

Aesthetica

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Thursday, 26 May 2011

Humanity's Unspoken Rhetoric: rAndom International, Wellcome Collection, London.



Review by Sarah Richter, a candidate for the MA in Art History at [Richmond the American International University](#) in London.

Decorating Euston Road in the windows of the Wellcome Collection is an installation by rAndom International entitled *Reflex*. The light installation, which inhabits two large sets of windows, is composed of evenly spaced brass rods adorned with specially designed LED chips and is based on an algorithm that emulates collective decision making found in large groups of animals, such as ants or birds. All identical, the lights react to passers-by on the street and in a way record our migratory patterns as well. As one walks by the Wellcome Trust's windows, the installation is seemingly unassuming, but as soon as one swiftly walks by the piece, the lights gracefully twinkle and rush swiftly down from post to post trailing behind the pedestrian. In this sense, everyone who passes by the installation, whether they want to or not, are participating in the art. Without the pedestrian, the work wouldn't work, wouldn't be activated or have any artistic presence and thus the viewer is, in a sense the art work.

Whilst the installation is meant to depict the algorithms found in nature, the installation shows that humans also have patterns of predictability, much like other animals that travel in groups or pack like formations such as birds, fish, ants, lions and so forth. Representing society's commonplace desire to be part of a crowd, to follow the pack and fit in, *Reflex* demonstrates this innate human desire in an astonishingly subtle and modern way. Since the piece adorns the windows of busy Euston Road, the installation is a reflection of the inhabitants of the location. Creatures of habit who pass the window display daily, illuminating the windows, causing the brass rods and LED chips to buzz and literally glow with their sensation, their movement and their sheer presence.

As much as we like to separate ourselves and place ourselves at the top of the animal hierarchy, we are not much different from our animal friends who, much like humanity, want to be part of something, belong somewhere and find similarities and ultimate companionship in this maze of life. The basis for this light pattern represents that of unified movement attributed to members of the animal jungle, but the installation allows members of the urban jungle to ignite its message and establish their own migratory patterns. Although the idea of being surrounded by people but feeling totally alone can sometimes emerge in this concrete jungle, this light installation shows that, although we may not know everyone around us, we too act with pack like tendencies. Habitual routines and algorithms of movement are something that we participate in every day: taking the same route to work, visiting the same supermarket or bank, walking the same path to the gym or, my personal favourite, the local bakery.

Even though we place ourselves as humans, the most elevated of species, higher than that of our animal friends we aren't much different at all and like it or not our patterns or movement and response emerge and our often just as similar as that of animals. The lucky commuters, pedestrians, tourists and art lovers who take the time to

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traverse past *Reflex* are fortunate enough to create their own algorithm, their own pattern reflective of how we all make collective decisions to walk on the same side of the street to get to the McDonalds on the corner or the Euston Station stop. Collective decision making, whether or not we actually discuss with the person next to us about ordering the same skinny vanilla latte at Starbucks, means we are participating in an unspoken, collective decision to choose this particular coffee shop, the route, this tube stop. It is this unspoken rhetoric of collective decision making and unanimous understanding that is reflected in the windows of the Wellcome Trust - more than just an artistic illustration of a scientific study it is an aesthetic representation of humanity's daily self.

Further information on is available at their website [rAndom International](#). The installation *Reflex* will be on display at Wellcome Collection until April 2012: [Wellcome Collection](#).

Aesthetica Magazine

We hope you enjoying reading the Aesthetica Blog, if you want to explore more of the best in contemporary arts and culture you should read us in print too. In the spirit of celebration, *Issue 40* includes features on James Turrell, Wim Wenders, sculptors Alice Anderson and Kate MccGwire plus an extended feature on the Making is Thinking show at Witte De With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam. You can buy it today by calling +44(0)1904 479 168. Even better, [subscribe to Aesthetica](#) and save 20%. Go on, enjoy!

Posted by Aesthetica at [Thursday, May 26, 2011](#) 

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▼ [2011 \(107\)](#)

▼ [May 22 - May 29 \(8\)](#)

[Dipping a toe into Narcissus's pool: Narcissus Ref...](#)

[Preview: All the Fits: The Aesthetics of Journalis...](#)

[Humanity's Unspoken Rhetoric: rAndom International...](#)

[Filmmaker Series – Part 4 Q&A with Daniel Wirtberg...](#)

[A Pictorial Stream of Consciousness: Philip-Lorca ...](#)

[Spatial Form in Social and Aesthetic Processes: Co...](#)

[The Crucible: York Theatre Royal, Finishes Saturda...](#)

[The Most Beautiful World in the World: Friedrich K...](#)

► [May 15 - May 22 \(5\)](#)

► [May 8 - May 15 \(4\)](#)

► [May 1 - May 8 \(6\)](#)

► [April 24 - May 1 \(4\)](#)

► [April 17 - April 24 \(5\)](#)

► [April 10 - April 17 \(8\)](#)

► [April 3 - April 10 \(8\)](#)

► [March 27 - April 3 \(4\)](#)

► [March 20 - March 27 \(6\)](#)

► [March 13 - March 20 \(6\)](#)

► [March 6 - March 13 \(6\)](#)

► [February 27 - March 6 \(4\)](#)

► [February 20 - February 27 \(7\)](#)

► [February 13 - February 20 \(6\)](#)

► [February 6 - February 13 \(5\)](#)

► [January 30 - February 6 \(3\)](#)

► [January 23 - January 30 \(4\)](#)

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