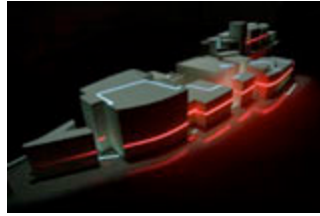


the Stranger

Seattle's Only Arts Section
Sep 28 - Oct 4, 2006



Floating Plaster, City Motion,
by Robert Campbell and Yuki Nakamura (2006),
at 911 Media Arts Center

Kingdom, Come

The Closed-Circuit City at 911 Media Arts

BY JEN GRAVES

In the perpetual future, our size is changeable. While we become godlike, peering down at a small earth from planes and spaceships and skyscraper observatories, through microscopes and zoom lenses, we burrow like ticks. The artists Yuki Nakamura and Robert Campbell transport us back now to a quaint mutation of scale—the miniature movie set—but instead of blowing up the sculptural miniature into a photographic cinema that reinforces natural scale, they construct a defiant, desirable city where no person can live, a city that goes on despite us. It is forever small, and we are forever too big. Now we are like gods who wish to be human again.

The installation, called ***Floating Plaster/City Motion***, sits on the floor in a dark room at 911 Media Arts Center. It is two silent white islands, which also resemble glowing ships of empire, of cast-plaster shapes with urban-style canyons between. The islands are based on the footprints of the Ile Saint-Louis and the Ile de la Cité in Paris, but they have become anonymous. Three synchronized projectors create one moving image across the surfaces of the buildings and streets and alleys. Bits of snow drop on the two cities, streaks of traffic careen down their avenues, and the cities are caressed by sun, sketched by architects, and destroyed by bombs. The animated realm that results from the changing combination of surface and form is abstract and suggestive, like a map, a telescoped view, a war zone broadcast from a safe distance.

This piece—one of the most ravishing new works I've seen in several months—is part of 911 Media Arts Center's "New Works Laboratory," which pairs traditional-media and new-media artists. Installation artist Carrie Bodle and painter Margie Livingston are the other team in the show, and one will be selected for an exhibition at the Henry Art Gallery this fall. Bodle and Livingston created hanging-grid sculptures that double as loose, three-dimensional tapestries referencing Livingston's floating-space paintings, but infused with light so that they cast photographic images on the wall and floor surfaces nearby. These are spectacles investigating the shifts between forms; it's a much smaller project than ***Floating Plaster/City Motion***, but alluring nonetheless.