artist David Cotterrell's masterpiece - Borrowed Time

Beck's Futures 2002 is the UK's most generous and inclusive UK art prize. The exhibition opened at the ICA from 29 March until 12 May and showcased works presented by ten short listed artists.

Pulsar first met artist David Cotterrell in 1997 when he was a student at Chelsea College of Art.

The piece 'Borrowed Time' is a life size, three dimensional projection of a moving steam train. The effect was achieved by filming a train, moving through a tunnel on a section of the Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway (from a fixed position on the track ahead of it). The train was recorded as it slowly gained speed towards the camera. Within the exhibition, the footage was projected back via a high powered video projector on to a moving volume of gas (liquid CO2 and smoke fluid).

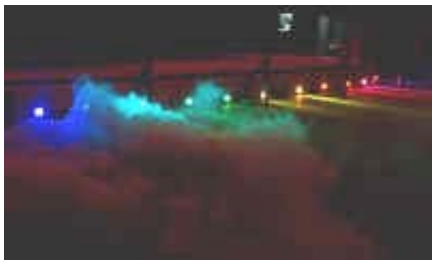
Initially, as the audience entered the room, the lights were up and the only evidence of activity was the sound of a train in the distance. As the train approached, the lights dimmed and the smoke machines were activated at the far end of the room to produce a vertical curtain of gas (as the gas hit the floor it rolled at a low level toward the audience). The distant image of the train moving through the tunnel was then faded in and projected on to the surface of the gas. At this stage the gas was simply acting as a flat screen, but gradually the smoke moved along the floor towards the audience and the image of the tracks was picked up on its surface.

When the low lying smoke had reached the projector and the tracks were visible along the length of the room, a solenoid was triggered which directed the flow of smoke from the three smoke machines forward towards the audience. As the train travelled the last ten metres towards the camera, the gas which had formed its screen moved with the projected image towards the audience. The clearly defined image of the steam train rushed towards the viewer on a three and half metre ball of smoke. Just as the smoke (and image) came within a metre of the audience, plate mounted fans at the rear of the room were triggered, dragging the smoke back. The image of the train faded to black and the audience were left in the dark for a few seconds with the noise of the passing train. As the house lights faded up, the smoke collapsed to the floor and the illusion was destroyed. The low-lying gas was pulled away from the audience and extracted through the rear wall of the room. The soundtrack continued until the noise of the train was no longer audible and the performance ended.

Borrowed Time was shown at the ICA, London as part of Beck's Futures 2002 touring exhibition. It was controlled through a Masterpiece 108 and lasted approximately five minutes. Borrowed Time was also installed in this form for the 1997 MA show at Chelsea College of Art.

For more information regarding this project please contact David Cotterrell at davidcotterrell@hotmail.com

robots come to life in a show of light



The award winning Magna Centre in Sheffield has recently added to its wide range of visitor attractions. The Living Robots Show opened to the public over the Easter weekend and it is the first of its kind.

Predator and prey robots chase each other in a purpose built arena, with the sole aim of survival. The robots are designed to learn from their experiences, making each show a unique and unpredictable battle.

Lighting for this attraction is of the utmost importance. Not only does a spectacular light and sound show indicate the opening of the proceeding, but also smaller robots are powered by light and will automatically refuel in special light spots across the arena.

The hard task of designing and installing the lighting and sound system was given to the Lighting Technology Group. Lighting Designer and Project Manager Davie Bell and Technical Expert Andy Elsegood worked to a tight six-week schedule to deliver a fully functional system.

The array of lighting equipment installed includes 4 Clay Paky Mini Scans, 12 Pulsar ChromaCrabs™, 6 clear Rigi-Flash™ tubes and dedicated Pulsar controllers.

Lighting Technology's Davie Bell enthuses: "Well proven reliability and back-up second to none made Clay Paky and Pulsar products an obvious choice." Of the ChromaCrabs in particular Davie adds: "They were chosen for the variety of effects you can achieve with the units. Furthermore they are easily changeable and give depth to the design."