

THE DRAGON, THE FORBIDDEN PURPLE ENCLOSURE, 2011
OPEN HOUSE, SINGAPORE BIENNALE 2011

“Intangible materials and forces are the stuff of Dane Mitchell’s work. From dust, scent and light to the presence of spirits and the dynamics of human interaction, Mitchell attunes us to the life of spaces, in the here and now and in the past. His work always involves intensive research, and often collaboration with specialists, including French perfumiers, glass blowers, and spiritual mediums. For his work *The Dragon, The Purple Forbidden Enclosure*, the special energies of a room at Old Kallang Airport have been identified and channelled with the help of a local medium, mapped by the artist’s astrological sign, delineating a conversation between cultures and a threshold between worlds”

Russell Storer, Co-curator (short guide text)

“Dane Mitchell’s installation in the Old Kallang Airport will make you part of an invisible process linking both artist and visitors to a space charged by a medium, filled with spirits and contained within the astrological outline of *The Dragon within the Purple Forbidden Enclosure*, the artist’s sign – a visual language made with stars. Outside, the circular airdrome around the building, forced to become a memory since the 1950s, hovers in mid-air like a ghost over the control tower. Airplanes and seaplanes, now absent, still vibrate through the clouds. Inside, having charged the exhibition with a spell conjured by a local medium and spiritual director, Dane Mitchell refills an abandoned room with life: deceased souls open a portal to larger spiritual and cultural gatherings.

The ritual is secret and stays invisible. In previous manifestations only crumbles of chalk, or charcoal, and spilled purified water remain on the floor. The process of undoing the piece as important as the making, for the spell must be safely. The linear system of metal tubes, that marks the physical edge of the experience, must be disassembled by the medium at the close of the exhibition.

The artist always develops a rigorous, clean investigation of what life leaves after, either human or celestial. His artworks focus on spirits and dissipated particles. He collects their physical traces with magic or scientific proceedings, and displays them in a way that challenges our minds along with the senses when we gaze on stars’ dust, or breathe the smell of an empty room whose chemistry has been artificially reconstructed. His art places remnants into a limited portion of our time. And they last longer than personal stories, artefacts, or monuments. Natural decay is stronger than history.

In other ‘spell’ pieces he made in New Zealand and in Holland he did not place personal elements. But this time, in Singapore, he brings the Dragon; the only mythological sign of the Zodiac, his own birth hung from the sky as many others’. The line of tubes around the spell’s remnants is earthly and plain, as if the stars had dropped down their desire to become a recognisable shape, and could only do it geometrically.

For me, *THE DRAGON, THE PURPLE FORBIDDEN ENCLOSURE* (2011) has a bigger meaning than the call for departed souls. One moves through different belief systems and superstitions. If details change in different countries, the essential search is the same: we call for spirits to get in touch with our own invisible souls, now. Such a process does not change as languages, mental habits, architectures or religions do. The intangible clue of our lives – including before and after – does not have geometrical or historical edges. In one word, Dane Mitchell’s art ‘annihilates’ history. What remains is a human, imaginary thread, stronger than languages and borders.”

Rosanna Albertini, commissioned catalogue text





































