

ART GUIDE

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Bathed
In Light

With their latest show Florida Road's **The Bank Gallery** continues to shine.

By Peter Machen

In these times of rolling darkness, the contents of Light Show at the Bank Gallery are pointedly contemporary. In what seems like a curatorial narrative, the show echoes the large scale projection of a television constantly being switched off which dominated the gallery's previous show by Matthew Coombes.

The Light Show, which was conceived of as a sort of sampler for artists that will be showing in the gallery through the year, gathers together many of the psychological concerns of our 21st century reality, as we move into an increasingly unsustainable future.

It is to the credit of both the curators and the artists involved that the show's experiential whole transcends the sum of its not insignificant parts. Curated by gallery owners Henrietta Hamilton and Robert Fraser, with the deftly multitasking Vaughn Sadie on board as guest curator, Light Show impresses as an example of the ascendant talent that the gallery will be showing during 2008.

Dominating the show is Siemon Allen's gorgeous appropriated work *The Birds*, which literally reconstructs the Hitchcock classic, in the process building endless layers of allusion. Made from a 16mm film copy of Hitchcock's 1962 thriller, Allen has woven the reels of film into a flat canvas, re-scaling the work with mathematical precision so that the woven film occupies a similar scale to the projected film.

In British artist Simon Jacque's work *Storm*, a series of electric storms is shown on five small LCD screens which interrupt the darkness of the small space adjacent to the main gallery. Shot on a low-resolution camera-phone, there is no sound, no thunder. The tiny camera is incapable of reproducing the complexity and fury of a thunderstorm, resulting in a strange reductive digital beauty.



Greg Streak's piece, *Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid*, consists of a cross constructed out of energy saving light bulbs. The cross correlates perfectly to an actual statue of Christ on the cross on the other side of the road, on the grounds of a Catholic Church. While the gallery is accessible to the public, the church is less so, surrounded by security fencing.

In Jeremy Wafer's haunting *Clouding Over*, the cloud's lining hums and dances ever so slightly, as the digital compression process struggles to render distinct edges. A blue sky is interrupted by a dark cloud which gradually fills the screen with its dank, shifting grey.

Motion and place becomes distorted, and the frame of the image seems to bulge and contract.

In contrast to Wafer's piece, Vaughn Sadie's *Pleasure of Feeling In Control* overwhelms with visual silence. A small bank of plug points and phone-line sockets is projected from a slide projector, looking more like a painting than a projection. The work's title is engraved into the wall, intimating a complacent relationship to a volatile technological reality.

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James Webb's work is a kind of embedded artwork, a Morse code message emanating from one of the light fixtures. It is in a sense only partially visible, with no gallery signage to tell the viewer that it is there. (The show's curators have chosen not to label any of the works in Light Show with titles and artists for this show. Instead, all such information is contained in the catalogue, giving the works autonomy from their creators during the viewing experience).

Bronwen Vaughan-Evans provides the only non-light-based piece, other than Allen's *The Birds*. Her piece *Vaughn Light*, created from layers of lightness and darkness anchors the show. On a long thin canvas, a street light is almost buried in the greyness that dominates the panel. A pair of feet extend into the top of the image. The feet – belonging to Sadie – don't appear to be falling to earth. Instead they seem to be floating, away from the banality below, away from the planet, towards the light.

Finally, a work by Steven Hobbes, *A Point in space*; containing all points, uses light and shadow as a medium in themselves, a delicately constructed installation which creates fluidly crystalline abstractions that fill the barred bank vault. The work suggests real value, intangible beauty, and the fact that, for some of us at least, an art gallery is the perfect replacement for a bank.