

Matt Sheridan: *keeping the colours / taking out the words*

Exiting Matsudo station at night, I pass the town's neon-lit stores and humming arcades to reach a dark horizon of parking lots. Through the gaps between the concrete, an architectural phantasm is cast in shifting patterns of coloured light. By going to see the new projections by LA-Based practitioner Matt Sheridan I was expecting a light show (in the dark), yet the scale of the glowing spectacle in this vacated location seems unexpectedly enticing. Competing with the city's own 'light' entertainment, the affects on other spectators is tangible; cars stop; drivers lose track of the road - so effectively do the flashing lights colonise their 'attention'.

Many suburban sites, even on the outskirts of Tokyo appear caught *twenty-four seven* in the familiar glow of convenience stores and game arcades. Yet it's another city, whose neon coliseums first informed Sheridan's projections; New York. During his time in New York, Sheridan recalls how he would walk through Times Square at night, taking in the glare. He'd walk up close to the billboards and experience the text distorted and over-sized, so that the words were no longer legible. "I wanted to keep the colours but take out the words" he reflects.

A hint at a political gesture? A long history of interventions in Times Square such as Jenny Holzer's provocative 'statements' or Ryoji Ikeda's "Test Pattern" interferences may come to mind. Yet these works clearly operate as interventions. Sheridan, like his chimeric visuals has more chimeric intent. For Sheridan may be as much influenced by fashion design and music as he is by Times Square, and seems to embrace buildings in the same way some New York parties in the 1980s may have re-shaped Seventh Avenue.

Sheridan is most interested in movement. For him, even oil paintings are already in his words, "moving" through colour, gesture and "the movements of spectators toward, across, and into the paintings (-in-motion)". His use of public space is also not site-specific but site-reactive. "As long as the painting is activating the room or transforming the room [or building] it's successful", he states. 'Painting' is also how he describes his own practice. Beginning with ritually painted works, which are then digitised, he form collages or sequences. These collages are animated and matched to a grid or architectural support "like making a garment" so that the final projections fit the target surface or building. For Sheridan - though mediated, these remain paintings. It is unsurprising then that he cites Wade Guyton as a key influence, whose 'paintings' are typographics or found images that he prints through an ink-jet printer. His gesture of 'pressing print' has been compared to Pollock's 'drip'.

In it's delimitations, Guyton's gesture of 'pressing print' does have a clarity despite the uncertain results (paper jams, ink shortages, paper sizing). Sheridan's gesture of 'projection' however seems less legible, particularly in a public arena in which - for Foucault and Debord - we are so aggressively commodified and controlled by flickering images. These are not new sites of contestation of course - for similar sites have been embattled with Holzer's counter-didactic billboards. Yet again, Sheridan may not intend to project- in-conflict or project-as-pastiche. Instead VJ' d and chimeric, dressing buildings and walls, his projections appear and disappear in sync, silently accompanied by an expressive "wooooooow" or a muted Iron Man's "whoosh" .

And in Matsudo, spectators 'making shapes' in the shadows of the projector, seem to concur. Viewing Sheridan's projections in the context of Tokyo, a friend later compared them to *Hanabi* (fireworks) - an association Sheridan may not contest, but may even celebrate.

Catherine Harrington, 2015