

" WHY " AND " WHAT FOR "

THE LIFT PROJECT : Artist Nola Farman in collaboration with Michael Brown: Australia

The Lift (elevator) has a dedicated computer which controls the complex mechanical and visual sequences that are central to the piece. The programme is written in *machine code* and ensures in *realtime* the perfect synchronisation of the images from the three projectors, the sound accompaniment, the opening and closing of the lift doors, as well as the progression of the electronic counter indicating the current floor level.

The journey in a lift usually connotes a temporary 'absence' from the world, a period of intermission, and it is within this brief span of time that the artists have inserted a sequence of images which evoke certain basic fears and tensions in a highly orchestrated manner. Thus the vague doubts and uncertainties which fleetingly assail most of us are brought into focus and made explicit. The lift marks a point of rupture with reality. It is a place of embarkation, but the journey involves not only a physical displacement of ascent and descent, but also a psychological displacement. As in all Nola Farman's work, this piece has been designed to be interactive. The riders in the lift become performers for each other. Each group of riders must discover for themselves the Lift's capabilities and their possible engagement with it.

The Lift to the artist is an important social space where looking becomes an illicit activity and the minute scrutiny of other people becomes all the more tempting and desirable; hence the extreme closeups of the slides and the feeling of conflict between the impersonal and the intimate. Fears and phobia are examined in a ride that ultimately ends nowhere, although the feeling of ascent and descent once the lift doors close on their passengers is quite "real".

The soundtrack is a source of tension in it's own right, as well as an enrichment of the sense of "pressure" conveyed by the images. The sounds were collected from inside actual lifts and a lift shaft. The Lift telephone provides a subsidiary sound tract which "helps" the lift-rider in a metaphoric sense to know, name and therefore confront fear.

A small "point-of-information" computer on the outside front of the lift gives a clue to one level of reading of the lift as a text by running out several meanings of the word "Lift" taken from a dictionary.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

THE LIFT PROJECT : Artist Nola Farman in collaboration with Michael Brown: Australia

This project was researched from 1979 and presented in 1983.

The computer has a dedicated and embedded 8085 processor with 4K of RAM and ROM. The programme to control the Lift is written in 8085 assembler language and permanently 'hard wired' into ROM. All control is through onboard miniature relays. The programme is responsible for:

1. Automatic door opening and closing. These doors are controlled in real time with collision over-ride to stop injury with the closing door.

2. Control of the TASCAM tape recorder - this supplies sound pulses and synchronisation of the 3 Kodak projectors as well as the sound track.

3. Light control - sequence phasing with the script.

4. Random selection of floor levels as script the progresses.

5. Sequential selection of floor levels and call delay when the lift is in the idle state.

6. Floor level selection. This is handled by actual lift floor level controllers and displayed on the outside as well as in the interior.

Power to the various peripherals is supplied through 'umbilical' cables housed in ducting. All electrical work is to the standard required for public utilities with Johns Perry Lifts Pty Ltd wiring the control mechanisms with the computer interface.

The 3 Kodak projectors are sequenced by sound pulses on the 3 track TASCAM recorder. This in turn is controlled by the computer. Standard stereo speakers are used except for the very low frequency speaker under the suspended floor - for vibration.

All of the computer and allied electrical equipment is housed in an aluminium flight case for robust handling and ease of installation. Lighting is standard utility 250 volt.