an elemental code/core, in the same way in which Nature, herself, reproduces from the codings of her DNA, RNA, etc. Copying what already exists in Nature is not the issue. The virtual garden grows from replicating the elements of its own codes, like an artificial life program inside a computer.

However, this virtual garden is no longer behind glass, available only to the prosthetic touch of the cursor, but is now open to direct mediation. Skin to skin. These virtual forms, pop in their sensibility, have been liberated from the screen and allowed to establish themselves in the park.

The idea is to lay out the formations of this virtual garden along lines of the nature/culture divide, allowing it to multiply in the interstices between Nature and nurture. It's neither fully artificial nor fully natural, replicating like a virus (nature-as-code) but composed of the new materials of urban culture. However, this divide is constantly recrossed and remarked: the intensity of its colors act as eye-perfume attracting people to it like the flowers of Nature, while its alien materiality retains its non-real status, integral to itself, thus raising the issue of cohabitation with virtual forms.

The work intentionally draws upon the brightly colored modular style of computer animation, underlining our quotidian, and almost mundane, relationship to computer generated worlds which less simulate nature than establish new virtualities. This dialogue between the real and the virtual is central to the work. (A generation of children have been absorbed into the virtual playgrounds of Mario and Pokemon not because they simulate reality but because they engender new kinds of interactions.)

Vistas.

It is important that virtual garden is both natural and cultural, that it blends into the compositions which make up the vistas of the park - a patch of color and form, here following a line of trees, there defining an open space or an architectural feature. The virtual formations will merge with the existing topography/planting plan to become thoroughly integrated into the landscape, in the manner of the formal 'informal' landscapes of Capability Brown.

It is therefore anticipated that people will react to these carefully arranged formations, seen at a distance, with questions like "is it or isn't it Nature?" The sculpture aims to produce harmonies of landscape but also to provoke debate on notions of artifice/artificiality/prosthetics/ virtuality/representation.

Materials.

The formations are composed the urban materials of the late twentieth century industrial plastics, a medium which combines lightness, strength, durability, malleability and intense color. The artificiality of the materials is important, bearing none of the traces of human manufacture.

The plastic scourers are the result of industrial processes of extrusion, and machinic actions of folding/stitching according to a program, in an affinity with cybernetics.

The Prototype Garden.

To test the concept of the virtual garden, a series of photographs was taken in local Sydney parks (Centennial Park, Hills Reserve). It must be stressed the formations assembled were prototypes, and, therefore, only indicators of the future work. The actual formations of the virtual garden, if selected, will be tailored to the scale and planting plan of Werribee Park.

The photographs were taken to underline the difference between mimesis and virtuality. The formations bear no resemblance to existent natural life forms, and make no attempt, like artificial plastic flowers to copy an original. They originate in themselves, from the program (replicating scourer by scourer). Intentionally Pop, funny, extreme and alien they separate themselves from Nature while cohabiting with it.

Displacement and Coherence.

It is important to note that the formations which compose this work meet the competition criteria of "a free standing, non-site specific sculptural object, consisting of one coherent entity." Even though the work is composed of two

components (one set red, the other a single yellow and white), they function together as a compositional unit, and may be set up in different locations in different arrangements to take advantage of the situations presented by Werribee Park. It not a work which is "site-specific" in the sense of 'being about' one particular site. The work maintains its own integrity as thing-in-itself, and, as can be seen from the photographs of the prototypes, maintains its own coherence whilst lending coherence to the composition of the vista which receives it.

Displacement as a migratory concept is also integral to the work. Life, even vegetal life, moves, if only slowly. It is appropriate that virtual life forms should have the theoretical possibility of displacement, to grow, to mutate, to change habitats with the seasons. The laws of virtual life forms are, after all, only made up and appropriately manifest their unreal 'real' by breaking natural laws.

Brilliant colors have been chosen for the formations to take advantage of changes in the natural seasons. The colors complement nature; the red, in particular, is a 'natural' complement to green, and designed to prosthetically enhance the natural palette at those times of the year when the park is predominantly green, and flowers out of season.

Transportation and Mounting.

An important aspect of this show is that the formations are relatively lightweight and can be easily displaced around the park to take advantage of a range of vistas. The sculpture consists of two sets of formations, one red, the other yellow and white. Each component may be comfortably moved by two or three people. Once in place each component will be staked into position, using loops woven into the underside of the work.

The components are easily transported by a small truck. The approximately. weigh of the work will be of 80 kg and extending over a surface of approximately 60m².

Durability.

Each component is made up of durable, industrial plastics which do not deteriorate or fade over time, thus retaining the elastic or spongy quality of the works and their brilliant coloration.

The work can be securely fixed to the ground. However natural growth on and around the work is part of the conceptualization of the sculpture. The interaction between the virtual reality forms and nature is the core of the conceptualization of the art work.