

Press release

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The 2006 Snow Show opens in Italy

The 2006 Snow Show, curated by Lance M Fung, opened today in Sestriere, Italy as part of the art and cultural program of the upcoming XX Winter Olympic Games of Torino.

Now in its sixth year, The Snow Show explores the issues related to art and architectural investigation using the ephemeral materials of snow, ice and water. A fresh dialogue is established between the two disciplines and the resulting work creates a sense of mystery and discovery. Foster and Partners collaborated with the artist Jaume Plensa, to create a unique, ethereal, architectural installation - WHERE ARE YOU - that unites the two studios.

Other Snow Show participants are:

Daniel Buren & Patrick Bouchain
Carsten Hiller & Williams and Tsien
Yoko Ono & Arata Isozaki
Paola Pivi & Cliostraat
Kiki Smith 26 Lebbeus Wood

The Snow Show
February 6, 2006-March 19,
2006 Sestriere, Italy (TO)
Open daily from 10 am to 8 pm

The Snow Show
Jaume Plensa
January 2006

The white austerity of snow transforms the landscape profoundly. Like in a desert of sand, snow eliminates whatever narrative element there might be in the landscape, to give us the soul of the place in all its purity. GPS technology can give us our precise geographical position, a location in motion. This new form of portrait (of the landscape as much as the body) is, like snow, a metaphor of the ephemeral. The virtual portraits of the mountains of Sestriere, Norman Foster's studio in London and mine in Barcelona, united as a tattoo on the snow, as a kiss on the landscape.

Norman Foster
London
January 2006

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I have a very special interest in snow. It is the medium of a personal passion - cross country skiing. This takes me away from urbanity and into nature - a world of deserted valleys, glaciers and frozen lakes - over hills and along forest trails. Through changing light, terrain, weather and place, the sport, for me, is an indivisible blend of aesthetics and athletics.

By the point of contact with the snow - a wax coated ski - I am constantly aware of the fickle changes in the medium. The angle of the skis is influenced by the density, temperature and texture of the surface - hard or soft, rough or smooth. These and other, variations, such as slope and wind, determine whether the experience has the liberation of flight, or a battle against the elements.

My annual ritual covers around seven hundred kilometres, starting in Winter and carrying on into spring. It culminates in a marathon length race in the Swiss Engadine Valley. Blue tipped sticks mark out the route at intervals of twenty metres, whilst graphic displays every two and a half kilometres count up the distance travelled and later start to tell you how few kilometres remain to the finish line. Apart from the emotional buzz of the crowd of thirteen thousand skiers, it is a mental and visual experience that continuously relates the changes of space, time and place.

These three ingredients are central to the work that Jaume Plensa and I have created together for the 2006 Snow Show. Instead of a linear route of many grooves through the places which define a Graubunden Valley, our work is a single circular groove in the mountains of Sestriere. The circle, a symbolic and timeless motif, links the snow-carved site, Jaumes studio in Barcelona and my own London workplace. These places are defined by the degrees, minutes and seconds of latitude and longitude, using the precision of global positioning Satellites.

This ephemeral relief in the snow, like an imprint or seal is also evocative of the circles of prehistory - except in snow rather than earth or stone. The distinction might suggest the transience of snow and the permanence of stone. But in truth everything that is man-made is ultimately temporary - the pace of snow change is simply faster - like the pace of change itself on our planet. Also a metaphor for global warming?

The interconnecting circles of the Olympics, a contemporaneous event, also establish another visual link. Appropriately both events are celebratory.

Jaume and I have both written and sketched independently but the work near Turin is a true fusion - we have dissolved our own identities through the process of collaboration. The fact that we might seek to explain or rationalise it in different ways does not change the totality of a shared endeavour.

Perhaps contrary to popular myth, this work, like many creative acts, including architecture, is the fruit of shared talents. A common sense of purpose or values cuts across all professional boundaries. In this work I am also grateful, within my own studio, to my partner David Nelson - a collaboration within a collaboration, that already spans some thirty years.

In acknowledging the wider team behind the snow show we are all grateful to Lance Fungs initiative and the craftsmen who carved the snow and interpreted our concept into reality.

The Snow Show Turin 2006

WHERE ARE YOU?

Foster and Partners and Jaume Plensa

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