

FyberMotion: Restless Habitat

Restless Habitat is recognisably a structure for shelter but it is also a proposition, a conduit to a different point of view, from which to question the ways in which we inhabit the world. The structure has a rhythm, a movement that creates a space for contemplation of the exterior world beyond its enclosure. *FyberMotion* comprises new media artist Alistair Riddell, and textiles artists Belinda Jessup and Lucie Verhelst. Collaboratively, they have created a space in which questions about place, dwelling and home might be considered.

Restless Habitat is a nomad, assembled in temporary space, waiting to move on, waiting to migrate to its next point of view. A lifestyle determined by the itinerant schedule of the artist who, like the nomad, creates his presences fleetingly. A structure composed of movement, and that is designed to be moved, takes its premise from global nomadic tribes. Globally, diminishing numbers of people represent traditional nomadic life. Nomadic movement is dependent upon travelling in accord with the surrounding environmental rhythms. The romanticism of a harsh landscape and a lightly treading nomad may be a form of Orientalism, but global changes in the politics of water and oil, and generally in the demographics of city dwelling, point towards the growing tension between humanity and the landscape. The nomad becomes a case study in a larger project. This provides a conceptual framework with which to read *Restless Habitat* and the tension between sedentary and moving lifestyles.

Restless Habitat appears to breathe and manifest a visual rhythm through movement. Within the structure there is a nervous system, electrically manipulating the form. Muscle-wires provide a hidden mechanism for rhythm, a movement that transforms the ceiling of this habitat into a waveform of silk and flexing conduit. The structure is an assemblage of home hardware and building supplies, dyed silk weaves and custom electronics. Materially, the work becomes a colliding point between the suburban and the nomadic.

Upon entering this undulating space a sense of intimacy exists as if the structure concentrates its enclosure upon you. An awareness of crossing a threshold occurs, the structure moves in near silence, its only interruptions being the sounds of rubbing silk and bells stepping lightly around its perimeter. These walls then create a liminal space, their movement and spice stained interior transforming one's sense beyond the awareness of only the 'interior'. The experience of a space that manifests with

breath and rest deliberately affects one's spatial perceptions, imposing a sense of calm and meditation.

Movement of the body and its relationship to the home transforms the nature of space and how we can view it. Movement defines the body's cognition of space. The nomads carry their structures with them; homelessness is as far as the journey takes them. The suburbanite never loses the surety of home, only venturing out past its foundations. The process of building, breaking down, loading, travelling and rebuilding becomes part of the rhythm of the structure and how the nomad relates to it. Home cannot be understood without the concept of journey. In this cycle, the continuity of the interior, the overlay of a familiar site, spatially redefines the travelled landscape into home and habitat. On the contrary, those with a sedentary home often take some intimate material reminder of its interior, a form of comfort and nourishment whilst temporarily in the exterior world.

What then determines the criteria for a domestic habitat? The body is the matrix that determines the spatial arrangements of a 'home'. The architecture of lived space, whether it is nomadic or suburban, becomes set by the spatial necessities of the body. Its boundaries determined by perceptions of inner and outer spaces. A roof may provide shelter but the essence of a home rests somewhere deeper. The necessities of shelter, warmth and sustenance have been developed over time through the cultural barter of tradition and inheritance into a material culture of comfort and homeliness. For the nomad, the interplay between the technologies of transport and material provide the physical constraints upon which to build the forms of hearth and home.

Throughout *Restless Habitat* there is a repertoire of iconography and aesthetics that draws upon nomadic culture and builds upon the sense of home. Representations of a nomadic lifestyle are contrasted with the material culture of a built suburbia. The flex and strain of the conduit structure, adorned with the motifs of the silk and spice trade and the horses that might carry them, perhaps speculate on a future that might be. A weaving of lost tribes and invisible science, the enmeshing of old and new structures of thought. The symbol of water is key for the nomad, its location is a point at which to find replenishment, to rest and to offer hospitality to others. Within the work, a Perspex rhombus filled with water and crushed glass, emphasises the laser light passing through it, becoming a place to gather and nourish, but also alluding to a delicate balance with a potential for a darker outcome. The repeated geometries of the rhombus and the triangle manifest as doormats and carefully collaged shower curtains throughout the silk walls, creating cosmologies and timeless genealogies, connecting the work to older forms of iconographic systems.

Nomadic boundaries are always shifting, the relationships to built environments being determined by movement, habitation and environment. For the nomad, landscape becomes habitat with the cessation of each journey. This rhythm is clear in *Restless Habitat*, but it is also a metaphor for larger concerns, of larger rhythms and larger habitats. There are questions about how we occupy space and to what end. The built environs of our suburban lives are a stark contrast to the proposition of a nomadic lifestyle but the desires for home and its fundamental elements remain a common need whatever the lifestyle. Being attuned to the rhythms of our habitats becomes imperative.

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