



Kiron Robinson

Failure: a celebration
 Alliance Française Gallery
 St Kilda
 1 – 30 September 2005
 Reviewed by Veronica Tello

Above: Kiron Robinson
failure: a celebration (installation view) 2005
 Neon globe, light globe, balloons, playdough & paper
 Dimensions variable
 Photo credit: Edouard Mornaud

Imagine dozens of miniature low-budget world globes (brand name: Di Qiu Yi), deflated balloons, fluorescent light bulbs and doorknobs scattered on the gallery floor of the Alliance Française. Meanwhile a lofty white neon sign hangs in the middle of the gallery and brightly shines the words 'i tried'. This was Kiron Robinson's installation *Failure: a celebration* (2005).

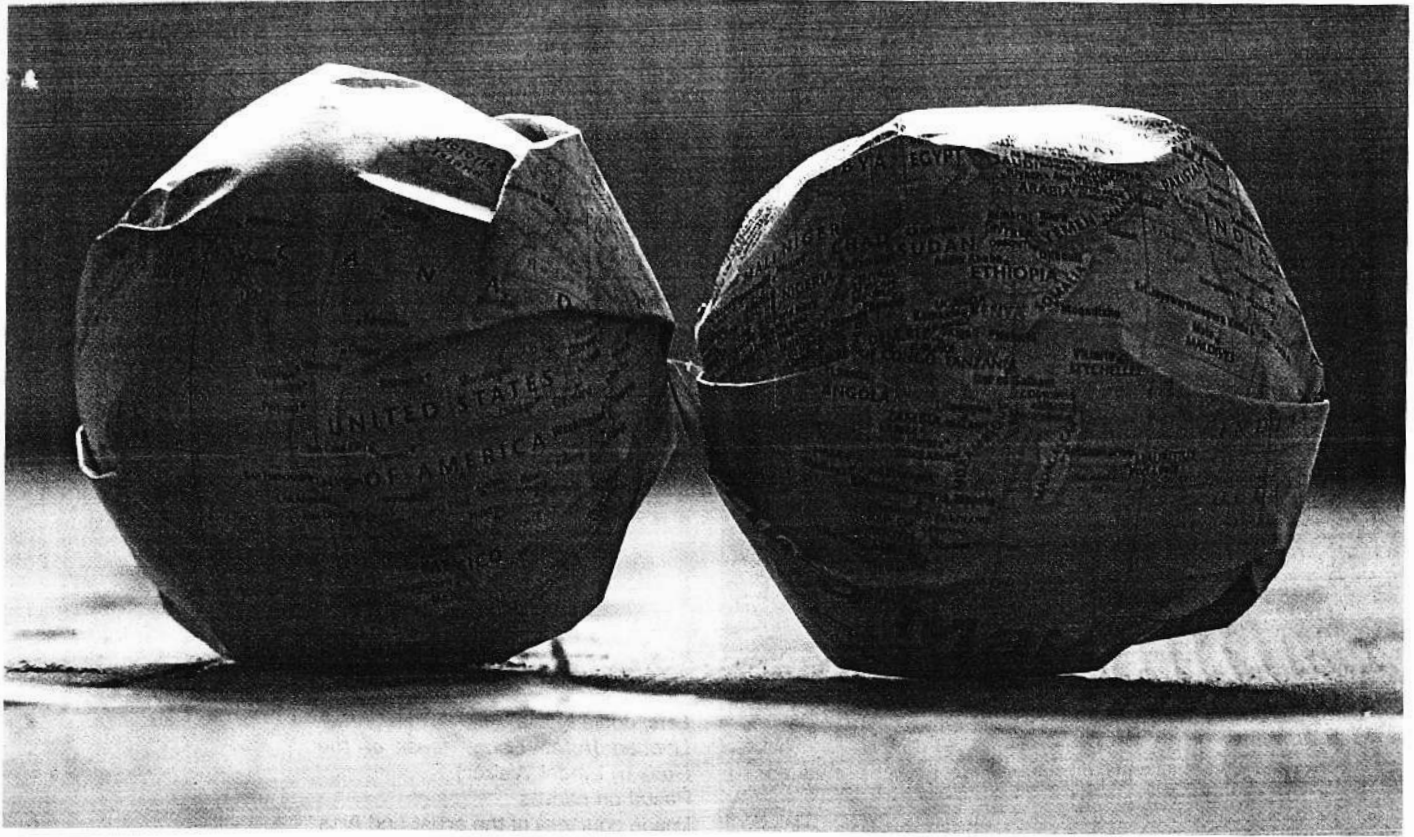
showcase a number of contradictions: It was the viewer's task, through active participation, to interrogate them. Firstly while many of the objects in the installation had come straight out of their packaging, others had been semi-handcrafted by the artist. Robinson had scrunched up pages of an atlas into balls that resembled globes. By placing these clumsily handmade globes alongside slick, mechanically produced ones, Robinson effectively set up the first of a series of disparities: the machine-made versus the handcrafted.

