

YVÁN ROSA'S DOWNTOWN TURN

Berlin in Space
by Yván Rosa

Vostok, Farethewell

LMAK Projects

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NY 10002

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The movie opens with Yukitomo contemplating his future ship; he's in the middle of a colonnade that seems to recede endlessly towards an infinitesimal point in the background. The architecture is clean, rectangular, and modular. "Is this unique?" Yukitomo asks, "Or from an assembly line? Are there others just like it? Do we see the hand, the care in every aspect? Do we need to see the inside or just the exterior?" So begins Andy Graydon's vicarious spatial, temporal, and philosophical exploration of Berlin.



Yukitomo, a Japanese designer touring Berlin, is attempting to create a computer model of a space ship for a science fiction movie set in the year 2612. In Graydon's *Vostok, Farethewell* Yukitomo's ship, the Vostok, propels him into a material exploration of Berlin's surfaces in search of the right skin for his three dimensional model.

The building of this model becomes an indirect investigation into the ideological and historical traces that pervades the city's architecture. Berlin comes in as the quintessential city of the twentieth century having born witness to the major pervasive

forces and contending ideologies that have defined the last hundred and some years.

A sense of loss and transience figures greatly in Graydon's film. Presence, erasures, traces all intertwine to create a poetic investigation into this city as a testing ground for, what are now, lost visions of utopia. As Yukitomo propels himself into the future using the bare materials of Berlin's surfaces, as his ship forms and un-forms, the problematics of such projections come to the fore reflecting a state of transience and unbecoming. In the film Berlin is portrayed as a city whose present state is constituted in a strange temporal flux. Having served as the testing ground for so many of the visions of twentieth century architects, the city seems to somehow contain the ruins of some future civilization.

About seven works on paper make up the rest of Graydon's exhibition. The film's subtitles provide the titular basis for these works. These works provide not so much an account of the making of the film (though they are partly that), but rather a kind of a reiteration of the

issues surrounding the film. One print in particular, *The alien says the same, in its way*, is telling. Two rectangular sheets of styropor lie next to each other. One sheet presents a slightly imperfect circle, vertically centered, surrounded by ghostly impressions. On the sheet to its right, we see a similar image, except it has been inverted horizontally, and instead of the ghostly impressions we see on the first sheet, here all the lines have been clearly outlined in black. They are the same image, yet so much difference lies between them. As Graydon explains, the signature mark of Erich Mendelsohn, the German architect, provides the source for this image. “When [Mendelsohn] liked a particular sketch on a large page filled with ideas, he would draw a quick line, or dome, around it, and seal it off with a signature squiggle.” The idea being “to contain the pure form or the good idea against infection by all that surrounded it . . . [an] attempt at total control in a process that was inherently messy.”

So much of what is memorable in *Vostok, Faretheewell* are the things that remain unsaid. The matter of the show could be said to lie somewhere between matters. Absence, in fact, comes to constitute a kind of presence. Yet, so much of Graydon’s approach still manages to maintain a strong connection to the materiality of his objects. His prints bear a kind of fragility, and the texture of his film seems to resonate with a matter tinged of nostalgia. The totality might be puzzling, but given time, it becomes an enjoyable reflective on space.



--Yván Rosa

(Images: *Not really a model at all, perhaps*, 2010, 2-panel letterpress print on styropor, 23 1/2 x 28 inches (each panel 23 1/2 x 13 inches); *The carnivorous grace of a deep space fleet destroyer*, 2010, 2-panel letterpress print on styropor, 23 1/2 x 28 inches (each panel 23 1/2 x 13 inches); Still from *Vostok*, 2010, DVD Sound and Color. Courtesy LMAK Projects.)