

Mike Nelson

October 31st 2008 – February 1st 2009

Opening on October 30th at 6 pm

British artist Mike Nelson, born in 1967, creates complex installations in which he uses a variety of objects and materials combining references to literature, cinema, architecture, and social and cultural exchanges. Upon entering these constructions, the visitor is immersed in a world between reality and fantasy, trapped in a territory where all sorts of elements can be freely associated. These scenarios reveal themselves in many different ways, often in the guise of sequences of interconnected rooms and corridors. His work tends to allude to things rather than to reveal them, and deliberately remains highly enigmatic.

Mike Nelson's installations make us behave like an explorer, or at any rate like a reader, the sequence of various elements and viewpoints appearing to be a specific scheme of signs in a fictional system. His devices also suggest to us to look behind the scenes. These elements reveal Mike Nelson's relation to parody. The notion of pastiche enables us to understand how he stages his work and plays with the notions of cliché and genre. He has said about his constructions that they are an attempt to exhaust his own style, in the way that Borges meant it in his introduction to the *Universal History of Infamy*, when he described the baroque style as deliberately exhausting all possibilities, and placing itself on the verge of self-parody in the process.

In choosing objects and architectural elements, Mike Nelson contrives to render rubbish and debris aesthetic. The downgraded aspect conveys a vestige like quality to his objects, which appear to be both elements of a past history and elements that fantasy can reproduce. The notions of debris and ruin include those of time, transformation and degradation. These recurring ideas in Nelson's work echo Robert Smithson's concept of entropy. One can find another reference to Smithson's work when Nelson uses mirrors to create an illusion, and as a symbol of mental projection. After a short stay at the Villa Arson, Mike Nelson was invited to build a project in the Galerie Carrée. His production will probably extend beyond the boundaries of the art centre. A residency will enable him to work on this ambitious project.

Translation: Claire Bernstein

Curator : **Frédéric Bonnet**



installation au MAMCO, Genève, 2005



AMNESIAC SHRINE or Double coop displacement, 2006



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The Centre national d'art contemporain is open daily from 2 to 6pm.
Closed on Tuesdays and on 1st may. Free admission.

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