

Ever Green

Ever Green is a photographic project by Dienneke Jansen and Jenny Gillam which explores how 'nature' exists in the built environment by exploiting the outdoor location and physical structure of the Courtenay Place Park light boxes. Both artists' practices engage with concepts of nature as a social construct and the mediated ways in which urban dwellers experience it. The perceived need to bring aspects of nature into urban contexts, the planting structures of inner city environments and the control of these plants due to space limitations and maintenance requirements, underpin this project. The work asks viewers to re-evaluate the urban environment that they might otherwise navigate without question on a regular basis.

Eight native shrubs have been photographed through glass from two sides, the images giving audiences the sense that the shrubs may be contained in the light boxes. During the six-month exhibition period a season change will occur so members of the public that regularly traverse Courtenay Place throughout that time will have a heightened sense of the passing of time. In autumn the images will merge with other foliage in the immediate environment, blurring the lines between the 'real' and its representation, while in the winter months, when the plants around the light boxes are leafless, the lush green images will offer some respite ('a nature band-aid' as James Howard Kunstler suggests in his lecture, *The Tragedy of Suburbia*^[i]). The work also acknowledges the photographic simulacra dominant in the urban environment and questions whether a representation (either a garden or photograph) can meet our needs for nature.

Dienneke Jansen is an artist and Senior Lecturer in Visual Arts, Auckland University of Technology. Jenny Gillam is an artist and Lecturer in the School of Fine Arts, Massey University, Wellington.

[i] http://www.ted.com/speakers/james_howard_kunstler.html posted May 2007
