

Artlink

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Memories of a Nebula

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It is a peculiar function of mind that it privileges certain events of our past, edits out others, packages them and strings them together to form a seamless whole - our memories. Living as we do in a culture which rotates pleasure about a yearly cycle of the summer holiday, most of our pleasant experiences happened in the heat; winter, associated with school and work, recedes. The memories of our youth are predestined to be high contrast, in full sunlight, the shadows so dark as to black out half the faces, just like the photos you took on your first plastic camera - of your cousins doing acrobatics at the beach, no doubt. So it is with Kreckler, who has described just such a memory he possesses, framed it in an A4 sheet and pasted it on the wall of the gallery as part of his installation, Fountain. It tells of standing by the railing at Circular Quay in the Sixties, watching aboriginal boys dive for money thrown into the water by a crowd gathered there. An image naturalised into the Sixties. How many black-and-white movies have we seen with such scenes? Sophia Loren in Greece, Audrey

Hepburn in Italy, Bogart somewhere in Asia musing wistfully as the natives in the middle distance (with grins, always with grins) dive from the appropriate pieces of landscape for coins. Here too, as in Kreckler's memory, the same sterilising sunlight suffuses the imagery. Various elements from this memory have been mapped by Kreckler into objects in the installation, interfering with the familiar space the scenario occupies in the social. Dominant are the coins, which exist in this instance as a vast set of copper coins combed by him into an image of the Crab Nebula covering most of the gallery floor. The immediate effect of this incident - the memory - opening itself out into an event so enormous as the Crab Nebula is that it becomes a victim of its own excess; emptying itself of any signifying function whatsoever. But this is also the sea floor from which the boys lifted their coins. The gallery becomes a sort of aquarium: we are walking underwater. Here the installation works at a level which few installations achieve: it operates as a device which, in its utilisation of space, must be read by the body ("You had to be there"). This ability to consider the viewer as performer carries the signature of Kreckler's own experience as a performance artist - his other persona. The Crab Nebula also happens to be composed of light. Each coin is a sun, millions of light years away. When we look at it we are looking at the past - a living memory, in fact. The obverse of light is darkness, absence. Opposite the A4 sheet, on the other wall, are a number of large stains: the result of ochre being flooded with water, of aboriginal children in the ocean. This dissolution, this loss, this darkness is the other side of the memory, the side unstated elsewhere, which lends the installation its resonance.