

Orbit

Simon Terrill

West Space, Gallery 2

4 – 19 March 2005

by **Andrea Bell**

Below: Simon Terrill

Orbit, 2004

Plasterboard, construction pine, mechanism & motor

420 x 280 x 90 cm

Image courtesy the artist

I didn't know quite what to expect when I arrived at West Space, only I was soon to learn that I was to write about a white revolving wall! Dizzy and bewildered at the prospect, I hesitantly entered the realm of *Orbit*.

More than just a stirrer, Simon Terrill has foundations in theatre installation design and they are key to *Orbit's* focus: the relationship between viewer, space and object. Without the viewer's presence, the work would continue revolving, much like the world keeps turning. Yet our participation gives the work meaning. We can make a difference!

Orbit challenges our faith in the stability of architectural structures. On its own, *Orbit* is but a wall, looming and receding, enticing and defying the viewer. In the gallery it becomes a machine. The motion of the wall stimulates vertigo in the destabilised construction of space. Universal elements are not merely suggested by the work's title; the spinning wall is also analogous to a gravitational pull. A single fluorescent light radiates from the northeast corner. This beam is interrupted when the physical presence of the wall blocks the light and mimics a pseudo eclipse.

Terrill works with a variety of media crossing a number of disciplines. His upcoming photography project is foreshadowed by the use of a 16mm film processing motor, a response to *Orbit* that sets it in motion to influence future projects. *Orbit* and its spinning wall exemplify his focus on the processes of art making and exhibiting; walls are commonly regarded as the bearers of artworks and Terrill challenges us to question the purpose and function of walls. He makes us view them not as the exhibitors of art but as the art in itself.

My initial response to *Orbit* centred on its immediacy. I felt compelled to interact. Yet I still felt shy in this impromptu audition; my personal space was intruded in a scene reminiscent of 'the walls of terror' from Ian Fleming's *The Spy who Loved me*. Finally my role in a James Bond movie had been realised! I was swept up in a flood of light only to be left in the dark a moment later due to my failure to keep up with the revolution. However this claustrophobic nightmare was short-lived upon recognition that the infringement of my space would soon disappear – what goes around comes around. Terrill's work radiates the cycle of life with theatrical expertise. With a structure that overrides content, *Orbit* is sure to upstage any of Disney's attempts.

Andrea Bell is a freelance writer based in Melbourne.