The aforementioned supermarket objects were positioned on the gallery floor in a seemingly scrambled and jazz-inspired manner – in broken rhythms. In order to view them, we needed to traverse through the gallery and our physiological and psychological participation was necessary. This was partly because of the installation's extensive sprawl, but it was also due to the diminutive size of the objects. These were no more than 30 centimetres high and were placed on the gallery floor. As such, we, the spectators were granted a bird's eye view, having to crouch down in order to ascertain the details of the various objects in *Failure: a celebration*. Prompted to engage both physically and mentally, we effectively experienced an intensified connection with the artwork, which implied self-empowerment. In this mode of spectatorship, we could begin to make sense of Robinson's installation.

After spending a little time with *Failure: a celebration* another contrast appeared – what initially seemed to be an installation comprised of a random dispersion of objects, emerged as a patterned constellation. As we mobilised ourselves through the space it transpired that the miniature globes had been situated by the artist singly, and in groups or couples. There was an organisation in this work that contradicted the initial perception of disarray in the installation.

Moving around the gallery – walking and kneeling down – it became apparent that Robinson had set up the space to

What Robinson showed was that order and disorder could emerge within the same space, but at the expense of dispelling any sense of the absolute. This was the point of *Failure: a celebration* – that the tensions between chaos and control create a fractured mode of apprehending a thing, whether it is the gallery interior, time, space or the globe itself. This philosophy persisted throughout Robinson's presentation of various frictions: high and low culture, the mechanical and



Above: Kiron Robinson
One half of the world and the other (detail) 2005
 Paper pins & polystyrene
 Dimensions variable

the handcrafted, chaos and order, and failure or celebration. No pole dominated the other, nor did they balance out in harmony – demonstrating that there is no balance between contradictions, only grinding tensions and intersections.

Robinson further expanded on the pervasiveness of unsettling frictions in his work by stating:

The authority that is given to the word despite knowing our own misuse or twisting of meaning relays a desire to establish and maintain a framework, above all. Maps and photographs work in a similar way. They define or establish a false framework. They allow for a meaning from which we can feel safe in our understanding.

The history of perpetual social, political and aesthetic shifts continually debunk any sense of an absolute agenda or consensus. Just consider the sequence of events that have altered our astronomical and geographical histories – from Copernicus and Galileo, to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Now, think of the correlating philosophies and theories that have changed the trajectory of our beliefs and politics – the Christian Bible, the Communist Manifesto and Post-modern critical theory. Ultimately, rigid parameters fail us and, perceptions become altered – such is the affect of radical transformation.

To feel secure within a construct will invariably produce disappointment or failure. To embrace contradictions, inconsistencies and the inevitability of loss is the driving force behind Robinson's work. While *Failure: a celebration* is marked by a tinge of apathy, leaving us to wallow in a feeling of disappointment, the work also prompted us – through active participation – to critically question the realms and frameworks within which we function, and to accept, even celebrate, their inevitable distortion or end.

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