

Illuminating Melbourne

Maxims of Behaviour

Anne Paterson

Illuminating Melbourne

The Royal Mail House is very 1960s style architecture. By day, its design seems strongly prescriptive of sixties' architectural maxims. But from dusk till late during winter 2008 until 15 September, the Royal Mail changes its colours, literally. The Royal Mail's facade 'comes alive' with Alexander Knox's kinetic light design entitled Maxims of Behaviour. Mounted upon protruding ledges, each light acts as a pixel. The imagery which moves across the face of the building is produced from abstracted video footage of the city's light, colour and movement.

Phantasmagoria

Knox is particularly interested in mythical and spiritual values. Knox also found further inspiration for the title of this work from the poem, *Phantasmagoria* by Lewis Carroll, where a male human is visited by a little phantom. A conversation ensues, and the little ghost explains to his human acquaintance 'The Five Rules of Etiquette'. Like humans, ghosts apparently respect a hierarchical pecking order, and observe strict rules of etiquette. The little ghost also comments insightfully about common ground with humans:

'...Ghosts have just as good a right
In every way, to fear the light,
As Men to fear the dark.'

from *Phantasmagoria*, Canto 1, The Trysting, Verse 7, in
Phantasmagoria and Other Poems by Lewis Carroll

The artist

Alexander Knox's huge kinetic light work contains 88 multi-coloured LED lights which run on green power, have a life span of 100,000 hours, and are very low maintenance. Each night, the average energy consumption is equivalent to running a 2400W small electric heater.

Alexander Knox studied Public Art at RMIT. He is a Melbourne-based artist who uses a combination of lighting, optics, audio, kinetic and formal elements in his work. He has a background in film and industrial design. Winner of the 2006 Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award at Werribee Park, he has exhibited widely in Australia and overseas. His residency in Bangkok's New Multi-Disciplinary Art Venue produced a large sound and light work entitled 'Little God', based on ancient geometries. He has recently been commissioned to design two major works for Melbourne's Docklands.

The City of Melbourne: Illuminating Melbourne
Maxims of behaviour, a kinetic light work, 1030m²
Alexander Knox

Where: The Royal Mail House building on the eastern corner of the Bourke and Swanston Streets intersection

When: Visible every night from dusk till late, during winter every year until 2012.

This artwork is visible Monday-Thursday, sunset till 12 midnight, and Friday-Sunday, sunset till approximately 2am, closing 15 September 2008.

Further information: www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/arts

