

The Fossil Star

Susan Nash

It gave me pleasure of a very special kind to exhibit in an ex-light bulb factory. Such a place seems to me as paradoxical as its product; whilst both are closely related to light and vision, they remain practically invisible themselves. And both recall that "clean, well-lighted place" which art can, occasionally, offer.

I enjoy working with found objects. I use them for my own purposes, but I try to preserve something of the past they carry with them, and I like to think that I also help them in their silent attempt to exist, to be visible at last, something only possible after their extinction as means to an end.

The Installation (A light bulb game)

The light bulb is a world of darkness, a paradox. It is hermaphrodite. It is the unseen, hidden by its own light (and an ever-popular symbol of the brain). A miniature sun, surrounded by its own closed system, but created from the materials and energies of our earth (and thus "fossilem", "taken from the ground").

It is a microcosm, constituted of the four elements: fire/energy, air/ gas, earth/matter, and water/liquid. Although only three elements appear to be present, glass is in fact an ambiguous substance; whilst for practical purposes it is considered to be a solid, at a molecular level it retains, even at normal temperatures, the disorder characteristic of the liquid state (Chinese philosophy indeed considers it as belonging to the element of water); stability prevails over instability by a relatively small margin, in what has been described as "precarious stability". (The "four elements" theme, as well as that of precarious stability, also appears in "The Four Points of the Compass at Table").

The glass discs amongst the sand forming the outer triangle relate not only to the shape and material of the light bulb, but also to the practice of adding broken glass during the melting process. The pyramid in the centre suggests the presence of fire and the materials used in the filament. The Osram company to which this factory belonged, introduced innovations with regard to the filament, a component that had initially presented considerable difficulties. Edison carried out his first experiments using strips of burnt visiting card, then burnt bamboo. These were later replaced by osmium alloys (this being one of the most heat-resistant metals after tungsten), and afterwards by tungsten alone. The outer triangle of sand and glass points downwards (for the visitor entering the space) in allusion to the elements of earth and water, which isolate us from and connect us with fire energy.

The installation as a whole refers to an elusive, ambiguous world, in which one element turns into another, hides within another, or may be two different (and in appearance mutually exclusive) things at the same time.