



Installations, video works, paintings

Mark Maxwell

London, UK

Correspondence to: Mark Maxwell. London, UK. Email: max@maxxart.com.

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Mark Maxwell is a filmmaker, painter and installation artist. His first job in the art world was working as an assistant to artist & musician Brian Eno on a series of projects relating to set and lighting designs for live musical performances entitled “Opal Evenings”. The designs would incorporate sculptural suspended forms with light projections.

A series of projects followed with Maxwell creating concepts for pop videos, contemporary dance, exhibitions and also live events such as Amnesty International and Roger Waters (Pink Floyd). Other creative design projects include immersive experiences for Madame Tussauds.

More recently, he has focused on film-making and his recent shorts “Naturaleza Muerta” a story about a soldier in the Spanish Civil War and “Voices from the Great War” a film commissioned by the Museum of London about boy soldiers have been screened internationally, including festivals in London, Paris, Rio de Janeiro and Los Angeles.

A common theme in Mark Maxwell’s art practice is the transformation of materials. Recent video installations involve the transformation of metals using the technique of electrolysis, a process first explored by the artist in 1995. This involves setting up an electrical system whereby small electrical currents are attached to objects within a solution and gradually over time they change shape and form. Often the transformation is captured within a duration of a few hours and easily visible to the eye.

His video works include a series entitled “Electra” which depicts a crucifix undergoing reverse electroplating. A version was shortlisted for the recent Open Prize for video. Inspired by Milton’s “Paradise Lost” and Shelly’s “Prometheus Unbound” the idea of the “spark of life” igniting the creation of man, the concept of utilising electrical currents to create a transformation or an evolution in form.

Recent exhibitions include a video screening of this

process, within the cloister of St. Bartholomew the Great, one of the oldest churches in London and survivor of the Great Fire. The projection screen itself consisted of 200 kg of melted down and reformed candle wax created “site specifically” for the exhibition. In 1725 the church was a workshop attended by the young Benjamin Franklin, the renowned scientist that would later discover that electricity could be harnessed from lightning and stored in leyden jars.

His paintings are influenced directly from his video experiments; oil paints and metal leaf are randomly arranged and gilded on to aluminum panels.

The appearances of the artworks, seemingly in a state of flux, evoke abstract landscapes undergoing a chemical patination.

The exhibition provisionally entitled “Duality” features sculptures paintings and video installations by Max Maxwell. The work has been heavily influenced by Maxwell’s recent Artist’s Residency in Bali, Indonesia, where he created pieces using electricity and water; exploring the themes of slavery and freedom; duality and transition; faith and religion.

He has also created work that contemplates the ever-fractionous relationship between nature and industry.

Dark Star (Figure 1)

Sixty-kg block of ice, LED lighting and heat installation

This piece is inspired by the first law of thermodynamics, which originally states that matter cannot be created or destroyed but can be transformed from one state to another. A 60-kg block of ice (formed of copper sulphate solution, the most common electrolyte) is suspended with chains from the gallery ceiling.

Slowly dimming LED lights encased within the block of ice will slowly be revealed as the ice melts, the droplets



Figure 1 Dark Star (<https://youtu.be/2WO72GYAB8I>).



Figure 2 Electra (<https://vimeo.com/114697022>, password electra).

falling onto a large metal hot plate below, as the drops hit the metal plate the liquid will sizzle and evaporate.

In socio-political terms, this piece represents man's reliance on electricity, the melting of the polar caps and the continued heating of the planet, and the cycle of destruction.

Electra (Figure 2)

Video installation

In this video installation by Maxwell, the figure of Christ from a crucifix is undergoing reverse electroplating.

An electric current is passed through the crucifix, which is made of pewter and plated in silver.

The crucifix acts as an electrode (anode) and releases its metal ions through oxidation into the liquid solution (electrolyte), which in turn, the ions are transferred to a hidden metal electrode (cathode).

Although the reverse electroplating of the crucifix is visually both mysterious and beautiful, the artwork also considers the role of precious objects in our society and poses the question of at which point in a production and distribution process does a religious object become sacred and revered?

Many "brands" of crucifixes are produced and plated simultaneously in large vats in factories all around the world, a typical process in the consumer market, but at what point does a simple modeled object such as a



Figure 3 Vassal (Slave Bracelets) installation (<https://vimeo.com/328869435>).

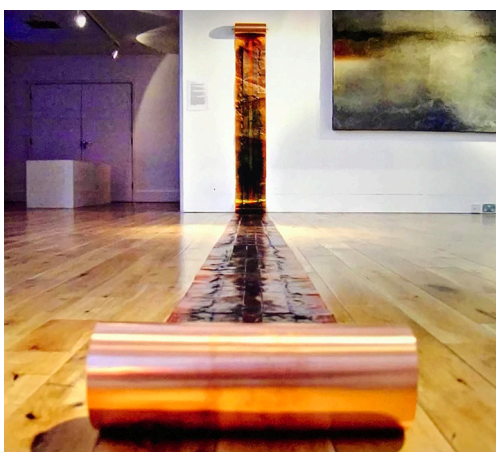


Figure 4 Greenwich Meridian line.

crucifix become a special object of veneration...or in other words...when does it become holy?

Vassal (Slave Bracelets) installation (Figure 3)

Metal bracelets, 12-volt current, tank of liquid, video projection

It has been suggested that the origin of this style of bracelet dates back to a time in India when they were worn by enslaved females and members of harems.

The design of the bracelets includes a ring attached to various styles of copper chains and ornamentation, around the hand and up to a bracelet around the wrist.

Similar to his video installation of the Electra work, this sculpture depicts two “slave bracelets” in a tank of water and copper sulphate solution (electrolyte) undergoing reverse

electroplation. One bracelet is wrapped around an acrylic hand in a natural pose.

A 12-volt current travels through this bracelet and slowly the bracelet breaks down with its particles being transferred to the other bracelet (which is forming a cradle shape in the water). The cradle shaped bracelet is gradually, microscopically increasing in size.

In this installation, the transfer of metal ions can represent re-birth or freedom—breaking down the symbolism of slavery, while exploring the principles behind the relationship between electricity and water.

Greenwich Meridian line (Figure 4)

Installation

The metal roll traveling across the gallery floor and up the wall, is a repousse copper pressing of the original Prime Meridian line, in Greenwich Observatory, which represents 0 degrees longitude. Historically this abstract line, divided the eastern and western hemispheres of the earth, every place on earth was measured in terms of its distance east or west from this line.

By placing the copper impression in the gallery space Maxwell is suggesting that there is now, a new 0 degrees longitude that has been commandeered and it inhabits the gallery space.

Acknowledgments

None.

Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

Ethical Statement: The author is accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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